Building Sustainable Communities: From Environmental Injustice to Just Sustainability and Regeneration
Environmental Studies 116
Winter 2018

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**Office Hours:** Monday 1:30-3:30pm or by appointment
**Class Meets:** Tuesdays and Thursdays: 2-3:15pm HSSB 1173.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant:**
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**Purpose and Rationale**
This course introduces students to the theoretical and historical foundations of a core focus of Environmental Studies: understanding the roots and consequences of our socioecological crises so that we may work to build an ecologically sustainable and socially just, democratic future. We will examine and interrogate the scholarly evidence concerning the phenomena of socioecological crises and the efforts by community residents, activists, workers, social movements, corporations, and governments to document and combat them. We will consider the ways in which human and nonhuman forces interact, collide, collaborate and are indeed inseparable. Students will be expected to master scholarly theories and concepts related to the subject matter. In particular, we pay close attention to the ways in which concepts like nature, environment, economy, society, humanity, culture, capital, and the state intersect and shape one another in order to better understand how social and natural systems are constructed, reinforced, and challenged. Questions we will pursue include: what do we mean by the term “sustainability”? *What* do we want to sustain, for whom, how, and why? *What* would we *not* want to sustain? How can human and nonhuman forces work together and why are they so often in conflict? What is the relationship between social hierarchies within human society and myriad impacts on ecosystems? How do we—as individuals and groups—contribute to ecological harm and how might we be a part of solutions to socioenvironmental crises? How shall we rethink, rebuild and recast our relationships with the more than human world, the biosphere, and our shared ecosystems? Furthermore, students will be exposed to key concepts, theories, and perspectives from the environmental social sciences, environmental humanities, climate science, chemistry, physics, history, public health, epidemiology, economics, sociology, ethnic studies, gender and feminist studies, urban studies, history, philosophy, anthropology, ethics, and law.

Studying the relationship between human society and the nonhuman world is fundamentally an ethical issue and a matter of shared responsibility because it reveals the ways that our everyday activities and the public policies our elected officials enact have
real consequences for the health of humans, nonhuman species, and the ecosystems upon which we depend. We will consider and debate evidence and perspectives from scholarly studies on this matter with an eye toward inculcating the importance of students acting as historical agents of change in the quest for improvements in knowledge, scholarship, and action toward more sustainable and just relationships within and across species and ecosystems. To that end, this course will place particular emphasis on connecting knowledge and practice by requiring students to 1) complete writing assignments and in-class exercises that demonstrate an understanding of the links between the articulation and application of theories and major intellectual ideas in the fields of environmental studies; and 2) complete a major class project that allows you the freedom to apply your knowledge in the form of a term paper, a strategy paper, a community engagement activity, or artistic project.

Required Text:


The book is available at the University bookstore and on Reserve at the UCSB library. The rest of the readings are on GauchoSpace (GS).

This syllabus, all assignments, a number of articles (required reading), and other important course information are all available on the course GauchoSpace site. Note: GauchoSpace will be used for posting course information and messages, discussion fora, and readings. All assignments will be turned in as hard copies at the end of the class period on their respective due dates.

Evaluation: Participation and attendance (including discussion section participation and event analysis)……………………………………………………………………………….20%

Pop Quizzes (3)……………………………………………………………………………….10%

Test I …………………………………………………………………………………………….25%

Test II……………………………………………………………………………………………25%

Final Project…………………………………………………………………………………………20%

As the above figures indicate, a significant portion of your grade is based on participation and attendance in class and discussion sections. The class participation grade will be calculated based on your regular involvement in discussion sections. You are responsible for staying abreast of the reading materials each week so that you can fully participate. Please read all materials for the week before the first class meeting (Tuesday). Your Graduate Teaching Assistant will facilitate class participation in the sections, clarify questions you may have about class materials, and evaluate your participation. Every
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A student is required to attend 1 event outside of class that relates to the course topic in some way (event analysis). This can be a film, a conference or symposium, a visiting speaker on campus or in the community, a student organization meeting or any gathering that is relevant to the course. You will need to produce a 1 page, single spaced summary and analysis of the event, linking what you observed and heard (and perhaps what you did) to the course topic. This paper will count for 2 of the overall 20 participation points. Note: attendance in sections is mandatory and you must complete all course requirements in order to earn a passing grade for the course.

