

## Study Questions, Week 2

### Topics for the Week:

Ecological Disorganization

Why should we protect the environment?  
Ecological limits

### Readings for the Week:

Allen Schnaiberg & Stephen Alan Gould. 2000. *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict*. Caldwell, NJ: The Blackburn Press. Chapters 1 & 2.

### Questions, Chapter 1:

- (1) What is meant by the term “sustainable development?” What are some dimensions of this term? Is the U.S. society currently practicing sustainable development? The global society? What are some indicators you can point to that support your answer?
- (2) What are the two principles of ecological organization, and how do they affect ecosystems? How do they affect society?
- (3) What is an ecosystem? What functions do ecosystems serve? How do ecosystems change in a “natural” (i.e. without human intervention) setting? How have human activities altered ecosystems?
- (4) What do Schnaiberg and Gould mean by “ecological disorganization?” What produces ecological disorganization?
- (5) Identify and explain some of the social implications of ecological disorganization.
- (6) What are two general dimensions of social concern about ecological disruption? What are two aspects of each dimension? Explain how these interact.
- (7) Why is it imperative that sociologists and other social scientists have a role in shaping the environmental debate and policy solutions?
- (8) What are chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)? What effects do CFCs have on the environment? Why has it been so difficult to slow the production and use of CFCs?

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**Questions, Chapter 2:**

- (1) What similarities and differences can we identify between “native” peoples and modern society in terms of their relationship with the natural world? Do native groups provide us with an “environmental ideal” that we can strive for as a society? Why or why not?
- (2) How did the industrial revolution change the relationship between people and the natural environment? In your opinion, have these changes been, on balance, more positive or more negative?
- (3) What do Schnaiberg & Gould mean by the term “ecological limits?” What is the relationship between ecological limits and technology? Explain what the authors mean by the “return” of ecological limits?
- (4) Schnaiberg and Gould claim there is a close connection between industrialization and water. Identify at least two ways in which water benefits industrialization, and at least two ways in which industrialization harms water.
- (5) What is the relationship between science and policy in resolving environmental issues? Which can more effectively deal with environmental problems in your opinion, science or politics? Explain.
- (6) What do Schnaiberg and Gould mean when they refer to the 1980s as the “lost decade?” How have conditions changed in the 1990s?
- (7) How much longer will we be able to rely on fossil fuels for energy? What are some alternatives to fossil fuels? Which are the most likely to replace fossil fuels once they are depleted?