Course Handbook
Sociology Honours (SY0034) and MSc in Science and Technology
Studies (SY0094)
Second semester, 2008-2009

Sociology of the Environment and Risk
Course teacher: Donald MacKenzie

Thursdays, 11.10 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
Weekly, except week 6
Seminar Room 5, Chrystal Macmillan Building

Postgraduate seminar, 11.10 a.m. – 12.00 noon Monday 19 January, 2 and 23
February, 9 and 16 March, meeting room 6, 6th floor, Chrystal Macmillan Building
The course in brief

The main focus of the course is sociological perspectives on the relationship between human societies and their natural environments, which we explore via:

• discussion of ‘pessimistic and ‘optimistic’ views of that relationship
• sociological analyses of the rise of environmentalist and animal rights movements
• discussion of the relationship between gender and the environment
• analyses of the role played by science in environmental debates
• sociological analysis of ‘carbon markets’

There will also be sessions on the processes underpinning perceptions of risk, and on the light that sociological analysis can throw on the extent of the proneness of technological systems to catastrophic accidents. Other relevant topics – such as Marxist perspectives on the environment and applying sociological analysis to ‘greening’ technology – will not be discussed in the lectures, but nevertheless can be explored in essays.

At each session we will discuss environment and risk matters that have appeared in the media during the previous week. In the second half of the course (weeks 7-11), half of each session will be devoted to student presentations.

The course involves a significant ‘research component’, so is assessed entirely by essays: there is no examination. Undergraduate and visiting-student assessment is via a 1,500 word mid-term essay (25% of the overall mark) and a 4,000 word final essay (75% of mark). The course is also taken by postgraduate students, who attend the weekly sessions but also have their own separate seminar, and who are assessed following the requirements of their degree.

Don’t be alarmed by the size of this reading list! The essential readings for each week are modest in number and length (and are available electronically via WebCT). The longer lists of further readings are for those doing essays on the topic, and their length arises because I wanted to provide an introduction to the literature on each topic, leaving you free to choose what to focus on, rather than giving you prescriptive essays lists.
Objectives

The learning outcomes being sought are that at the end of the course you will be familiar with and be able to discuss:

1. the factors affecting the development of ‘green’ movements, such as the movement against nuclear power, Green Parties and the animal rights movement;
2. the factors that shape public perception of risks;
3. how a sociological analysis can throw light on the extent of the proneness of technological systems to catastrophic accidents;
4. the inter-relations of population growth, development and the environment;
5. the debate with feminist theory about the relationship between gender and the environment;
6. how sociological analyses of science and of its public understanding can help us understand the role it plays in environmental matters;
7. the nature of carbon markets and the light that can be thrown on them by sociological analysis.

Student presentations

Although it is not assessed and does not form part of your mark, an essential element of the learning experience in the course is presentations to the class. Home undergraduates and visiting students make a 20-minute group presentation on a topic of their choice. Postgraduates make an individual 20-minute presentation to the postgraduate seminar.

Remember to follow the rules of good presentation: have a clear structure; try to speak from notes rather than read a text; look at your audience; vary pace and intonation; have a clear aim and structure to your presentation; if presenting to a large group like the full class, use the data projector or an overhead projector; don’t simply summarize the reading but try to say something interesting using it; don’t be afraid to be controversial. In most full-class sessions, more than one student will be presenting, and it is important that you prepare your presentations as a group so that they link together well and that you keep to time.

Examples of possible topics are:

(a) Choose a particular environmental movement/animal rights movement/Green Party and report on the extent to which the theories in the lectures are supported (or not) by those movements.
(b) Discuss perceptions of risk in a particular area (e.g. terrorism, smoking, mobile phones, alcohol, unprotected sex, GM food) and discuss how the literature on risk perception can be applied to the understanding of it.
(c) Are we really living in a ‘risk society’, as Beck asserts?
(d) Choose a particular large-scale accident or accidents, and report on the extent to which the theories in the lectures are supported (or not) by those movements.
(e) Is population growth the enemy of the environment? If so, how dangerous a threat is it?
(f) Discuss the argument by some feminist scholars that men and women have different relationships to the environment.
(g) Discuss the role of scientific expertise (particularly contested knowledge) in a dispute about risk or the environment, and report on the extent to which the theories in the lectures are supported (or not) by what you find.