Quizzes will be administered from time to time during class lectures. As always, pop quizzes are intended to provide a motivation for you to stay abreast of the readings and lectures. They are also a means of encouraging your attendance.

Final Project. Below are four options for your Final Project. You must choose one.

Analytical Paper: This assignment will require you to (1) bring to life a topic related to the topic of sustainable communities with your own voice and analysis of primary and/or secondary sources and (2) draw on concepts and theories used in class and the readings. Specifically, you will be expected to produce an original review and analysis of work that others have done on a topic of your choosing. This can include an examination of: A) scholarly writings from the social sciences, humanities, or sciences or B) literary fiction, art, music, or films relevant to your topic, or C) a combination of A and B. Your grade will be based on analytical depth, supporting evidence, creativity, and indication of time and effort devoted to the project. Length of analytical paper: 12-15 double-spaced pages (not including bibliography). Further details concerning this assignment will be made available by week 2.

Strategy Paper: This assignment gives you the opportunity to have a direct impact on an organization working on environmental justice, sustainability, or related challenge. Your charge is to write a strategy document that offers guidance, advice, and direction to an organization (non-governmental, business, or government agency) that will advance their goals, offering new ideas, tactics, strategy, and direction that you believe will amplify their impact and improve outcomes. This paper is totally unsolicited advice but you are expected to send it to a staff member, manager, or director at the end of the quarter. You are free to choose whatever organization you like and you must base your writing on careful and detailed research on the organization, their past and current work, and on the specific issue you are focused on. For example, you could write a strategy document advising the Environmental Defense Center of Santa Barbara, CA USE, the California EPA, or Lyft on how to address sustainability goals in their operations. Length of strategy paper: 12-15 double-spaced pages (not including bibliography).
Community Engagement Project: The goals of the CEP are (1) to ensure that your education is multifaceted and that your overall understanding of theoretical concepts related to the course material deepens and expands, and (2) to offer you the opportunity to practice community building and leadership that go beyond the classroom. You will be required to spend time volunteering for a relevant organization on campus or in the Santa Barbara County area working on a range of tasks assigned by that organization in consultation with the instructor. Another option would be to launch your own group or focused on sustainable communities, environmental justice, etc. You could create a petition drive, a letter writing campaign, a social media or marketing campaign etc. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences in written form. Questions you might reflect on could include: what are the opportunities and limitations that organizations experience when confronting environmental sustainability crises?; how can universities and other organizations better address problems of sustainability?; to what extent is your understanding of the course shaped by your experience working with this organization?; how has this experience helped you critique and question academic concepts and theories concerning environmental studies and sustainability?; how has the reading and in-class experience assisted you in offering productive critiques of the organization you have worked with? Length of CEP paper: 12-15 double-spaced pages.

Artistic Project: The goal of the Artistic Project is to have you engage ideas and materials from the class in an original, innovative fashion that allows you to creatively express your interpretations of and reactions to the subject matter. This can involve a range of approaches, including but not limited to: composing songs, poetry or spoken word, a film, dramatic theatrical sketches, a short novel or short story, a board game, painting, photography, a blog or website, a children’s book, etc. The idea is to move beyond the traditional boundaries and requirements of a typical written class assignment while encouraging you to express your views on the topic in an informed, constructive, and imaginative way.

Tests I and II: These will be take home essay tests requiring the use of course readings, lectures, discussions, and films to answer questions.

Technology: Unless you have documented special needs that require the use of a computer in the classroom, I do not allow computer usage during class time, other than my own. I know that many students like to take notes on their laptops and electronic notebooks and tablets, etc., but the availability of chat functions, email, and the web have compromised this otherwise noble pursuit. Furthermore, all other electronic products with a screen of any size should be turned off during class at all times (cell phones, PDAs, iPads, and any other hand held device). Usage of such devices during class time will be grounds for your removal. Instead, please bring a paper notebook, ballpoint pen, and the week’s reading materials (yes, bring the book or printout or electronic version—for use during discussions only), and take lots of notes – it is the best way to keep up with, and
absorb all the readings, lectures, discussions, and films. It helps you to remember and to think. Studies have shown that note taking is even better than an energy drink to keep your mind alert! If you read them closely, the words, images, and meanings from the course readings will stay with you forever. If you are ever unclear or confused about any of the instructor’s policies, class materials, subject matter, or assignments, please visit me after class or during office hours for assistance.

