

# CAMOSUN COLLEGE

## Course Outline

### SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

#### SOCIOLOGY 120

*Instructor:* Dr. Peter Maidstone F/02  
*Office:* Dunlop 220  
*Phone:* 370-3369

*Required Texts:* Harper, Charles. *Environment and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Prentice Hall, 2001  
Suzuki, David. *From Naked Ape to Superspecies*. Stoddart, 1999.

#### *Calendar Description:*

In this course social relations are seen within a larger biophysical context. Sociological analysis will be applied to the understanding of the ideological and social-structural aspects of environmental sustainability. Economic activity, public policy, and social movements will be analyzed by focusing on specific environmental issues at the regional and global levels

#### *Course Objectives:*

The aim of the course is to utilize a sociological viewpoint as a means of critically examining the range of perspectives which seek to account for the relationship between humans and their biophysical environments. By comparing both the arguments of the texts and critical responses to them, the course will attempt to arrive at some conclusions as to the most viable accounts of human agency and social structure with respect to the current state of the environment, how it came about, and the prospects for change. The course will place the perspectives and issues that are examined, in both a Canadian and a global context.

#### *Intended Learning Outcomes:*

The intended learning outcomes of the course are threefold:

- (a) the students will gain an understanding of the major Canadian and global environmental issues;
- (b) the course will enable students to both understand the perspectives that seek to explain these issues, as well as to critically evaluate the explanations that are offered; and,
- (c) students will therefore be empowered with respect to their ability to deal with the issues.

*Organization of Course:*

Three hours per week will be spent in lecture sessions.

*Evaluation Procedures:*

First exam	30%
Second exam	35%
Third exam	15%
First essay	10%
<u>Second essay</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

*Letter Grades:*

The following percentage conversion to letter grade will be used:

A+ = 95 - 100%	B = 75 - 79%	D = 50 - 59%
A = 90 - 94%	B- = 70 - 74%	F = 0.0 - 49%
A- = 85 - 89%	C+ = 65 - 69%	
B+ = 80 - 84%	C = 60 - 64%	

*First Exam:* The exam will be an “objective style” multiple-choice exam, but will attempt to test one’s conceptual rather than factual knowledge. It will focus on material covered to date in the course, and will be written in class on **October 15**.

*Second Exam:* The second exam will have the same format as the first. It will be based on material covered since the first exam. It will be written in class on **November 14**.

*Third Exam:* The third exam will retain the same format as the other exams. It will focus upon the topics covered since the second exam. It will be written in class **December 5**.

*First Essay:* Each student is responsible for completing a seven hundred and fifty (750) word, typewritten, critical analysis of a current Canadian newspaper or magazine article. This assignment, which will be explained more fully in class, will be evaluated on a Pass-Fail basis. A copy of the article together with the analysis is due **October 31**.

*Second Essay:* Each student is responsible for completing a seven hundred and fifty (750) word typewritten analysis of one of the seven environmental problem areas identified in the Harper text. The analysis will be developed in terms of one of the paradigms or theoretical perspectives that have been discussed in class, with the objective of utilizing a particular perspective in order to present its account of the environmental problem area selected by the student.

A fuller explanation of this assignment will be given in class. The assignment will be evaluated on a Pass-Fail basis, and will be due **November 28**.

*Required Reading:*

The student will be required to read selected chapters of the texts, as well as material on reserve in the library.

*Course Topic Areas:*

Environmental Problems: an Overview.

Understanding the Environment: Social Scientific Perspectives.

Assessing Risk: A Look at Some Issues.

Sustainability: Is There an Alternative Future?

Environmentalism: The Role of Social Movements.

Social Structures: The Potential for Change.

The Global Context: Globalization - from Above and Globalization - from - Below.

Activism: Antidote to Despair