(h) Choose a particular ‘carbon market’ (such as the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme or the Clean Development Mechanism) and discuss its good and bad features.

‘In the news’ and discussion questions

After the first week, we will begin each session with a brief discussion of ‘environment and risk’ issues that have appeared in the press over the previous week. Please bring cuttings and be ready to say briefly what they contain.

I’ve also proposed a question or questions that we will discuss each week after the lecture. Please think about the question in advance, drawing upon the essential reading, and come prepared to discuss it.

Office hours

Please tell me as soon as possible if you are having any problems with the course, if you would find it helpful to have an individual chat about your presentation or essay topics, or if there are any other aspects of the course you would like to discuss with me.

My office hours are Tuesdays, 2.00–4.00 p.m. My office is room 6.26, Chrystal Macmillan Building.

If those times don’t suit, I am happy to make appointments to see you at other times too. Telephone me on my office phone (0131 650 3980 or 650 6958). My use of e-mail is currently restricted because of a neck problem.
Reading List

‘Essential’ readings are designed to tie in closely with lectures, so please read them before each session of the class. **All essential readings are available electronically, mostly via WebCT.** You’ll also find photocopies of some readings in the Sociology offprint filing cabinets in the reserve section (ground floor) of the Main Library, George Square: check the electronic catalogue.

‘Further’ readings are for those doing an essay on a particular topic. **Don’t feel you need to read all of these** for your essay, but equally **don’t restrict yourselves to them**: for an honours/postgraduate-level course such as this, you can do your own literature searches. The further readings below are intended to start you in this process by acting as a guide to the kind of literature available: they’re not a definitive essay reading list.

I’ve asked for copies of the ‘further reading’ books that I expect to be in heavy demand to be transferred to the Reserve section of the Main Library: these books are indicated with an asterisk. Given the length of this reading list, it would not be reasonable to do this with all the further readings, so you will find that some books are out on loan. In those cases, staff at the Library’s service desk can recall them for you. However, this process normally takes at least a week, so plan your essay work in advance, recalling those books you will need which are out.

Recent journal articles will normally be available electronically via the electronic journal holdings of Edinburgh University Library ([http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/)): you’ll need to be logged in via EASE/MyEd to get access to them. Unfortunately, older volumes of journals (e.g. prior to 2000) are often not available electronically.

*Please tell me if you are experiencing problems getting hold of any of the readings.*

**Useful overall readings: e.g. alternative overall ‘takes’ on the environment and society**


There are also a number of collections of readings that are also useful. Michael Redclift and Graham White (eds), New Developments in Environmental Sociology* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2005) is particularly helpful: it contains reprints of 30 influential articles in the field. Also worth consulting are Riley Dunlap et al. (eds), Sociological Theory and the Environment: Classical Foundations, Contemporary Insights* (Boulder, Colorado: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Michael Redclift and Graham Woodgate (eds), The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 1997); Michael Redclift and Ted Benton, eds., Social Theory and the Global Environment* (London: Routledge, 1994).
Week 1: Introduction - The environment and society

After the lecture, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. Is modern industrial society unequivocally bad for the natural environment?
2. Why are the following institutions held (by some analysts) to be bad for the environment:
   (a) capitalism
   (b) patriarchy
   (c) Christianity?
3. What is 'the tragedy of the commons'?
4. What is 'ecological modernisation' theory?

Discussion question: in your view, are environmental problems
(a) the most serious issue facing humanity (if so, why?);
(b) one important issue amongst others;
or (c) blown up out of all proportion (by nostalgic urban yuppies, self-interested scientists .... )?

Essential reading


Further reading


Weeks 2 and 3: The rise of environmental concern, green social movements, Green Parties, and animal rights

After the lectures, you should be able to answer the following questions:

(1) Why is the existence of real ecological problems not sufficient to explain the rise of ecological concerns?
(2) What is Inglehart’s explanation of the growing political importance of environmental issues?
(3) What are the main factors governing the emergence of movements against nuclear power?
(4) How would you explain the rise and fall of the British Green Party?
(5) What are the main features of contemporary direct-action environmentalism, such as anti-roads protest?
(6) What is Lansbury’s explanation of the prominence of women in the nineteenth century movement against vivisection?
(7) According to studies of the modern American animal rights movement, who is particularly likely to join such a movement? What do we know about their British counterparts?

