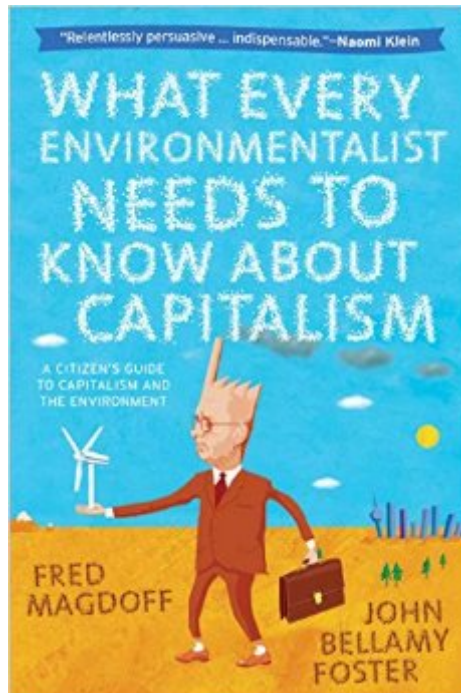


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# What Every Environmentalist Needs To Know About Capitalism



## Synopsis

Praise for Foster and Magdoff's *The Great Financial Crisis*: In this timely and thorough analysis of the current financial crisis, Foster and Magdoff explore its roots and the radical changes that might be undertaken in response. . . . This book makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing examination of our current debt crisis, one that deserves our full attention.âPublishers Weekly

There is a growing consensus that the planet is heading toward environmental catastrophe: climate change, ocean acidification, ozone depletion, global freshwater use, loss of biodiversity, and chemical pollution all threaten our future unless we act. What is less clear is how humanity should respond. The contemporary environmental movement is the site of many competing plans and prescriptions, and composed of a diverse set of actors, from militant activists to corporate chief executives. This short, readable book is a sharply argued manifesto for those environmentalists who reject schemes of "green capitalism" or piecemeal reform. Environmental and economic scholars Magdoff and Foster contend that the struggle to reverse ecological degradation requires a firm grasp of economic reality. Going further, they argue that efforts to reform capitalism along environmental lines or rely solely on new technology to avert catastrophe misses the point. The main cause of the looming environmental disaster is the driving logic of the system itself, and those in power "no matter how "green" are incapable of making the changes that are necessary. *What Every Environmentalist Needs To Know about Capitalism* tackles the two largest issues of our time, the ecological crisis and the faltering capitalist economy, in a way that is thorough, accessible, and sure to provoke debate in the environmental movement.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism" is Magdoff and Foster's attempt to convince environmentalists that the radical ecologist position is correct. Because of the enormity of ocean acidification, overpopulation, and climate change, drastic measures will be necessary in the near future in order to avoid the undoing of earth as a livable planet. According to the authors though, the problem environmentalists face is even larger than the directly visible aspects of ecological degradation. Rates of resource consumption between nations are generally deeply unequal, with nations such as the U.S. representing the bulk of humanity's resource consumption. And yet, governments and international corporations in ALL parts of the world, not just the first world, enthusiastically participate in ecological destruction through the production of pollutants and insane rates of material extraction + consumption. Working-class and indigenous people usually bear the brunt of capitalism's anti-ecological effects. Plenty of corporations pay lip service to the idea of being "green," but their efforts are usually paltry, or in the case of BP, once considered to be at the forefront of corporate green activism, a ruse that covers up their role in destroying food supplies and ecosystems. These phenomena may appear to be disparate in origin, but Magdoff and Foster argue that they are undoubtedly connected, and that they all spring from the capitalist relation to nature. Their argument can be summed up as follows: 1. Capitalism is a system of profit. The goal of capitalism is to take limited resources and limited labor-time and transform them into maximum profit. 2. Capitalism always grows in size.

What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism is an important book for seasoned environmental activists and scholars as well as newcomers to the realization that we are facing historical crises. It is also a great book for teachers to consider assigning in high school and college courses, or to recommend for student groups and book clubs, because the issues raised in an approachable way here are so central to the preparation all students need to understand the world they are inheriting and the kinds of problems they confront. Activists for social justice causes will find this a prime source for understanding why the poor, women, and people of color globally have the most to lose as a result of the crisis and many of the proposed solutions, which will exacerbate inequalities. The book offers a strong but succinct overview of the central conflict of our times: that between global economic growth and both the sustainability of our planet's ecology and social justice. While challenging Capitalism may seem a daunting, impossible, or utopian task to those for

whom it is the only system they have ever known or can imagine, an honest assessment of the systemic causes of our social and environmental problems requires it. This book shows why there are increasing numbers of environmental reforms and technological developments while the scale of the environmental crisis only increases. At the same time, the authors explain that without focusing on immediate threats, like climate change, things will be even worse. In sum, the point of the *What Can Be Done Now?* section starting on page 124 is to explain clearly why immediate environmental reform must be a priority, but must be part of a larger struggle for an end to the system that makes real solutions impossible.

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