

Sociology & Environmental sociology: Theorizing society, nature and their interactions

Course code: C2B

Course Instructor: Siddhartha Krishnan¹

Course Description: The course introduces students to the most holistic, self-critical and reflexive of social scientific disciplines- sociology. Itself a product of modernity, sociology's disciplinary debut lay in the need to understand profound intellectual and social changes that accompanied the industrial revolution and enlightenment. Classical sociological foundations were laid by thinkers who sought to assess the possibilities for order amidst disorder, critique capitalism as that form of economic organization of society that profited from such disorder, and impart cultural corrections to tendencies that accorded causal primacy to the economic realm. Students will then be exposed to contemporary sociological thought that shifted focus from macro to micro sociological realms i.e. human interactions and its symbolism; neo-Marxist thought that critiqued conservative systems and evolutionary thinking, and critiqued Marxism itself along with contemporary society and culture; and feminist sociology that provided gendered critique of the discipline of sociology itself, besides exposing structural and inequitable oppressions. Students will then be introduced to environmental sociology, its sub-disciplinary trajectories in terms of its engagement with environmentalism in the US and India; contemporary theoretical approaches, controversies and critiques. The course ends with a sociological exposition to students of concepts encountered frequently in the field of environmental research and practice.

Class Duration: 1 hour

Class Days: Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday

Evaluation Scheme

1. Attendance: 10 Marks.
2. Assignment-1: A written (2500-3000 words) assignment, informed by classical or contemporary sociological theory (except gender & feminist sociology). Topic to be decided in consultation with instructors: 25 marks.
3. Assignment-2: An oral assignment that is power point aided on any aspect of gender and feminist sociology. 15 minutes for presentation. Topic to be decided in consultation with instructor. 15 Marks. Two classes, after the gender and feminist sociology component is completed, will be allotted for presentations. Each
4. Written Examination: This will cover the whole syllabus: 50 marks. 5 questions to be answered out of a choice of 8

¹ Sunayana Ganguly shall teach 3.3 and part of 5.2.

Part I: Theorizing Society

1. *Introducing sociology*

- 1.1. Understanding our world, our place in it, and ourselves
- 1.2. Is sociology a science?
- 1.3. The sociological imagination: Historical sensibility, anthropological insight and critical sensitivity

Readings: *Sociology*. James Fulcher and John Scott. 2007. Oxford. Oxford University Press. (Chapter 1 for 1.1 and 1.2)

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 1. 11th August, 2015. 10:10-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

2. *Classical sociology*

2.1. *The enlightenment and sociology*

- Sociology's origins in a conservative reaction against intellectual and economic change

2.2. *Sociology as social physics*

- Auguste Comte's 'positivist' critique of the enlightenment and French revolution

(Lecture number/ Class date: Lecture 2. 12th August, 2015. 2:00-2:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

2.3. *Emile Durkheim's engagement with social order and disorder*

- Functions of religion

(Lecture number/ Class date: Lecture 3. 13th August, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Suicide and division of labour as non-material 'social facts'

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 4. 18th August, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

2.4. *Inverting the German ideal dialectic*

- Karl Marx's dialectical materialism

(Lecture number /Class date: Lecture 5. 19th August, 2015. 2:00-2:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Critique of capitalist society

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 6. 20th August, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

2.5. *Max Weber upends Marxist economic determinism*

- Historical sociology of ideas

Class date/Lecture number: Lecture 7. 25th August, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.

- The rationalization process

(Lecture number/ Class date: Lecture 8. 26th August, 2015. 2:00-2:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Theory of human action and how and why to understand it

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 9. 27th August, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

Readings: Sociological Theory. George Ritzer. New York. McGraw-Hill. (8th edition). Chapter 1; pp. 8-11 for 2.1; pp. 15-19 for 2.2; pp.76-111 for 2.3; pp. 43-75 for 2.4; pp. 112-157 for 2.5.

3. Contemporary sociology

3.1. Symbolic Interactionism: Human interaction and its symbolic meaning

- George Herbert Mead's theory of mind, self and society

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 10. 1st September, 2015. 10:00-10:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Erving Goffman's theories of the self: presentation and dramaturgy

Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 11. 2nd September, 2015. 2:00-2:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

3.2. Conflict Theory

- Critique of structural functionalism

- Ralph Dahrendorf's theory of authority

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 12. 3rd September, 2015. 12:00-12:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Randal Collin's conflict sociology

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 13. 8th September, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

3.3. Critical Theory

- The Frankfurt School's critiques of Marxism, positivism, modern society and culture

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 14. 9th September, 2015. 2:00-2:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Subjectivity and dialectics

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 15. 10th September, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

3.4. Feminist Theory

- Feminism, sociology and gender

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 16. 15th September, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Feminist theories on gender difference, inequality and oppression; structural oppression; postmodernist feminism

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 17. 16th September, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium. Last date to submit written assignment.)

