

SOCI 420

Sociology of the Environment

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Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 2:00 – 3:00

Office hours Wednesday 12:30-2:30, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will examine environmental problems and their solutions through a sociological lens. After a broad introduction to the field of environmental sociology, we will examine environmental problems, focusing on climate change but also studying natural resources conservation, environmental justice, and chemical toxins. The next stage of the course examines solutions to environmental issues and we will look at market-based solutions, individual solutions and civil society solutions. Throughout, you will be introduced to core theories in environmental sociology and encouraged to think about how this area of study might evolve and further contribute to addressing ecological issues.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course has three key learning objectives. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with major environmental issues;
2. Explain at least two environmental sociological theories;
3. Apply these theories to better understand an environmental issue;
4. Evaluate the advantages and limitations of social responses to environmental issues.

CLASS FORMAT and STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Most classes will be structured around a lecture, broken up with classroom discussion, exercises, and multi-media. Students should come prepared to engage in class discussion, and listen attentively to the instructor and their fellow students.

You are expected to regularly attend class, engage in class discussions, respectfully listen to your fellow students, and keep up with the course

readings. In addition, you are expected to have access to a laptop on which you can take Canvas quizzes.

READING MATERIALS

The readings for this course are available through the course Canvas site.

Note: This course assumes and expects that you will acquire the skills necessary to use the UBC library system. The hyperlinks are included for many articles, but they work differently depending on where/how you are accessing the library system. If you have problems using the library system, please seek advice from a UBC librarian, rather than your instructor.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Type	Description	Date	Weight
Quiz 1	Multiple Choice (30 min)	Feb 25	10% (100 pts)
Quiz 2	Multiple Choice (30 min)	March 22	10% (100 pts)
Memos	Personal reflections on course content.	Bi-weekly	10% (100 pts)
Reading summaries	Summaries of the core concepts in each week's reading.	Weekly	10% (100 pts)
Reflection and Analysis Paper (RAP)	Phase 1 (pass/fail)	Jan 25	5% (50 pts)
	Phase 2 (pass/fail)	Mar 1	5% (50 pts)
	Phase 3: Final RAP	Apr 8	20% (200 pts)
Final Exam		TBD	30% (300 pts)

IN-CLASS QUIZZES

- There are two in-class quizzes (Feb 25 + Mar 22).
- These are short (20 minute), multiple-choice quizzes on Canvas that will be held promptly at the beginning of class.
- Each quiz will contain material presented in previous lectures and readings, including readings assigned for the test date.
- The quizzes are *not* cumulative, meaning that material tested for Quiz 1 will not be repeated for Quiz 2.

MEMOS

There are six opportunities to submit memos throughout the semester, roughly every two weeks. You only need to submit 5 and these are graded on a complete / incomplete basis (10 points for complete, 0 for incomplete).

These informal assignments should be your own personal, informal reactions to the course material. The purpose of the memo is to integrate course material with your own life, showing how your reflections in and out of class allow you to learn deeply the material we cover in class and in the readings. The content of the memos should focus on both the course material and your experiences, but are otherwise open to you. For example, you might describe your reaction to a reading, class discussion, time spent in service work, or report an event in your life or a conversation with a friend or family member about course material – whatever is happening in your mind that week.

Memos can be up to a page long (double-spaced) and should be submitted through Canvas. Memos (without names) may be read in class to stimulate discussion or illustrate a diversity of perspectives. If you prefer not to have your memo read aloud, *please indicate this at the top of the page.*

WEEKLY SUMMARIES OF READINGS

Most weeks you will have readings assigned for class on Monday and Wednesday. On the days indicated in the course schedule and in the modules section of Canvas, please submit a summary of the readings for that week.

The summaries can be written in bullet point form and should not be longer than one-page. You should identify the main takeaways from the readings and define any key terms, avoiding excessive direct quotations.

Summaries are graded on a pass / fail basis (captures core concepts=10 points; missing core concepts=6 points; incomplete=0 points). Think of these as a resource for you for studying for quizzes and exams: what information do you think you should remember from the readings? There are 11 opportunities to submit summaries but only 10 are required.