Week 2 discussion questions: have you been involved in any environmentalist movements? If so, why? If not, why not? What factors do you think have shaped your view of environmental issues?

Week 3 discussion question: what factors do you think have shaped your view of animals and their ‘rights’?

Essential reading

Chris Rootes, Environmental Protest in Western Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chapters 1, 2 and 10. (You might also want to dip into the other chapters of this e-book, which deal with a range of European countries.)


Further reading


A major challenge to ‘postmaterialist’ explanations of environmentalism is the rise of environmentalist movements in developing countries, for which see Robin Broad, ‘The Poor and the Environment: Friends or Foes?’ World Development, 22 (1994), 811-22. On The Environmentalism of the Poor more generally, see the book with that title by Joan Martinez-Alier (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2003).

There is of course a large sociological literature on social movements, and it is helpful to place discussions of green movements in this context. Green movements would be regarded by many as prime examples of ‘new social movements’, differing from ‘labour movement’ organisations in their goals, their social composition and their tactics (e.g. the use of the media and credit card donations by the ‘new’ movements). Amongst important authors here are Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci. See, e.g., Touraine, The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Alberto Melucci, Nomads of the Present* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989). The editors’ preface to the latter is amongst the essential readings. Other perspectives can, however, be applied to green movements, such as the predominantly American tradition of ‘resource mobilisation’ analysis. For an overview of the issues, see Steven Yearley, ‘Social Movements and Environmental Change’, in Michael Redclift and Ted Benton, eds, Social Theory and the Global Environment* (London: Routledge, 1994). For a sophisticated network analysis, see Mario Diani, Green Networks: A Structural Analysis of the Italian Environmental Movement (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995). For the broader literature on social movements, see e.g. Vincenzo Ruggiero and Nicola Montagna (eds), Social Movements: A Reader (London Routledge, 2008); Nick Crossley, Making Sense of Social Movements (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002); and David Snow et al. (eds), The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).


There was a major change in attitudes to animals in the Anglo-Saxon world between 1800 and 1900: for an account of this, see James Turner, Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). Turner’s focus is on the emergence of the various Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The other main nineteenth century social movement concerned with animals is the anti-vivisection movement: see Richard D. French, Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975). The results of more recent historical research can be found in Nicolaas A. Rupke, ed., Vivisection in Historical Perspective (London: Routledge, 1990); Elston’s chapter in this book forms a useful counterpoint to Lansbury’s analysis of the involvement of women in antivivisectionism.


Week 4: Perceptions of risk

After the lectures, you should be able to answer the following questions:

(1) What is the case for saying that modern industrial society is uniquely low-risk?
(2) What is the case for saying that modern industrial society gives rise to historically unprecedented risks?
(3) What is the ‘availability heuristic’? List some other factors that appear to govern public perception of risk in modern industrial society.
(4) How is perception of risk related to trust in institutions?
(5) What are ‘grid’ and ‘group’, and how, according to Douglas and Wildavsky, do they relate to perception of risk?

Week 4 discussion questions: to what extent do you feel the processes discussed in the lectures account for your own perception of risks (and, where relevant your own behaviour) in relation to the risks of smoking, drinking, driving, flying, rail travel, sunbathing, abduction of children, vaccination, bird flu, AIDS, nuclear power etc.? Are there significant factors we have not discussed?

Essential reading


Further reading

The sociological literature on risk has now grown to the point where there are in effect textbooks. See, for example, Roy Boyne, Risk (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003), Joost van Loon, Risk and Technological Culture (London: Routledge, 2002), Piet Strydom, Risk, Environment and Society (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002).


Perceptions of risk are of great importance in affecting the acceptability of new technologies. For a useful introduction to that topic, see Rob Flynn and Paul Bellaby (eds), Risk and the Public Acceptance of New Technologies (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007). Another area important to this course where risk perception matters a lot is climate change: see Michael Thompson and Steve Rayner, ‘Risk and Governance Part I: The Discourses of Climate Change’, Government & Opposition 33 (1998), 136-166; their Part II (with Steven Ney) is in the same volume, 330-354.

