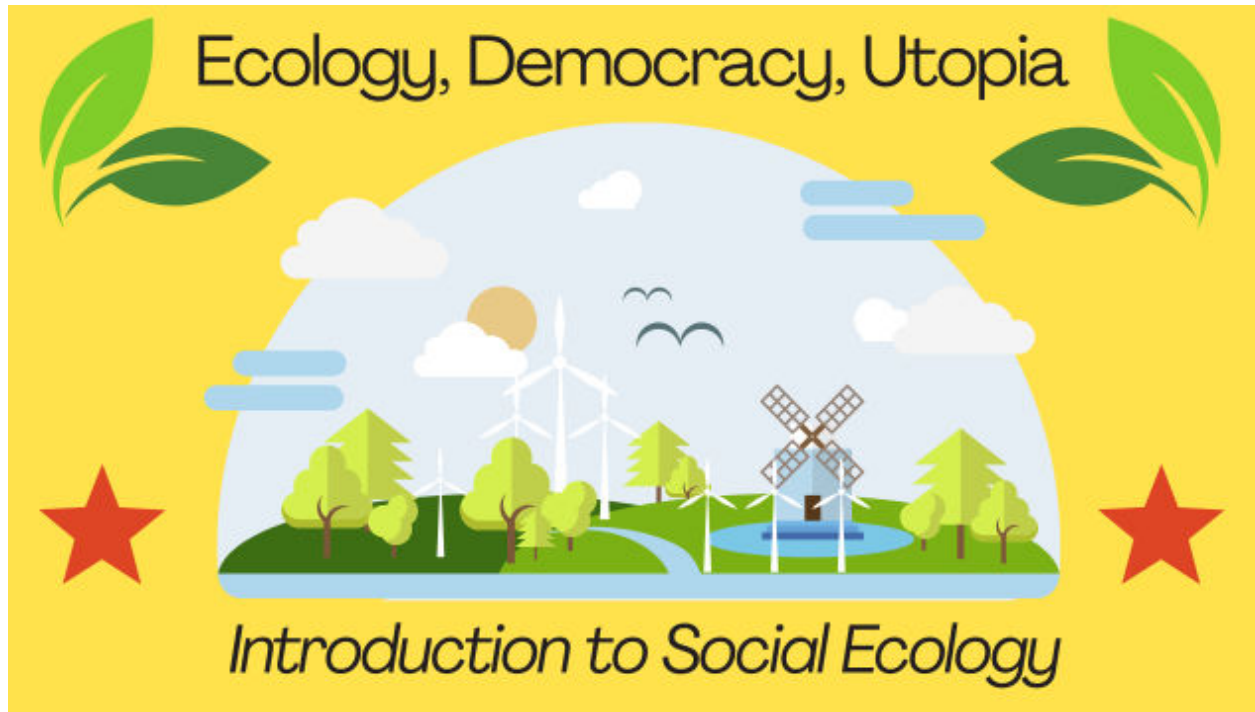




Spring 2026: February 16-April 20

This course introduces students to social ecology: an interdisciplinary body of ideas that explores the relationship between social and ecological problems. Social ecology is both a theory and a practice, a critique of the present society and a vision for a new one. The course explores a broad range of interconnected themes including: social theory, hierarchy and domination, gender, race, capitalism, nature philosophy, ecology, direct democracy, grassroots movements, revolutionary strategy, and utopian thought. We will consider how ideas about nature shape and reproduce a variety of social relations institutionalized by the state, capitalism, gender regimes, racialized inequality, sexuality, and global power relations. Participants will apply these insights to a variety of contemporary political and ecological problems, sharpening our understanding of the world while developing visionary solutions to change, and perhaps save it.

The ten units explore:

What is Social Ecology?

Understanding Nature

The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy

Patriarchy and Ecofeminism

Race and the Colonial Order

Capitalism, Critique, Alternatives

An Ecological Economy
Politics Beyond the State: Direct Democracy & Popular Assemblies
Getting from Here to There: Social Movements and Community Organizing
A Reconstructive Vision: Reclaiming Utopia

WEEKLY LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

1. What is Social Ecology?

Lecturer: Dan Chodorkoff

Dan Chodorkoff. "Social Ecology: an Ecological Humanism." *The Anthropology of Utopia*. (New Compass: 2014).

Eleanor Finley. "The Theory of Social Ecology." *Practicing Social Ecology: From Bookchin to Rojava and Beyond*, (Pluto Press 2025).