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS PAPER (RAP)

The RAP is a cumulative project, and will be submitted in 3 phases. The assignment is focussed on analyzing an ecological problem and its relation to society.

Deadlines: Phase 1 is due Jan 25th, Phase 2 is due Mar 1st and Phase 3 is due April 8th

Phase 1 of the assignment, you will research the environmental nature of the problem and write a short, 2-page (500 word) paper that describes the problem, including the social impacts or causes of the problem. Use and cite at least two academically credible websites to strengthen this paper. A list of resources is available on Canvas.

Possible themes:

- Energy/climate,
- Water,
- Food,
- Waste/consumerism,
- Bodies/health

In **Phase 2**, you will research a solution that has been (or could be) proposed to address the problem you described in Phase 1. Submit a 2-page (500 word) paper describing the solution and discussing its advantages and limitations. Use and cite at least two academically credible websites to strengthen this paper.

Solution categories:

- Individual-level
- Market-based
- Technological
- State-level
- Civil society

In **Phase 3** you will bring it all together, and write an essay (1500-2500 words) that sociologically analyzes your topic, its' problematic elements, and potential solutions. In this paper, you will make reflexive and critical connections between sociological concepts and theories and public perceptions about the topic.

Grading for Phase 1 and Phase 2

- Assignment must be submitted to Canvas
- You must cite at least three academically credible websites
- Graded on a Pass (50/50) Fail basis (0 (not submitted) or 25/50 (inadequate)).
- A pass will have a clearly-stated social and/or ecological problem (Phase 1) and solution (Phase 2) and will cite at least two academically-credible websites or sources.
- Late penalty: 10% / day

Grading for Phase 3, final RP essay (due last day of class)

- Assignment must be submitted to Canvas

- You must cite at least 4 academic sources in addition to the sources used in Phases 1 and 2.
- You *must* properly reference citations in your essay using APA citation style.
- Late penalty: 10% / day
- Your Phase 3 essay will be evaluated on 4 criteria:
 - i. Familiarity with environmental issues, 30%
 - ii. Sociological imagination and critical thinking¹ (skilfully, critically, and creatively using sociological theory to analyse your topic, its problematic elements, and solutions), 30%
 - iii. Clarity and force of argument (making a clear point that is introduced and sustained throughout the paper), 20%
 - iv. Eloquence (writing style, tone, grammar, spelling, and citation standards), 20%.

FINAL EXAM

- Closed book, 2-hour exam.
- Format: combination of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay.
- The final exam is cumulative and will test all material presented in the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1. Introduction to the Course

Jan 2: Intro to SOCI 420

- Readings: Syllabus

Jan 4: Environmental values

- No readings, class exercise

Week 2. Environmental Sociology

Jan 7: Origins of Environmental Sociology

- Readings: Catton Jr, W. R., & Dunlap, R. E. (1978). Environmental sociology: A new paradigm. *The American Sociologist*, 41-49.

Jan 9: What Do Environmental Sociologists Study?

¹ What is critical thinking? Briefly, critical thinking involves a higher-order of thinking that goes beyond *description*, and involves *analysis*. Critical thinking means skeptically asking *how* we know things, not just listing what you think are facts and truths. Critical thinking also involves reflexivity – testing and critically examining your own assumptions and thinking process. Trying watching this short video on critical thinking produced by teaching experts at UBC: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/student-toolkits/thinking-critically/>.

- Readings: Pellow, D. N., & Nyseth Brehm, H. (2013). An environmental sociology for the twenty-first century. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, 229-250.

- Reading summary due

Jan 11: What does environmental concern feel like?

- Small-group discussion, no reading
- Memo #1 due

Week 3: Climate Change

Jan 14: Climate Change and Sociology

- Readings: [National Geographic summary](#)
- Podcast (listen outside of class): The Daily, [A New Climate Tipping Point](#)
- Jorgenson, Andrew, et al. 2018. Social Science Perspectives on Drivers of and Responses to Global Climate Change. *WIREs Climate Change*, Available online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wcc.554>

Jan 16: Climate Denial (North America)

- Readings: Brulle, R. J., & Roberts, J. T. (2017). Climate misinformation campaigns and public sociology. *Contexts*, 16(1), 78-79.

