

# CES 541: Fall 2012 Section Syllabus



## Environmental Stewardship and Social Justice: *Nature, Faith, and Politics*

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Professor: Dr. Michael Bell

TA: Amanda McMillan

*How shall we live? What is just? What is sacred? Where can we find truth? How can we best steward the world and care for all its inhabitants, human and non-human alike? In this special topic version of Community and Environmental Sociology 541, we take a sociological look at the history and relationship of two of the most culturally powerful realms of reasoning on these deep and abiding questions: the natural and the supernatural. From Buddha to Darwin, from Lao-Tzu to Thoreau, from Mohamed to Einstein, from Gilgamesh to the Bible, we will consider the past, present, and future of these great ideas in their social, and therefore political, context.*

### Discussion Section description

Discussion Section is space for us to wrangle with new knowledge, absorb other perspectives, and consolidate our understanding of faith, politics, and nature. While the lecture, given by Mike Bell each Tuesday, will sketch specific topics' social and historical milieus, Section allows students to engage critically with the course material and each other in greater depth.

The small classroom setting will allow us to discuss course con-

cepts, approach issues from multiple perspectives, and consider how these concepts are applied. In this way, Discussion Section relies upon active participation as a way to deepen our understanding of the course materials.

Sections will usually begin with dialogue with your *muddle* about your *weekly intellectual journal*. We will bring key points from muddle discussions to the broader section and explore concepts we find most challenging.

Read this section syllabus carefully. The syllabus is a tool for your success, the aim of which is to remove ambiguity about the nuts and bolts of the course so you can better immerse yourself in learning. View it as a contract; it explains logistical details of the course, focusing specifically on discussion section requirements. It is your job to read the syllabus thoroughly and set yourself up for a semester of learning.

### Course details

Lecture: Tuesday 4:30-5:45pm (Biochemistry 1120)

Sections:

- Thursday, 3:00PM - 4:15PM (Agriculture Hall 10)
- Thursday, 4:30PM - 5:45PM (Agriculture Hall 10)
- Friday, 9:30AM - 10:45AM (Agriculture Hall 38)
- Friday, 1:00PM - 2:15PM (Agriculture Hall 38)

Course Website: <http://www.michaelmbell.net/CES-541/home.html>

Teaching Assistant: Amanda McMillan

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Office: Ag Hall 313

Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-3pm and by appointment

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# Weekly Intellectual Journal

The weekly intellectual journals will give you a chance to: consolidate your learning and develop your own views on the readings and lectures, to communicate those views to the class, to demonstrate your command of what we've read thus far, and to keep you up-to-date with the material in the course.

A full-credit journal will include:

- ◆ A thoughtful, articulate development of *one theme* of interest to you

from the week's reading and lecture. I will be looking for evidence that you're engaging in the material seriously and critically.

- ◆ Clear *documentation and defense* of your theme or argument by properly citing readings in APA format, complete with reference list and in-text citations; see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>
- ◆ 250-350 words, in Microsoft Word, e-mailed

each week by **Wednesday midnight** as an attachment to your *muddle* (see below) and your TA: (Amanda.CES541@gmail.com)

- ◆ Additionally, bring a **printed copy** of your journal entry to Section. If you do not bring a printed copy of your Journal entry to Section, you will receive a zero for that week's journal grade.

Here's a nice thing: You will be given 2 "trump cards" that allows you to opt out of a week's entry of your choice,

resulting in a minimum of 12 required entries over the course of the term, each worth 2.5% of your final grade. (There's no journal entry due for week 1 or for week 8, the week of the mid-term.) If you choose not to use a trump card, you may drop your lowest score(s).

However, in order for your trump to count as a trump, not a skip, you must notify your TA via email by midnight Wednesday that you would like to use your "pass" for the week. If you submit your Weekly Intellectual Journal late, you will receive a zero

## Muddles and section approach

for the Journal grade for that week.

Each muddle is a group of 3 or 4 students, who are expected to read each other's Weekly Intellectual Journal entries before section and to "muddle through" (discuss) them intelligently.

Each section will begin with a meeting of the muddles; each muddle will discuss themes raised by its members. Then, the muddles will themes forward to the entire section for further discussion. We will periodically re-organize into new muddle

## Our ambiance

Politics, nature, religion... contentious issues outside the classroom. But inside our classroom, we have the unique opportunity to redesign how we engage in discourse about these vitally important topics. It's an honor intentionally attempt to better understand different ways of being the world and to hear new perspectives on how society and nature have—and could—coexist. We must take up the challenge to engage each other in thoughtful, thought-provoking conversation about the social origins of spirituality and nature. It is

likely that students will have diverse opinions about and sensitivities to the texts. We expect all students to speak respectfully to one another, even as you voice your opinion.

Check your absolutes at the door, however. You can pick them up again on your way out, but during the class we will strive as best mere humans can to be open-minded about the thoughts of others and ourselves. However, students must recognize that all will be coming to the discussion with a unique set of per-

sonal experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, political convictions, etc. Please make no assumptions about your fellow classmates—always first listen to what they have to say. Disagreements will arise, but students are expected to disagree in a respectful manner. Skepticism and critical thinking are important, but so is being open-minded enough to consider and give a fair hearing to new perspectives. Mature intellectuals weigh evidence and thoughtfully engage in con-

versation with each other.