Note that theorising about ‘risk society’ should not be taken simply as ‘fact’, and we need to consider historical and empirical evidence. For an only partially successful attempt to do this, see Peter Dickens, Reconstructing Nature: Alienation, Emancipation and the Division of Labour (London: Routledge, 1996). Frank Furedi is the leading sociological commentator on the discrepancy between preoccupation with risk and the reality of living in what by any historical standard are remarkably safe societies: see, e.g., Furedi, Culture of Fear (London: Continuum, 2002). See also Cas Sunstein, Worst-Case Scenarios (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and Barry Glassner, The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things (New York: Basic, 2000).
Week 5: Organisations and catastrophic accidents

After the lectures, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What factors seem to increase the chances of organizations suffering catastrophic accidents?
2. According to the ‘high reliability’ theorists, what features do organizations need to have in order that they can safely manage situations of potentially extreme hazard?
3. What does Perrow mean by ‘complexity’ and ‘coupling’?
4. Why, according to Perrow, is it impossible safely to manage systems with high complexity and tight coupling?
5. Why can analysis of accidents after they take place mislead as to their causes?

Week 5 discussion questions: which view strikes you as more plausible, the Berkeley School’s optimism or Perrow’s pessimism? Does Perrow’s analysis provide a compelling argument against nuclear power?

Essential reading


Further reading


The empirical study of major accidents can throw light on their social causes. A useful overall compendium, which has helpful pointers to further reading on particular accidents, is Neil Schlager, Breakdown: Deadly Technological Disasters (Detroit: Visible Ink, 1995); see also the references contained in Susan Herring. From the Titanic to the Challenger: An Annotated Bibliography on Technological Failures of the Twentieth Century (New York: Garland, 1989).

The best documented recent accidents are the two Space Shuttle accidents, of which the canonical study is Diane Vaughan, The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996). The Vaughan-influenced Columbia Accident Investigation Board (see above) is also worth reading. See also United States, Presidential
Week 6: no class

Week 7: Population, development and the environment

After the lecture, you should be able to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the ‘total fertility rate’ and ‘demographic momentum’?
(2) What is likely to happen to world population growth over the next century?
(3) What is meant by ‘sustainable development’?
(4) What is the magnitude of improvement in technology that would be necessary to keep humanity’s environmental impact constant while the Third World develops towards Euro-American prosperity levels?

Week 7 discussion question: is there a plausible path for world development compatible with no overall increase in human environmental impact?

Essential reading


**Further reading**


**Week 8: Gender and the environment**

After the lecture, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean to claim that ‘female is to male as nature is to culture’?
2. Why does Plumwood distinguish between ‘cultural ecofeminism’ and ‘social ecofeminism’? What does it mean to criticise the former as ‘essentialist’?
3. Do rural women in the Third World have a special relationship to the environment?

**Week 8 discussion question**: are women closer to nature than men are?

**Essential reading**

Sherry B. Ortner, ‘Is female to male as nature is to culture?’ in M. A. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds.), *Women, Culture and Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974). Ortner’s article can also be found in the Social Anthropology offprint cabinets in the ground-floor Reserve in the Library; at the time of writing it is also available at homepages.uel.ac.uk/C.Knight/Is%20Female%20to%20Male%20as%20Nature%20to%20Culture.pdf


**Further reading**

For a textbook treatment, see Susan Buckingham-Hatfield, *Gender and Environment* (London: Routledge, 2000). There is a useful brief overview of the issues is the chapter by Mellor in Michael Redclift and Graham Woodgate (eds), *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 1997), and a useful collection of readings is Nalini Visvanathan et al. (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader* (London: Zed, 1997).
Ortner’s (qualified) claim that ‘female is to male as nature is to culture’ has been criticised in many places: see, e.g., C. MacCormack and M. Strathern (eds.), Nature, Culture and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Nevertheless, the parallels drawn between female and nature on the one hand and male and culture on the other continue to resonate in debates about the relationship of women to the environment: see, e.g., Irene Diamond and Gloria Ferman Orenstein, eds., Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism (San Francisco, Calif.: Sierra Club books, 1990) and Mary Mellor, Feminism and Ecology* (Oxford: Polity, 1997). A particularly prominent ecofeminist is Vandana Shiva: see her Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed, 1988), also Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, Ecofeminism* (Halifax, NS and London: Fernwood & Zed Books, 1993). Shiva’s form of ecofeminism has been roundly criticised by a variety of writers such as Maxine Molyneux and Deborah Lynn Steinberg, ‘Mies and Shiva’s Ecofeminism: A New Testament?’, Feminist Review, no. 49 (Spring 1995), 86-107 [Sociology offprint cabinets]; see also Bina Agarwal Cold Heaths and Barren Slopes (London: Zed, 1986). Another leading ecofeminist is Carolyn Merchant: see her Earthcare: Women and the Environment (London: Routledge 1996). Ecofeminist perspectives are also to be found in the readings above on animal rights.