**Academic Integrity vs. Misconduct:** It is expected that all UCSB students will support the ideal of academic integrity and that you will be responsible for the integrity of your work. The strictest disciplinary action will be pursued in all instances of academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes (among other things): cheating on assignments or tests; plagiarizing any part of work done by someone else; and submitting the same (or substantially similar) work for two courses without the professor’s consent. For more information, see the Office of Judicial Affairs page on “Academic Integrity”: http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx

**Ground Rules:** The number one ground rule to which we will all adhere is to engage in respectful and considerate discussion and debate in the classroom. By the very nature of the course topic, there will likely be a wide range of opinions among students, many of which may be rooted in your personal and perhaps painful experiences. This is what a good classroom environment is supposed to do: stimulate you to think for yourselves and raise critical questions. However, if you feel the need to do this in a manner that offends and insults your peers or otherwise disrupts the learning process, you should find somewhere else to engage in such behavior. Abusive and harsh language will not be tolerated in this classroom. We are all responsible for keeping discrimination, harassment, and intimidation out of the classroom.

**Regarding Trigger Warnings:** Per the 2014 UCSB A.S. “Resolution to Mandate Warnings For Triggering Content in Academic Settings,” students are hereby informed that some course materials may include references to, descriptions of, and/or presentations of content that could conceivably trigger post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms for persons who have experienced severe trauma. As the instructor of record, I will do my best to warn students ahead of time if there are videos that will be shown in class that might fall within the parameters of this Resolution. Students can opt out of viewing such material with no penalty.

**Resources**

- The Writing Lab at the Campus Learning Assistance Services helps students with many aspects of writing, including getting started, making revisions, organizing ideas for papers, proofreading, editing, and general writing skills. To schedule an appointment, come to Student Resource Building (SRB) 3231 or visit my.sa.ucsb.edu/clas
• The Mental Health Peer Program (MHPP) is a UCSB campus resource offering guidance with regard to stress management, anxiety, depression and other related challenges. They offer a range of resources, including psychological counseling services and the Test Anxiety Program (for students experiencing mild to moderate anxiety before and/or during an exam). MHPP is located in Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Building 599. Phone consultations are available 24 hours: (805) 893-4411.

• Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Disabled Students Program to get documentation of needs and to generate suggestions for reasonable accommodation (room 2120 Student Resources Building, phone: 805.893.2668; email: DSP.Help@sa.ucsb.edu). Requests for accommodation via Disabled Students Program will be granted.

• For those of you who are dealing with the headaches of long commutes associated with the Highway 101 closure: students who need reimbursement and other assistance should contact Dean of Student Life Katya Armistead (katya.armistead@sa.ucsb.edu).

Below is a list of additional student services available on campus. I encourage you to make use of them:

• Campus Advocacy Resource and Education (CARE): http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/care/home

• Counseling & Psychological Services http://caps.sa.ucsb.edu

• Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) http://eop.sa.ucsb.edu

• Health and Wellness http://wellness.sa.ucsb.edu

• MultiCultural Center http://mcc.sa.ucsb.edu/

• Non-Traditional Student Resource Center http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/nontrad/

• Office of International Students and Scholars http://oiss.sa.ucsb.edu/

• Office of the Ombuds https://ombuds.ucsb.edu/

• Office of Student Life (OSL) http://osl.sa.ucsb.edu/

• Opening New Doors to Accelerating Success (ONDAS) Center http://www.ondas.ucsb.edu/home
Course Schedule
[Note: this schedule and its content are subject to change]

Week 1 (January 16 and 18): Introduction to the Course: What is Sustainability?
Reading (for January 18): Julian Agyeman, Robert Bullard, and Evans. “Joined Up Thinking: Bringing Together Sustainability, Environmental Justice and Equity” (GS)

First Assignment, due in-class on Thursday, January 18th. In 1, single-spaced page tell me what your vision of a sustainable world is and how we can get there. You can choose whatever setting, place, or scales (local, regional, national, global, etc.) you like, but spell out what makes your vision dramatically better than our current circumstances and what you think is needed to achieve that goal. You should also be explicit about how your vision and plan actually address the underlying problems we currently face. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to think openly, analytically, and critically about how we can address some of the major socio-ecological challenges we face as one of countless species that depends on earth’s life support systems. Please bring your assignment on a printed sheet of paper and be prepared to share your thoughts in class on Thursday, January 18th.
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Environmental Studies 116
Winter 2018