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 18. 22nd September, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 19. 23rd September, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

Reading: Sociological Theory. George Ritzer. New York. McGraw-Hill. (8th edition). Chapter 10, pp. 355-369, 373-379 for 3.1; chapter 7, pp. 265-274 for 3.2; pp. 282-293 for 3.3; pp. 454-498.

Oral assignment presentation dates: Classes on dates 29th & 30th September (10:00-10:50 am & 02:00-02:50 pm respectively) and classes on dates 1st & 6th October (12:00-12:50 & 10:00-10:50 am respectively). Ground floor auditorium.

Part II: Environmental Sociology: An introduction

4. Sub-disciplinary history: Sociological responses to environmentalism

4.1. American and European trajectories

- Biological and geographical determinism
- The human exemptionalism paradigm

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 20. 7th October, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Taking environmental stock of classical sociology

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 21. 8th October, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and American environmentalism

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 22. 13th October, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

4.2. The Indian trajectory

- Natural resource conflicts and the Chipko movement
- The Citizens reports

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 23. 14th October, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

- The normative and prescriptive social scientific responses

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 24. 15th October, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

Reading: Environmental Sociology. John Hannigan. 2006. Routledge. Chapter 1 &2 for 4.1; Ramachandra Guha. 1997. Social-Ecological Research in India: A 'Status Report'. Economic and Political Weekly. For 4.2; Amita Baviskar. 1997. Ecology and Development in India: A Field and its Future. Sociological Bulletin. Vol. 46. for 4.2.

5. Contemporary environmental sociological theories, approach controversies and critiques

5.1. Explanations of environmental degradation and assessments for improvement

- Foundational and political economic explanation

(**Lecture number/Class date:** Lecture 25. 20th October, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Normative theories for improvement: Risk society; ecological modernization

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 26. 21st October, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

(**Lecture number/Class date:** Lecture 27. 27th October, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

5.2. Approach controversies

- Social Constructionism vs. Realism; Environment as a social construction

(**Lecture number/Class date:** Lecture 28. 28th October, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

(**Lecture number/Class date:** Lecture 29. 29th October, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

- Political Ecology and Cultural Politics

(**Lecture number/Class date:** Lecture 30. 3rd November, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

Reading: Environmental Sociology. John Hannigan. 2006. Routledge. Chapter 2, pp. 16-33 for 5.1 & 5.2; An Invitation to Environmental Sociology. Michael Mayerfeld Bell. 2012. Sage.pp.211-225 for 5.2 ; Amita Baviskar. 2003. For a Cultural Politics of Natural Resources. Economic and Political Weekly (For 5.2)

5.3. The state of environmental sociological research: A review

Reading: David N. Pellow, and Hollie Nyseth Brehm (2013). An Environmental Sociology for the Twenty-First Century. Annual Review of Sociology. 39: 229–50

(**Lecture number/Class date:** Lecture 31. 5th November, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 32. 10th November, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

6. Commonly encountered concepts: A sociological introduction

6.1. Community

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 33. 11th November, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

6.2. Indigeneity

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 34. 17th November, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

6.3. Institutions

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 35. 18th November, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

6.4. Policy

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 36. 19th November, 2015. 12:00-12:50. Ground floor auditorium.)

6.5. Perception, attitudes and values

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 37. 24th November, 2015. 10:00-10:50 am. Ground floor auditorium.)

6.6. Power & discourse

(Lecture number/Class date: Lecture 38. 25th November, 2015. 02:00-02:50 pm. Ground floor auditorium.)

Reading: Amita Baviskar. 1997. Ecology and Development in India: A Field and its Future'. Sociological Bulletin. Vol. 46 (For 6.1, 6.2); Arun Agrawal. 1999. Community-in-Conservation: Tracing the Outlines of an Enchanting Concept. In A New Moral Economy for India's Forests., Jeffery, Roger and Sundar, Nandini (eds). New Delhi. Sage (For 6.1); Michael R Dove. 2006, Indigenous People and Environmental Politics, Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 35, , pp. 191-208 (For 6.2); John L Campbell.2002. 'Ideas, Politics and Public Policy'. Annual review of Sociology. Vol. 28. (For 6.4); Values: Reviving a Dormant Concept. Steven Hitlin and Jane Allyn Piliavin. 2004. Annual review of Sociology (for 6.5) ; John Hannigan. 2006. Routledge. pp. 53-57 for 6.6.

Spare/reserve class dates: 26th November, 2015/ 1st, 2nd & 3rd December, 2015