**Weeks 9 and 10: Scientific expertise, public understanding of science and the environment**

After the lectures, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Duhem-Quine thesis? In what sense does it suggest that scientific knowledge is socially negotiated?
2. Why, according to Collins and Pinch, ought the public to know ‘more about science’ rather than ‘more science’?
3. What kind of uncertainties attend scientific knowledge of global climate change?
4. What factors affected Cumbrian sheep farmers’ response to what scientific experts said about radioactive fallout following the Chernobyl disaster?
5. What are the differences between the views of science and scientific expertise put forward by Wynne and by Collins and Evans?

**Week 9 discussion question:** how has ‘science’ been presented to you, e.g. at school, on television programmes, in newspapers - as the source of straightforward facts, or as something more problematic?
**Week 10 discussion questions:** consider areas (eg eating beef, GM foods, smoking, AIDS, fluoridation of water supplies, vaccination, climate change) where what scientific experts say is relevant to your life? Do you always believe them? If so, why? If not, why not?

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**

The best overview of the issues is the chapter by Steve Yearley in Edward Hackett et al. (eds), *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008). See also Yearley’s chapter in Michael Redclift and Graham Woodgate (eds), *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 1997).


The mass media clearly play an important role in shaping public understanding of scientific issues: see, e.g., Stuart Allan, Media, Risk and Science (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002). For a study of media handling of two key environmental issues, see Nils Roll-Hansen, ‘Science, Politics, and the Mass Media: On Biased Communication of Environmental Issues’, Science, Technology, & Human Values, 19 (1994), 324-41. Note, though, the contrast between Roll-Hansen’s basic assumptions about scientific knowledge and those of more sociological authors.


The history of knowledge of ozone layer depletion discussed in Maureen Christie, The Ozone Layer: A Philosophy of Science Perspective (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and in chapter two of Richard E. Benedick, Ozone Diplomacy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). There is an interesting contrast to be drawn between the cases of global warming (in a sense, century-old science, followed only very slowly by political action) and chlorofluorocarbons and ozone (newer science, much more rapid action): see Ian H. Rowlands, The Politics of Global Atmospheric Change (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).


**Week 11: Carbon markets**

After the lecture, you should be able to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the main features of the two leading carbon markets: the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme and the Clean Development Mechanism?
(2) Why is the issue of ‘sameness’ crucial both for those who are constructing carbon markets and those who oppose them?

**Week 11 discussion question:** what, in your view, are the merits and demerits of carbon markets as means of achieving abatement, compared to other means of doing so (voluntary action, carbon taxes, direct government investment, government regulation, government research and development expenditure etc.).

**Essential reading**
David Pearce et al., Blueprint 2: Greening the World Economy (London: Earthscan, 1991), 1-10.

**Further reading**

Essays

Home undergraduates and visiting students are assessed via:

(1) A mid-term essay of between 1400 and 1600 words (excluding bibliography), which makes up 25% of your marks for the course. **Two paper copies** must be submitted to Sue Renton (Sociology Administrator, Room 1.09, Chrystal Macmillan Building) by Monday 23rd February 2009, **no later than 12.00 noon**, and an electronic version must also be submitted via WebCT by that time.

(2) A long essay (term paper) of between 3,500 and 4,500 words (excluding bibliography), which makes up 75% of your marks for the course. **Two paper copies** must be submitted to Sue Renton (Sociology Administrator, Room 1.09, Chrystal Macmillan Building) by Friday 24th April 2009, **no later than 12.00 noon**, and an electronic version must also be submitted via WebCT by that time. See the end of this Handbook for how to do this; there are also instructions on WebCT.

