

Mizan-Tepi University
College of Social Science and Humanities
Department of Sociology

Course Outline

Background Information

Module Name: **Environment and Society**

Module Code: **SocM3171**

Course Name: **Environmental Sociology**

Course Code: **SOCI3171**

Module ECTS: **5 ECTS**

Total Module Study Hour: **135 Hours**

I. Module/Course Description

This module introduces students to the general discipline of environmental sociology, which deals with the interaction between environment and society. It starts by introducing the focus of the discipline and how it benefits from classical sociological theories. It also covers a wide range of contemporary theoretical approaches that explain environmental degradation as well as theories of modernism and environmental improvement. In this vein, the debate between Realism and Constructionism as well as the application of the latter in environmental discourses will be discussed in detail. At the end, it will provide insights into current environmental problems (globally, regionally and locally), their causes and possible solutions. Students are also expected to have practical study visits.

II. Module/Course Objectives

This module intends to familiarize students with relationship between society and the ecosystems of which we are a part. It provides themes that enable a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social ecosystems. The module also intends to impart to students the relationship between ideology and the environment and what we might do to move towards ecological reorganization/social ecosystems/ that are more stable and sustainable.


III. Mode of Delivery and Study Hour


The mode of delivery for this course is interactive teaching and learning, independent learning and collaborative learning. The total study hours allocated for this course is 135 hours. Of this time, 30 hours is allocated for lectures, 19 hours for assignments, 15 hours for presentation, 20 hours for tutorials and problem solving sessions, 16 hours for assessment and 35 hours for independent study.

IV. Module/Course Competency

- ✓ Clearly understand how environmental sociology emerge and its focus
- ✓ Understand the role of classical sociological theory in environmental sociology
- ✓ Understand major ideas, strengths and limitations of contemporary theories in the sub discipline well-versed with various environmental discourses, their sources and role in the construction of environmental problems
- ✓ Comprehend key tasks in the social construction of environmental problems and strategies for the successful construction of environmental problems
- ✓ Understand the role of media, scientists and local people in the construction of environmental problems
- ✓ Develop a framework to approach environmental research, particularly in the South including Ethiopia
- ✓ Be able to identify research themes in the sub discipline

V. Course Contents

 **Section One: Introducing Environmental Sociology:** *Definition, emergence, and focus of environmental sociology as well as classical sociological theory and the environment.*

 **Section Two: Contemporary Theoretical Approaches to Environmental Sociology:** *Explanations for environmental degradation/ destruction, theories of modernism and environmental improvement and the acrimonies debate between realism and Constructionism.*

- 📖 **Section Three: Environmental Discourse:** *definition and typology of environmental discourse*
- 📖 **Section Four: Discourse, Power Relations and Political Ecology:** *Discourse and political ecology, and water privatization*
- 📖 **Section Five: Social Construction of Environmental Issues and Problems:** *Key tasks in the social construction of environmental problems, audiences for environmental claims and mechanisms for the successful construction of environmental problems.*
- 📖 **Section Six: Media and Environmental Communication:** *Manufacturing news, media discourse, Mass-mediated environmental discourse and constructing winning environmental accounts in the media.*
- 📖 **Section Seven: Science, Scientists And Environmental Problems:** *Science and the construction of environmental problems and science and environmental policy*
- 📖 **Section Eight: Risk:** *Risk and culture, sociological perspective on risk and power and the social construction of environmental risk*
- 📖 **Section Nine: Biodiversity Loss:** *Factors for the rise of biodiversity loss as a major environmental problem and the social construction of biodiversity loss*
- 📖 **Section Ten: An Emergence Model of Environment and Society**
- 📖 **Section Eleven: Environmental Problems in Ethiopia**

VI. Mode of Assessment

- ☑ **Assignment:** Students will select a research topic that explore environment and society interaction and prepare a well-articulated proposal (that includes all elements of a good social research proposal). They will conduct research based on primary sources in either rural or urban villages of Ethiopia and submit the findings of their work. The **assignments** will account for 25% (write up 15% and **presentation** 10%) of the total marks.
- ☑ **Tests:** Students will take tests which will account for 20% of the total course mark.
- ☑ **Quiz:** will accounts 10% of the total mark
- ☑ **Final Examination:** There will also be a final exam at the end of the course which will account for 45 % of the total course mark.

VII. Reading Materials

Dunlap, R. E. and Michelson, W. (eds) (2002) *Handbook of Environmental Sociology*, Westport, CT: Greenwood press

Hannigan, John (2006) *Environmental Sociology*. USA and Canada: Routledge

Jarson Clay (2004) *World Agriculture and the Environment: A Commodity By Commodity Impacts and Practices*. World Wildlife Fund. Washington: Island press

OkbazghiYohannes (2008) *Water Resources and Inter-Riparian Relations In The Nile-Basin: The Search For An Integrative Discourse*. USA: State university of New York Press

Milton, Kay (1996) *Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse*. London: Routledge / Taylor and Francis Group.

Pak Sum Low (2005) *Climate Change and Africa*. Cambridge University Press

Picou, Steven(1999) *Theoretical Trends in Environmental Sociology: Implications for Resource Management in the Modern World*. Paper presented at the Social and Economic Planning Conference, minerals management services. Utah

Sutton, W (2004) *Nature, Environment and Society*. Palgrave Macmillan Thomson,

Yeraswork Admassie (1997) *Social and Institutional Issues Relevant for Environmentally Sound Natural Resource Management in Ethiopia*. A Discussion Paper Prepared for the Africa Regional Environmental Assessment Training Course in Ethiopia for USAID Partners

Yeraswork Admassie (2000) *Twenty Years to Nowhere: Property Rights, Land Management and Conservation in Ethiopia*. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press

Zenebe Teddesse (2001) *Environment and Development in Ethiopia*. Proceedings of symposium of the forum for social studies, Addis Ababa