

**SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
POLITICAL SCIENCE 354
POLITICS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL
CHANGE
FALL, 2007
T.TH. 8:10-9:50; Room HSS 285; 4 Units**

Last Day to Drop a Class: September 24, 2007

**Last Day to Withdraw from a Class without Dean's
Approval: November 16, 2007**

**General Education Roles: Segment III: Category B:
Our Violent Planet Cluster; Category B: Preservation
of a Livable Environment Cluster; Environmental
Studies Core Requirement for "Human Values and
Environmental Ethics" Section; and Environmental
Studies B.A. in "Environmental Sustainability and
Social Justice" Concentration Core Requirement**

[Please note that the content of this syllabus is subject to change based on unforeseen circumstances at the time of its creation. All changes and their justifications will be discussed in class.]

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Office Hours:	T.Th. 7:30-8:10 a.m. (before class); usually 1600 -1700 M –TH; and by appointment at Dean's Office (or telephone 415.338.1846); or during Instructor's lunch in the BSS Courtyard between 12:15 and 1 p.m. each day.

Course Objectives and the Means to Achieve Them:

1. Like all courses in political theory, Political Science 354, aims to improve class members' ability to read and write—critically or philosophically—by discussing the meaning of challenging theoretical texts and by detailed assessment of written rationally persuasive essays.
2. Political Science 354 aspires to convey the nature of the many environmental problems facing humanity today, and their underlying political nature and causes, especially having to do with political values. To achieve this aim both scientific inquiry into the nature of environmental problems and normative political theory about human political values will be required. Therefore, this course uniquely requires both scientific and value discourse to be read and written.
3. This course will examine the fundamental political ideas behind the environmental movement for social change and the remedial action it recommends to save our planet and all the living creatures that dwell upon it.
4. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Political Science 354 will address the following profound question: **Can the environment be the basis for social change within industrial societies—that have never undergone critical transformation—and what shape should this social change take or what ecologically sustainable and just future should we aim for?**

Inspiration for the course this semester:

Barely out of the starting gates, on the heels of the bloody and genocidal century that preceded it, the 21st century already is a time of war, violence, environmental disasters, and terrorism against human populations, animals, and the Earth as a whole. This omnicidal assault is waged by powerful and greedy forces, above all, by transnational corporations, national and international banks, and G8 alliances. . . These menacing forces are part of a coherent *system* rooted in the global capitalism market currently in the final stages of the privatization and commodification of the natural and social worlds.

The net result of millennia of [W]estern culture, and roughly two hundred thousand years of the reign of *Homo sapiens* as a whole, is hideously visible in the current ecological crisis involving dynamics such as air and water pollution, acid rain, genetic crop pollution, chemical poisoning, species extinction, rainforest destruction, coral reef deterioration, disappearance of wetlands, desertification, and global warming. This planetary crisis is caused by forces that include human

overpopulation, hyperdevelopment, mass production, overconsumption, agribusiness, militarism, and a cancerous greed for power and profit that consumers, entraps, or kills everything in its path.

With the exception of a few sparkles of democracy, egalitarianism, and enlightenment, [W]estern cultural development is a dark stretch of hierarchy, domination, violence and destruction, all predicated on the pernicious ideologies and institutions of statism, classism, sexism, racism, speciesism, and anthropocentrism. . .

As global temperatures climb, icecaps and glaciers melt, sea-levels rise, and forests fall, the short-lived human empire has begun to devour itself and implode like a collapsing white dwarf star. The Earth itself—the bulk of which has been domesticated, colonized, commodified, bred and cross-bred, genetically engineered and cloned—is refuting the myths and fallacies of Progress, Development, Science, Technology, the Free Market, and Neo-Liberalism while demonstrating the inherent *contradiction* between capitalism and ecology.

Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella, II
*Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of
 The Earth*
 Introduction, 8-9 [emphasis in original]

Required Texts:

Barry, John. *Environment and Social Theory*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2007, pb.

Edwards, Andres R. *The Sustainability Revolution: Portrait of a Paradigm Shift*. Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005, pb.

Kassiola, Joel Jay, ed. *Explorations in Environmental Political Theory: Thinking About What We Value*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003, pb.

Warren, Karen J. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective On What It Is And Why It Matters*. Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. pb.

Course Themes and Readings:

1. The Relation of the Environment and Society in Theory and Western

Intellectual History

Reading: Barry: Introduction: The Environment and Social Theory: 1-6.

- Barry: Chapter 1: “‘Nature,’ ‘Environment,’ and Social Theory:” 7-30.**
- Chapter 2: “The Role of the Environment Historically within Socially Theory:” 31-50.**
- Chapter 3: “The Uses of ‘Nature’ and the Nonhuman World in Social Theory: Pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment Accounts:” 51-82.**
- Chapter 4: Social Theory Checklist: p. 122; Limits-to-Growth Argument and Opponents: 135-143.**
- Chapter 5: The Environment Justice Movement: 160-165; The Anti-Globalization/Global Justice Movement: 176-178.**
- Chapter 7: “Gender, The Nonhuman World and Social Thought:” 183-204.**
- Chapter 8: “The Environment and Economic Thought:” 205-241.**
- Chapter 11: “Greening Social Theory:” 294-315.**

2. How to Write Rationally Persuasive Papers

Reading: Joel J. Kassiola: “Rationally Persuasive Writing is Like House Painting: It’s All in the Preliminaries [available on the Instructor’s website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/kassiola>]

3. The Nature of Environmental Political Theory and Illustrations

Reading: Kassiola: Kassiola: Introduction and Overview: 3-13.

Kassiola: “The ‘Tragedy’ of Modernity: How Environmental Limits and the Environmental Crisis Produce the Need for Postmodern Values and Institutions:” 14-36.

Milbrath: “Envisioning a Sustainable Society:” 37-51.

McLaughlin: “Industrialism and Deep Ecology:” 104-127.

Goodin, “A Green Theory of Value:” 128-148.

Zimmerman, “On Reconciling Progressivism and Environmentalism: 149-177.

Kassiola, “Questions to Ponder in Understanding the Modern Predicament:” 178-188.

4. Patriarchy and the Environmental Crisis: Is Ecofeminism the Solution?

Reading: Warren: all.

5. The Sustainable Revolution in Values: The Green Vision of the Future and

Documents

Reading: Edwards: all.

Videos [time permitting]:

“Advertising and the End of the World;”

“Radical Environmentalism;”

“Time Frenzy;”

“The Future of Food.”

Additional Information

Components of Course Grade: the components of the final grade for this course will be: performance on written essays [approximately 50%]; the final examination which will be open-book [approximately 20%]; class attendance [approximately 10%]; and contribution to class discussion [approximately 20%]. There will be no in-class examinations. Instead, class members will be asked to write rationally persuasive essays defending their chosen value position on issues of their definition drawn from the readings and class discussion.