

Study Questions, Week 4

Topics for the Week:

Social Responses to the Treadmill

Population, Consumption, Technology

Readings for the Week:

Allen Schnaiberg & Kenneth Alan Gould. 2000. *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict*. Caldwell, NJ: The Blackburn Press. Chapters 4 & 5.

Questions, Chapter 4:

- (1) Explain the logic of the “treadmill of production.” What processes contribute to the treadmill of production? What are some of the results of the treadmill of production?
- (2) Why do Schnaiberg and Gould assert that “eternal conflict is the price we will have to pay for ecologically sustainable development” (p. 70)? Explain the logic upon which they base this assertion.
- (3) Why does the expansion of production play such a central role in economic planning in modern industrial societies? What roles do the logic of individual economic organizations (as presented in Chapter 3) and technological changes play in the ethic of expanding production?
- (4) Identify the roots of expanded production. Provide specific examples of environmental problems and suggest how they stem from the ethic of expanding production.
- (5) What is the role of population growth in ecological disorganization? What mediating factor(s) influence the relationship between population and environment? What is the relationship between population growth and economic growth?
- (6) In what ways has the expansion of production benefited different groups of workers, and in what ways has it harmed these workers? Consider how these beneficial and harmful effects might lead to ecological disorganization.
- (7) How do Schnaiberg and Gould respond to those that suggest that “runaway” technology leads to environmental disruptions? Do you agree or disagree with Schnaiberg & Gould’s argument? Why?

Questions, Chapter 5:

- (1) What is an institution? What is the role of institutions vis a vis the treadmill of production?
- (2) Why do some people claim that modern societies are “environmentalist?” What can we conclude from a closer look at the evidence? Provide evidence and explanations that support these conclusions.
- (3) On page 97, Schnaiberg & Gould claim “what recent history reveals in industrial societies is a very high ratio of treadmill-to-environmental research and teaching.” What do they mean by this statement?
- (4) Schnaiberg & Gould claim that individuals are constrained by the rules, roles and expectations of social institutions, and that these tend to encourage individuals to adopt the values and practices associated with the treadmill of production much more than environmental values and practices. Provide examples of how this process operates within (a) families, (b) the mass media, and (c) workplaces.
- (5) What is meant by “green” advertising (sometimes referred to as “greenwashing”)? Why do companies engage in “green” advertising? Does “green” advertising more accurately represent an environmentalist ethic, or the ethic of the treadmill of production? Why?
- (6) What is the relationship between form of political organization, the treadmill of production, and ecological disorganization? Are some political systems “greener” than others? What role do economic systems play in this scenario?
- (7) What role do government institutions play in sustaining and promoting the treadmill of production? Provide concrete examples of how this relationship operates.