**THESE TWO ESSAYS MUST BE ON DIFFERENT TOPICS.**

Do not include your name anywhere on the essay but include your **exam number at the top right hand corner** on the first page of your essays. On the first page of both essays, give an exact word count for the essay, which your word processing software can provide (don’t include the bibliography in the count, since it does not form part of the word limit).

**Pitfalls to avoid: Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious offense attracting severe penalties: see the Sociology Honours Handbook or other student handbook relevant to you for what it is and how to avoid it. The School of Social and Political Studies uses the ‘Turnitin’ system to check that essays do not contain plagiarised material. Turnitin compares every assignment against a constantly-updated database, which highlights all plagiarised work.

**Pitfalls to avoid: Lateness**

Please note that **both** paper and electronic copies must be submitted before the deadline. We will take the **later** of the submissions as the definitive ‘hand in’ date and time. Should this be after the deadline (**noon** on the relevant day) then Lateness Penalties **will** apply. See the Sociology Honours Handbook or other student handbook relevant to you for the lateness penalties, and on what to do should you have a good reason to miss the deadline.

**How the mid-term and final essay differ**

The mid-term and final essays must be on different topics. I haven’t set separate questions or reading lists for them, but the obvious difference is that, because the mid-term essay is shorter and you have less time to work on it, it is less ambitious. In both essays, you’ll obviously want to read all the essential reading, but for the mid-term
you can draw on the further reading in a more limited way. If discussing, for example, particular environmentalist social movements or particular accidents, it would be appropriate to choose one movement or accident if it is a mid-term essay, and more than one if it is the final essay.

You are perfectly at liberty to give your class presentation on the topic of your mid-term or final essay.

**Essay topics**

You are not restricted to the list below. Although you must consult me if you intend to do so, you may construct your own essay title within any of the areas covered by the course, or within the two additional topics (Marxism; technology). For readings, see the appropriate sections of the reading list, or the Marxism and technology references below.

(1) Discuss the factors that have encouraged and have inhibited the growth of at least one of (a) environmentalist social movements (b) Green Parties and (c) movements against nuclear power. For the mid-term essay you may, if you wish, restrict your answer just to one movement or party, but for the final essay I’d encourage you to consider wider cases.

(2) ‘Debates over vivisection and animal rights are really debates about our (human) relations to each other.’ Discuss.

(3) ‘The causes of the rise of the animal rights movement are different from the causes of the rise of environmentalists movements.’ Discuss.

(4) ‘Perception of risk has many more aspects than simply the objective chances of death from various causes’. Discuss.

(5) Compare and contrast the positions of the Berkeley School and Charles Perrow on the extent of the proneness of technological systems to large-scale accidents. Which view do you prefer and why?

(6) What can the analysis of large-scale accidents reveal about their social causes? For the mid-term essay you may, if you wish, restrict your answer just to one accident, but for the final essay you should consider more than one.

(7) Is ‘female to male as nature is to culture’?

(8) What problems are there in expecting that scientific experts will give the public unchallengeable, authoritative knowledge about the environmental problems we face?

(9) Compare and contrast the positions of Wynne and of Collins and Evans on the public understanding of science and the role of scientific expertise. Which do you prefer and why? (For the final essay, I would expect you to bring independent empirical material – that is, not just that drawn on by Wynne, Collins and Evans – to bear on the question.)

(10) What are the problems in expecting carbon markets to be effective tools of greenhouse-gas abatement? To what extent can those problems be overcome? (For the mid-term essay, it is enough to consider one market. For the final essay, you should consider more than one.)

There are two essay topics that are not covered in the lectures but that could be written by those with a special interest in them and some existing knowledge of either Marxism or Science and Technology Studies. These topics are not suitable if you have no existing background in either.
(11) Does Marxist theory need revised radically to take environmental issues into account?
(12) In what ways can approaches in Science and Technology Studies (STS) help us understand how technology can be made more environmentally friendly?

Readings for essay topics not covered in lectures: Marxism


Much recent writing on the topic is to be found in the journal, Capitalism, Nature, Socialism. A browse through it (it is available electronically via the Library’s e-journals) is essential for those doing an essay on this topic.