**Week 2** (January 23 & 25) What’s the Problem? Perspectives on Extraction and Production (and theories of environment and human society intersections)

Readings: Leonard, Introduction, A Word about Words, Chapter 1 (“Extraction”) and Chapter 2 (“Production”)

**Week 3** (Jan. 30 & Feb.1): Critical Perspectives on Distribution, Consumption, and Disposal
Readings: Leonard, Chapters 3, 4, 5, and Epilogue

*Final Project proposals due February 1st*

**Week 4** (Feb. 6 & 8): Theories of Environment-Society Dynamics
Readings: Kenneth Gould, David Pellow, and Allan Schnaiberg, “Interrogating the Treadmill of Production” (GS)

Richard York and Eugene Rosa, “Key Challenges to Ecological Modernization Theory” (GS)

Alan Rudy and Damian White, “Hybridity” (GS)

Jane Bennett, “Political Ecologies” (GS)

Robert Brulle “Risk Society” (GS)

Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, and Colin Waters, “Anthropocene” (GS)

Greta Gaard, “Ecofeminism” (GS)

*Test 1 assigned February 8th, due in class on February 15th*

**Week 5** (Feb. 13 & 15): Climate Change, Climate Justice, and System Change
Readings:

Bill McKibben, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math”

John Foran “A Few Thoughts on Studying the Most Radical Social Movement of the Twenty-first Century” (GS)
Geraldine Terry, “No Climate Justice without Gender Justice” (GS)

Julie Sze, “Environmental Justice Anthropocene Narratives: Sweet Art, Recognition, and Representation’’ (GS)

Dario Kenner, “Inequality of Overconsumption: The Ecological Footprint of the Richest” (GS)


**Test 1 due in class February 15th**

**Week 6 (Feb. 20 & 22): Once Again, What is Sustainability and Why is it so Elusive?**
Readings: Julian Agyeman, “The Sustainability Discourse and Sustainable Communities” (GS)

Julian Agyeman, “Sustainability” (GS)

Julian Agyeman, “Just Sustainability in Theory” (GS)

Sym Van der Ryn and Stuart Cowan, “An Introduction to Ecological Design” and “Nature’s Geometry” (GS)


*Note: if you have not turned in an event analysis yet, this would be a good time to work on it.*

**Week 7 (February 27 & March 1): What Might Sustainable Communities Look Like and How Can We Build and Support Them?**
Readings: Julian Agyeman, “Alternatives for Community and Environment: Where Justice and Sustainability Meet” (GS)

Sym Van der Ryn and Stuart Cowan, “Design with Nature” (GS)

Timothy Clark, “Sustainability for Whom? An Examination of the Equity Pillar of Sustainability at the Local Policymaking Level” (GS)

David Tilman and Michael Clark, “Global diets link environmental sustainability and
human health” (GS)

Isabelle Anguelovski, “Tactical developments for achieving just and sustainable neighborhoods (Boston, Havana, and Barcelona)” (GS)

Jimmy Tobias, “What if People Owned the Banks instead of Wall Street?” (GS)

**Week 8** (March 6 & 8): Beyond Sustainability: Justice, Equity, Resilience, Degrowth, Wild Democracy, and Regenerative Development

Readings:
- Amy Lubitow and Thaddeus Miller, “Contesting Sustainability: Bikes, Race, and Politics in Portlandia” (GS)
- Bryony Schwan, “Biomimicry” (GS)
- Rockstrom et al. “A Roadmap for Rapid Decarbonization” (GS)
- Jack Skelley, “Tear Down that Freeway” (GS)
- Samuel Alexander and Peter Burdon, “Wild Democracy” (GS)
- Christina Hoxie et al, “Stimulating Regenerative Development through Community Dialogue” (GS)

*Test II assigned on March 6*

**Week 9** (March 13) Reflections

This week we will have short presentations from students on their Final Projects

*Test II due, March 13 in class*

*All event analyses are due by March 13*

*Final Projects due on March 20th by 4pm on GauchoSpace if project is in digital/electronic form, or in the Environmental Studies Main Office (4312 Bren Hall) if project is not in digital form. This is the only exception to the hard copy rule.*