

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
POLITICAL SCIENCE 354
POLITICS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL
CHANGE
FALL, 2005
T.TH. 8:10-9:50; Room HSS 349; 4 Units

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

Professor:	Joel Kassiola
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Office Hours:	T.Th. 7:30-8:10 a.m. (before class); usually 1600 -1700 M –F; and by appointment at Dean’s Office (or telephone 415.338.1846).

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?

Justification for Course:

Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, worsening poverty, hunger, ill health, and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being . . .

While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.

Special attention should be paid to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption and to efficient use of those resources consistent with the goal of minimizing resource depletion and reducing pollution. Although consumption patterns are very high in certain parts of the world, the basic consumer needs of a large section of humanity are not being met. This results in excessive demands and unsustainable lifestyles among the richer segments, which place immense stress on the environment. The poorer segments, meanwhile, are unable to meet food, care, shelter, and educational needs. Changing consumption patterns will require a multipronged strategy focusing on demand, meeting the basic needs of the poor, and reducing the wastage and use of finite resources in the production process.

--United Nations, AGENDA 21, Report of The
United Nations Conference on
Environment and Development,
Rio de Janeiro, 1992

Required Texts:

Barry, John. *Environment and Social Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 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 Nature of Environmental Political Theory and Illustrations**

- a. Joel Jay Kassiola, Introduction and Overview; Kassiola: 3-13.
- b. Joel Jay Kassiola, "The 'Tragedy' of Modernity: How Environmental Limits and the Environmental Crisis Produce the Need for Postmodern Values and Institutions;" Kassiola: 14-36.
- c. Lester W. Milbrath, "Envisioning a Sustainable Society;" Kassiola: 37-51.
- d. Dennis Pirages, "Building Sustainable Societies: The Third Revolution in Human Affairs;" Kassiola: 52-65.
- e. Andrew McLaughlin, "Industrialism and Deep Ecology;" Kassiola: 104-127.
- f. Robert E. Goodin, "A Green Theory of Value;" Kassiola: 128-148.
- g. Michael E. Zimmerman, "On Reconciling Progressivism and Environmentalism;" Kassiola: 149-177.
- h. Joel Jay Kassiola, "Questions to Ponder in Understanding the Modern Predicament;" Kassiola: 178-188.

2. How to Write Rationally Persuasive Papers

Joel Jay Kassiola, "Rationally Persuasive Writing is Like House Painting: It's All in the Preliminaries." [on website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/kassiola>]

3. The Environment and Social Theory

Barry: All

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

Warren: all.

Videos: **The Environment and the Hyperconsumer Society**

“Advertising and the End of the World” by Sut Jhally; and

“Time Frenzy.”

Additional Information

A. Components of Course Grade: the components of the final grade for this course will be: performance on written essays; the final examination for this course will take place on: **Thursday, December 15, 2005 from 8:00-10:30 a.m.** this semester and will be open-book; class attendance; and contribution to class discussion. There will be no in-class examinations. Instead, class members will be asked to write rationally persuasive essays defending their chosen position on issues of their definition drawn from the readings and class discussion.

B. Instructor’s Office: Office of The Dean of The College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Room HSS 359.