Jan 18: Climate Denial (China)

- Readings: Liu, J. C. E. (2015). Low carbon plot: climate change skepticism with Chinese characteristics. *Environmental Sociology*, 1(4), 280-292.
- Reading summary due

Week 4. Climate: Alternative Perspectives

Jan 21: An Indigenous Perspective on Climate Change

- Readings: Whyte, K. (2017). Way Beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice.

Jan 23: Climate and Fire

- Readings: Davis, M. (1995). The case for letting Malibu burn. *Environmental History Review*, 19(2), 1-36.
- [An Account of My Hut, Christina Nichol](#) (n+1)
- Reading summary due

Jan 25: Why do we deny climate change?

- No reading, In-class exercise
- Memo #2 due

Week 5. Integration: Society & Environmental Issues I, Nature

Jan 28: Should Nature Have Rights?

- Readings: [Should rivers have rights?](#)
- [Environmental rights are human rights](#)

Jan 30: Conserving nature

- Readings: [Big Lonely Doug \(Globe & Mail\)](#)
- Rea, C. M. (2015). Commodifying conservation. *Contexts*, 14(1), 72-73.
- Reading summary due

Feb 1: An Indigenous Perspective

- No reading, in class film, *In the Light of Reverence*

Week 6. Integration: Society & Environmental Issues II, Justice

Feb 4: No class, instructor speaking at International Week, U Alberta

Feb 6: Environmental Injustice

- Readings: Auyero, J., & Swistun, D. (2007). Amidst garbage and poison: an essay on polluted peoples and places. *Contexts*, 6(2), 46-51.
- Chapter 1 in “Speaking for Ourselves”, Agyeman, J., Cole, P., HaluzadeLay, R., & O’Riley, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Speaking for ourselves: Environmental justice in Canada*. UBC Press.
- Reading summary due

Feb 8: Who Defines Environmental Justice?

- No reading, small-group discussion on Turkey Creek
- Memo #3 due

Week 7. Integration: Society & Environmental Issues III, Bodies

Feb 11: Food and Bodies

- Readings: Mackendrick, N. (2014). Foodscape. *Contexts*, 13(3), 16-18.

Feb 13: Consumer goods and Bodies

- Readings: Corder, A., & Brown, P. (2015). A multisector alliance approach to environmental social movements: flame retardants and chemical reform in the United States. *Environmental Sociology*, 1(1), 69-79.
- Reading summary due

Feb 15: Bodies as Sites of Environmental Injustice

- No reading, small-group discussion of Toxic Baby

Week 8. Reading Week

Feb 18-22, no classes

Week 9. Transitioning to Solutions

Feb 25: Theories of Consumerism

- Readings: Kennedy, E. H., & Krogman, N. (2008). Towards a sociology of consumerism. *International Journal of Sustainable Society*, 1(2), 172-189.
- Quiz #1

Feb 27: Individualizing Environmental Responsibility

- Readings: Maniates, M.F. 2001. Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World? *Global Environmental Politics*, 1(3): 31-52.
- [Globe and Mail, Zero Waste](#)
- Reading summary due

Mar 1: The Lorax

- No reading, in-class film and discussion
- Memo #4 due

Week 10. Market-based Solutions

Mar 4: Ecological Modernisation, State and Capital Protecting the Environment

- Readings: Mol, A. P., & Janicke, M. (2009). The origins and theoretical foundations of ecological modernisation theory. In *The Ecological Modernisation Reader. Environmental Reform in Theory and Practice*. (pp. 17-27). Routledge.

Mar 6: Eco-Consumerism?

