

Resilience Research School

Course: Why bother with Durkheim? Using (classical) social science to understand the social dynamics of social-ecological systems (3 ECTS)

Course leader: Wijnand Boonstra

Instructors: Wijnand Boonstra (WB), Simon West (SW)

Time period: January-February 2014

Brief description of course

The general course objective is to introduce graduate students of the Resilience Research School into several (classic) social science perspectives on the collective dimensions of causes, outcomes and solutions to environmental problems. More specifically, the aim is to have students extrapolate insights from (classical) social science to understand and analyze the social dimensions of environmental problems, in both their causes and solutions. Students will use social science theories to construct an original claim that relates to the analysis of social-ecological systems. In so doing, the course aims to cultivate skills in independent thinking through students developing their own thesis statement; supporting that thesis with logical rationale and appropriate evidence; and presenting the thesis in a convincing fashion, both orally and in writing. Moreover, the course also introduces students into the diversity of social science perspectives on the interdependent relations between social behavior and the natural environment.

Understanding (classic) social science literature requires that students actively engage themselves with the course reading, and that they are supported in this activity through class discussions, in individual and group exercises. The course will exist of at least five lectures in which insights from a classic work from the social science canon are accessible. The lecturer explains the main argument or insight of the work discussed, how it can be used for the study of social-ecological resilience. Preferably these insights are then applied to empirical studies of social-ecological systems to illustrate the payoff. The lectures are organized around reading sessions in which students are assigned specific roles to: a) interpret the text and lecture and connect it to the analysis of social-ecological systems, b) visualise and summarize key ideas, c) recording insights and progress in a reading portfolio, c) organise group discussion, and d) to prepare for examination and the final seminar. The examination will exist of an oral and written part. The written part consists of a blog summarizing one lecture and a 5-page essay applying at least two readings (or thinkers) that were discussed in the course to illuminate aspects of social dynamics in cases that students can use for their work. The oral part consists of the organization and presentation of a seminar to be held as a resilience dialogue at the end of the course.

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Course content: Theory, method and applications to be used in the course

| Concepts | Methods | Applications |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Classical social science theories | Literature review, reading and discussion | Development of research questions and theoretical framework |

Class schedule: All lectures are in the room 248 (SRC building) unless otherwise noted.

The course will run part-time from 23th January until 20th February.

| <i>Facilitators</i> | <i>Class exercises</i> | <i>Home work</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1: Why study the classics? – The problematic non-human | | |
| January 23th - 13.15-16.00 | WB and SW | Reading seminar |
| | | Preparing presentation and discussion in reading seminar |
| Week 2: Karl Marx | | |
| January 30th 13.15-16.00 | WB | Reading seminar |
| | | Preparing presentation and discussion in reading seminar |
| Week 3: Emile Durkheim | | |
| February 6th 13.15-16.00 | SW | Reading seminar |
| | | Preparing presentation and discussion in reading seminar |
| Week 4: Max Weber | | |
| February 13th 13.15-16.00 | WB | Reading seminar |
| | | Preparing presentation and discussion in reading seminar |
| Week 5: Thorstein Veblen | | |
| February 20th 13.15-16.00 | SW | Reading seminar |
| | | Preparing presentation and discussion in reading seminar |

| Duration | Activity |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 hrs. | Discussion seminars |
| 30 hrs. | Reading and preparation of written assignments by students |
| 20 hrs. | Written essay |
| 5 hrs. | Oral presentations and preparation |
| 10 hrs. | Preparation & Resilience Dialogue |
| | |
| 75 hrs. | Total |

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will:

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1. Have a deeper understanding of the social dynamics of social-ecological systems and how classic social science literature can be used to more deeply understand and articulate these dynamics.
2. Have a basic understanding of the scope and diversity of social science disciplines.
3. Be able to demonstrate how to apply insights from (classic) social science literature to help solve questions and objectives of research of social-ecological systems.

Assessment and grading criteria

| Component | Weighting (%) | Learning Outcomes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Participation in lectures, reading seminars, class discussions (presence, quality of questions, preparation) | 35% | 1-3 |
| Written assignments | 20% | 1-3 |
| Individual written essay | 30% | 1-3 |
| Organization and presentation of final seminar | 15% | 1-3 |
| Individual Course Evaluation | Compulsory | |
| | 100% | |

Attendance of lectures and participation in all lectures and seminars is compulsory. Participation does not only mean attendance, the participant must take an active role during the lecture and the seminar that follows, and complete the assigned exercises. Failure to attend a seminar will result in a grade of Fail. Examination consists of a written and/or oral exam. The individual course evaluation at the end of the course is compulsory.

Criteria for assessment:

The following grades are issued, the lower limits for each grade is expressed as a percentage of the maximum points available:

- P Pass – above 50% – Proficiency in stipulated goals and full attendance
 F Fail – Below 50% – Poor or insufficient conduct and/ or incomplete attendance

Reading

Lecture 2: Karl Marx

Marx, K. (1976). Large-scale industry and agriculture. In: Capital, pp. 636-643. Penguin Classics: London.

Foster, J. B. (1999). Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology 1. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105 (2), 366-405.

Harvey, D. (1993). The Nature of Environment: The dialectics of social and environmental Change, *Socialist Register* 29, 1-51.

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Lecture 3: Emile Durkheim

Durkheim, E. (1982). Introduction (Steven Lukes), pp. 1-30. In: *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited, with an introduction, by Steven Lukes; translated by WD Halls.

Durkheim, E. (1982). Preface to the second introduction, pp. 34- 47. In: *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited, with an introduction, by Steven Lukes; translated by WD Halls.

Durkheim, E. (1982). What is a social fact? pp. 50-59. In: *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited, with an introduction, by Steven Lukes; translated by WD Halls.

Rosa, E. A., & Richter, L. (2008). Durkheim on the Environment Ex Libris or Ex Cathedra? Introduction to Inaugural Lecture to a Course in Social Science, 1887-1888. *Organization & Environment*, 21(2), 182-187.

Sawyer, K. 2005. Durkheim's theory of social emergence. In: *Societies as complex systems*, pp. 100-124. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lecture 4: Max Weber

Weber, M. 2001 [1930]. Introduction (A. Giddens): vii-xxv. In: *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (T. Parsons Trans.). Routledge Classics. Routledge: London and New York

Weber, M. 2001 [1930]. Authors's introduction: xxviii-1. In: *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (T. Parsons Trans.). Routledge Classics. Routledge: London and New York

Radkau, J. (2008 [2002]). *Nature and power: A global history of the environment* (T. Dunlap Trans.), pp. xi-35. Cambridge, UK, and New York: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press.

Lecture 5: Thorstein Veblen

Veblen, T. 2010 [1923]. The timber lands and the oil fields. In: *Absentee ownership and business enterprise in recent times: the case of America*.

Mitchell, R. E. (2001). Thorstein Veblen Pioneer in Environmental Sociology. *Organization & environment*, 14(4), 389-408.

Camic, C., & Hodgson, G. M. (Eds.). (2010). Introduction. In: *The Essential Writings of Thorstein Veblen*. Taylor & Francis.

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