2. What is Nature?

Lecturer: Chaia Heller

Murray Bookchin. Selections on "Nature First and Second." *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (ed. Janet Biehl, Black Rose Books 1999).

Eleanor Finley. "First and Second Nature." *Practicing Social Ecology: From Bookchin to Rojava and Beyond*, (Pluto Press 2025).

3. The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy

Lecturer: Brian Tokar

Murray Bookchin. "Usufruct, Complementarity, and the Irreducible Minimum." *The Ecology of Freedom* (Cheshire Books 1982).

Murray Bookchin. "The Notion of Domination" and "Early Human Communities." *Remaking Society: A New Ecological Politics* (AK Press 2023).

David Graeber and David Wengrow. "How to Change the Course of Human History." *Eurozine* (2018).

4. Patriarchy and Ecofeminism

Lecturer: Chaia Heller

Chaia Heller. "Social Ecology and Ecofeminism." *Ecology of Everyday Life* (Black Rose: 1999).

Ynestra King. "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism* (New Society Publishers, 1989).

Asmae Ourkiya. "Queering Ecofeminism: Towards an Anti-Far-right Environmentalism." *Network in Canadian History and Environment* (2020).

5. Race and the Colonial World

Lecturer: Kali Akuno

Victor Ray. "The Social Construction of Race." *On Critical Race Theory: Why It Matters and Why You Should Care* (Random House 2022).

Alan H. Goodman, Yolanda T. Moses, Joseph L. Jones. "Creating Race." *Race: Are We So Different?* (Wiley Blackwell 2012).

Bethany Wright. "Environmental Colonialism, the Root Cause of Our Planet's Crisis." *Worldcrunch* (2024).

Further readings:

Joseph Murphy. "Environment and Imperialism: Why Colonialism Still Matters." *Sustainability Research Institute* (2009).

Karl Marx. "The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist." *Capital, Volume 1*.

6. Capitalism, Critique, Alternatives

Lecturer: Peter Staudenmaier and Emily Kawano

Peter Staudenmaier. "What is Capitalism?" *The Institute for Anarchist Studies* (2015).

Naomi Klein. "Capitalism vs. the Climate." *The Nation* (November 28, 2011). (Recommended reading.)

Howie Hawkins. "Community Control, Worker's Control and the Cooperative Commonwealth." *Society and Nature* (Issue 3, 1993). (Recommended reading.)

7. Agriculture, Climate, and Ecology

Lecturer: Grace Gershuny

Emily Kawano. "Solidarity Economy: Building an Economy for People and Planet" (excerpt). *The Next System Project*.

Murray Bookchin. "An Open Letter to the Ecological Movement." *Toward an Ecological Society* (Black Rose Books 1980).

Tom Perrett. "Bookchin, Degrowth and Libertarian Municipalism: A Blueprint for a New Environmentalism?" (2020).

8. Politics and the State: Popular Assemblies and Direct Democracy

Lecturer: Mason Herson-Horvath

Murray Bookchin. "Libertarian Municipalism: A Politics of Direct Democracy." Chapter 5, *The Next Revolution* (Verso: 2016).

Kali Akuno. "People's Assembly Overview: The Jackson People's Assembly Model." Chapter 5, *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi* (Daraja Press: 2017).

Video: "The Communes of Rojava: A Model in Societal Self Direction."

Further readings:

Project South. *The People's Movement Assembly Organizing Handbook*.

9. Getting from Here to There: Social Movements, Community Organizing, Revolutionary Politics

Lecturer: Arthur Pye

Neighborhood Solidarity Network. "Solidarity Communities: An Introduction to Neighbor Unions."

Symbiosis Research Collective. "Community, Democracy, and Mutual Aid: Toward Dual Power and Beyond". *Next System Project*: 2017.

Detroit Build and Fight Strategy document.

10. A Reconstructive Vision: Reclaiming Utopia

Lecturer: Dan Chodorkoff

Dan Chodorkoff. "The Utopian Impulse," *The Anthropology of Utopia*, (New Compass: 2014) pp. 121-144).

Brian Tokar. "On Utopian Aspirations in the Climate Movement," *Toward Climate Justice*, (New Compass: 2010) pp. 117-136).

Video: Solarpunk Surf Club at the 2025 ISE Summer Intensive. "Solarpunk, Art, and Social Transformation."