- Readings: [Products](#) that are Earth and Profit Friendly
- Film (watch outside class) [Cradle-to-Cradle design](#)
- Reading summary due

Mar 8: Greenwashing

- No readings, small-group discussion: Focus on Chevron ads

Week 11. Individual-level Solutions

Mar 11: The Behavioral Wedge

- Readings: Dietz, T., Gardner, G. T., Gilligan, J., Stern, P. C., & Vandenberg, M. P. (2009). Household actions can provide a behavioral wedge to rapidly reduce US carbon emissions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106(44), 18452-18456.

Mar 13: Disproportionality

- Readings: Kennedy, E. H., Krahn, H., & Krogman, N. T. (2014). Egregious emitters: Disproportionality in household carbon footprints. *Environment and Behavior*, 46(5), 535-555.
- Reading summary due

Mar 15: Homework, try something!

- No reading, small-group discussion on personal experiments
- Memo #5 due

Week 12. Civil Society Solutions

Mar 18: Anti-fracking protests

- Readings: Obach, B. K. (2015). A fracking fracas demonstrates movement potential. *Contexts*, 14(4), 72-75.

Mar 20: Pipeline Protests, Guest lecture, Dr. David Tindall

- Readings: [Lessons from Clayoquot Sound](#)
- Reading summary due

Mar 22: Global Environmental Justice Activities

- No reading, bring laptops, EJ Atlas small-group exercise
- Quiz #2

Week 13. Integration: Society & Environmental Solutions

Mar 25: Environmentalists versus Resource-dependence

- Readings: White, R. Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living? 1996. In, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon. New York: WW Norton and Company, pp.171-85.

Mar 27: Bipartisan Support for Renewable Energy

- Readings: Horne, C. and E.H. Kennedy. Forthcoming. Explaining support for renewable energy: Commitments to self-sufficiency and communion. *Environmental Politics*. DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2018.1517917.
- Reading summary due

Mar 29: Social Class, Morality and Environmentalism

- No reading, small-group exercise (Cartoon)
- Memo #6 due

Week 14: Wrap up

Apr 1: Exam review

- No readings, but submit one exam question via Canvas

Apr 3: Environmental Values Exercise and Reflections

- No readings, but bring in environmental values exercise from Week 1

Email Communication

- Assignments must be submitted to the instructor via Canvas.
- Assignments will not be accepted via email.
- All course communication should be conducted through Canvas or your UBC email account.
- All emails must include the course code (SOCI 420) in the subject line.
- All emails should be signed with the student's full name and student number.
- Emails from students will generally be answered within 2 working days of receipt. (Please don't count on receiving last minute email answers to questions about an assignment. Plan ahead.)
- Treat emails as you would any other professional communication. Proofread. Use appropriate language. Be as concise as possible.
- Due to a large volume of emails, emails that ask questions that are answered in the course syllabus or website (e.g., "how much is assignment X worth") will not receive a response.

Classroom Etiquette

You probably know the basic rules of classroom etiquette, but everybody can use a refresher. You attend a top-ranked research institution and you should conduct yourself in a professional, responsible manner. Here are a few key things to remember:

- Refer to the instructor using standard university etiquette -- “Professor” or “Doctor”. Terms like “miss” “madam”, and “hey” are not appropriate for university communication.
- Turn off your phone when class begins.
- If you are late, enter quietly and discreetly, and avoid walking in front of the instructor and projection screen.
- Never record the lecture without explicit permission from the instructor.
- **Laptop usage** is allowed in class, but should be used for notes only. Other uses (e.g., emailing, web surfing) distract your fellow students. Inappropriate laptop use will result in the student being required to turn off the laptop and it may affect their participation mark

Here are a few things that students sometimes do, *that get noticed by professors*, and create a negative impression in university classrooms:

- Check your text messages during the lecture.
- Sleep.
- Leave class and come back 15 minutes later.
- Consistently come to class late.
- Let others do all the work during a group process.
- Pack your bags and look eagerly at the door when there are 3 minutes of class left.
- Talk to your neighbour (either during the lecture, or when a fellow student is trying to share their ideas with the rest of the class.)

Please note that students who exhibit open disengagement from in-class learning (e.g., texting, side-conversations) or other disrespectful behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

If you have read to the end of the syllabus, hooray and thank you!