Readings for essay topics not covered in lectures: Greening technology

The idea here would be to take an area or areas of technology relevant to environmental matters and apply to it perspectives from the sociology of technology and related fields. Good overall guides to the literature in Science and Technology Studies (STS) include Sheila Jasanoff et al. (eds), The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (London: Sage 1995), and the new edition, Edward Hackett et al. (eds), The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008; on order for Library). For technology studies specifically, see Knut Sorensen and Robin Williams (eds), Shaping Technology, Guiding Policy: Concepts, Spaces and Tools* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2002).

The magnitude of the changes in technological systems and in the way they are used that are required to combat global warming is usefully analysed by the ‘stabilization wedges’ model of Stephen Pacala and Robert Socolow, ‘Stabilization Wedges: Solving the Climate Problem for the next 50 Years with Current Technologies’, Science 305 (12 August 2004), 968-972.

The range of technologies for which one could do an essay of this kind is huge, and in many/most cases you won’t find existing work that applies an STS perspective, so it would be a matter of starting from non-sociological accounts and applying STS. Areas in which this could be done include:

- ‘Natural’ capitalism, or similar advocacy of radical technological change. Take a book such as Paul Haken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins, Natural Capitalism (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), and assess its arguments using an STS perspective.
- Carbon capture and storage, for which ‘starter’ readings would be B. Metz et al., Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report: Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), available at http://www.ipcc.ch/pubs/reports.htm, and I. A. Saeverund, ‘Norway’s Experience of Carbon Dioxide Storage’, Climate Policy 7 (2007), 13-28. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this volume of Climate Policy was not available via the University Library, so you may need to consult it in the National Library of Scotland on George IV Bridge.
Sociology Honours: Electronic Submission of Essays

In line with first and second year courses in the School, Sociology requires electronic submission of all written coursework in Honours (i.e. short essays, Project reports, Long essays). Please read the under-noted information carefully, and familiarise yourself with it well before your assignment is due.

Turnitin

The School uses the 'Turnitin' system to check that essays do not contain plagiarised material. Turnitin compares every assignment against a constantly-updated database, which highlights all plagiarised work. Information on plagiarism can be found in your Honours handbook.

Instructions for submitting your essays

You must submit TWO paper copies of your essay to Sue Renton (Room 109, Chrystal MacMillan Building) by noon on the day of deadline.

Do not include your name anywhere on the essay but include your exam number at the top right hand corner on the first page of your essay.

You must submit an electronic version by the same deadline.

We cannot accept more than one document per student, so the file you submit must include the text of your essay and all footnotes, bibliography etc.

☐ Make sure that you have saved your essay with your exam number as the file name, e.g. 1234567.doc.

☐ Do not include your name anywhere on the essay but include your exam number at the top right hand corner on the first page of your essay.

VERY IMPORTANT!!

Files must be in Word (.doc), rich text (.rtf), text (.txt) or PDF (.pdf) format ONLY. Other types of file (including Word extensions such as .docx) cannot be accepted.

Keep a back up electronic copy of your essay – if you have not followed the proper procedure we will, in every case, require you to provide an electronic version before your work is marked.
Instructions for WebCT submission

Open WebCT through your MyEd portal.

Open the relevant course (under the 'Courses' tab) and click on the relevant Essay Submission icon on the Course Content page. Note that most courses will require electronic submission of more than one assignment or essay, so make sure you open the correct icon.

This will take you straight into the submission page for your assignment. (You can also access this through the Assignments tab situated on the Course Tools bar at the left hand side of the page).

Here you can upload your essay by adding it as an attachment. Just click on 'add attachment' and select the file from your computer. DO NOT ‘cut and paste’ your essay here.

Click on Submit when you are ready.

Troubleshooting

If you are having difficulties submitting your essay in this way:

Check that you are using a WebCT compatible browser (these are listed at http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/webct/settings.phtml#op_systems)

Ensure that your document is in .doc, .rtf, .txt or .pdf format.

No other formats are acceptable.

A note on Late Penalties

Please note that both paper and electronic copies should be submitted before the deadline. We will take the later of the submissions as the definitive ‘hand in’ date. Should this be after the deadline (in most cases at noon on the relevant day) then Late Penalties will apply.

If you have difficulties in electronic submission then you should:
• ensure the paper copy is submitted prior to the deadline, and;
• seek the assistance of the lab manager and/or computing support.

Please see your Honours handbook on late penalties, and on what to do should you have a good reason to miss the deadline.