When contributing to class, please be aware of the difference between anecdotal evidence and generalizable facts. A good social scientist understands that it is intellectually lazy, or worse, to generalize based on little evidence. Remember that the ultimate physical or metaphysical correctness of these ideas are questions we leave for outside the classroom. Our concern is for their social origin and for the social use to which we put them.

# Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

- ◆ 30% Weekly intellectual journal
- ◆ 25% Class participation
- ◆ 20% Midterm exam (October 23, 4:30-5:45pm)
- ◆ 25% Final exam (December 20<sup>th</sup>, 7:25-9:25pm )

# Readings

Plan to put in 4-5 hours each week to do the course readings. All of the books are available at the Rainbow Cooperative (426 West Gilman Street). The other readings are available at the course web site: <http://www.michaelmbell.net/CES-541/home.html> We advise you to only print out the readings one week at a time (for the current and immediately following week), as Mike may make adjustments to the PDFs of future readings.

# Exams

The midterm (worth 20% of your grade) and final (worth 25% of your grade), based on the readings and lectures, will each consist of:

- ◆ In-class, multiple-choice term/concept identifications
- ◆ Take-home essays

For the *in-class, multiple-choice identifications*, I advise you to keep a running list of interesting con-

cepts and terms from lecture and readings.

For the *take-home essays*, you are welcome to meet and discuss the questions with others; however, you must put your answers *in your own words*. Feel free to bring in outside sources to build your argument.

However, you must focus your analysis on assigned course readings.

Finally, in your take-home

essays, as in all your written work, you must properly cite all quotes, concepts, and paraphrases in APA format, complete with a reference list and (author, date) in-text citations; for more details, see [www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa](http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa)

**“So we saunter  
toward the Holy  
Land; till one day  
the sun shall shine  
more brightly than  
ever he has done...  
and light up our  
whole lives with a  
great awakening  
light...”**

**Thoreau, 1862.**

**“Walking,” p. 222**

# Attendance and participation

I take attendance in each lecture and discussion section. Mike and I both assess participation. You should be on time and ready for discussion each day. I expect class discussion will be lively, respectful, substantive, and that you will have done that day's assigned reading before class.

Your grade for class participation will not be a measure of how loud you were, or of how often you

spoke. Rather, it will reflect the extent to which you were “there.” We will evaluate your “thereness” based on our assessment of your engagement, including the quality of your listening, in muddles and class discussions. You will receive an assessment of your “thereness” 3 times in the semester, so you can keep track of how you are doing and adjust, if necessary. In the first 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the semester, your participation will be worth 5% of

your final grade; in the second and third segments of the semester, your participation will be worth 10% of your final grade, respectively, to total 25% of your final grade.

Attendance is expected at lecture and section. There's no such thing as an “excused absence” – you're either in class, or you're not. If you are late to lecture or section by more than 10 minutes, you will be considered absent for the day.

However, you may take two free “passes” from attending lecture, and two free “passes” from attending section, without your absence harming your grade. No excuse or explanation needed; just don't show up.

Absences beyond your two free “passes” will not be excused—except in exceptional circumstances. Each additional absence beyond two from lecture and/or section will lower your attendance grade by 2%.

## \*The fine print:

### Electronic Devices

Electronic devices, such as laptops, phones, or tablets, are prohibited during lecture and discussion section. If a student has particular needs that require them to use an electronic device, they must discuss it with the TA prior to class. If a student uses an electronic device during class, that student will receive a zero for participation and attendance that week.

### Special Needs

If you have special concerns, needs, or a disability please see me no later than September 15. I am happy to make accommodations and consult with you about the course, but you must come speak with me first.

### Re-Grade Policy

Come to office hours or make an appointment if you disagree with a grade I've given on an exam or section assignment. Prior to our meeting, review your assignment and my comments and send me a one-paragraph email outlining your concerns. If need be, I'll ask the instructor to consider your grade dispute.

### Contacting Your TA

Please stop by my office hours if you have any questions or need additional assistance. I will do my best to reply promptly to email inquiries, but office hours are the best time to speak with me. If you are not able to attend scheduled office hours, email me to make an appointment. My goal is to set you up for success and learning in this class!

### Religious Holidays

If you plan on missing class due to a religious holiday, please notify your TA by September 15.

### Accommodations

If you have a documented disability, and you need a reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please consult with me immediately at the start of the course so we can design a solution that will help you be successful in the class.

## Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

While some of the readings will be difficult or unfamiliar, your weekly intellectual journals and the material for the take-home portion of your exam must be uniquely yours, in your own words, and cited fully and properly.

Section 14.03 of the University of Wisconsin System Administrative Code Defines academic misconduct as "an act in which a student: (a) seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation; (b) uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exer-

cise; (c) forges or falsifies academic documents or records; (d) intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others; (e) engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; (f) assists other students in any of these acts."

If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct generally, you must consult [www.wisc.edu/students/amsum.htm](http://www.wisc.edu/students/amsum.htm) before proceeding in this course.

Any form of cheating or plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable and intolerable in this class and in the entire UW System. If you are suspected of doing so, your TA will speak with Dr. Bell, the Dean, and file a written report in your permanent academic file. You are expected to familiarize yourself with your rights and duties as a UW student, and about the consequences of cheating at: [www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html](http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html). Lack of knowledge regarding these guidelines will NOT be accepted as an excuse.

The Department of Sociology is licensed to use anti-plagiarism software. This software is extremely accurate, comparing student work to a database of previously submitted work, online sources (including Wikipedia), and published academic materials. Be aware that your TA or professor may choose to run your intellectual journal entries and/or test answers through the software.