# SOCI 420

# **Sociology of the Environment**

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Winter Term II, January 2021. ZOOM (info on Canvas)

Tuesday, Thursday 2:00 – 3:20

**Office hours** M-Th, on Canvas Chat, 4:00-5:00, or Wed. 2-4 pm by appointment (Zoom)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, you will examine environmental problems and solutions through a sociological lens. After a broad introduction to the field of environmental sociology, we will pursue three case studies in order to understand how environmental sociologists approach socio-ecological issues.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this course is to equip you to analyze environmental problems sociologically. This means being able to offer evidence-based and theoretically-informed answers to the following questions:

1. What constitutes an environmental issue?
2. What social forces are most salient in shaping the issue?
3. Which social actors, institutions, objects etc. are most negatively affected by the issue?
4. What solution(s) are being posed to deal with the issue(s)?
5. Which social actors, institutions, objects etc. are most *negatively* affected by the solutions posed to address the issue?
6. Which social actors, institutions, objects etc. are most *positively* affected by the solutions posed to address the issue?

## **CLASS FORMAT and STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

Because our class will be held online this year, I have structured most of our time to be interactive and to involve a lot of small group work. Most weeks, Tuesday’s class will entail an interactive lectures and Thursday’s class will be used for activities like small group work. You should always come to class prepared to engage in class discussions and to listen attentively to your fellow students, guest speakers, and instructor.

### *A Comment on Online Learning*

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit [this site](http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0) for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/supportresources/freedom-expression>

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

My home, from where I will be teaching this course, is located on traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the səl̓ilwətaɁɬ təməxʷ (Tsleil-Waututh), S’ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Qayqayt, Stz’uminus and šxʷməθkʷəy̓əmaɁɬ təməxʷ (Musqueam) people.

## **READING MATERIALS**

The readings for this course are available through the course Canvas site. There is no textbook for this course.

**Note:** **I assume and expect that you have or 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.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**

Assessment in this class is based on your participation in group work, several brief quizzes, an in-class essay, and three substantive group assignments.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assignment | Notes | Date Due | Weight |
| Quiz #1 | Multiple choice, in class | Feb 11 | 10% |
| Quiz #2 | Multiple choice, in class | March 23 | 10% |
| Quiz #3 | Multiple choice, in class | April 6 | 10% |
| Debate prep notes | Max 1 page of notes used to prepare for in-class debate | Feb 4 | 10% |
| Project #1: Consultant’s Climate Justice Report | Report should be 3-5 pages, submitted via Canvas | Feb 18 | 15% |
| Project #2: Presentation on Circular Economy | In-class presentation + submit slides via Canvas | March 16 and 18th; March 16 to submit ppt | 15% |
| Project #3: Academic Research Proposal | Summary of Proposal Topic | April 15 | 15% |
| Participation | Averaged self-assessment and peers’ assessment for each project | Throughout term | 15% (5% for each) |

#### **QUIZZES**

* Multiple choice quizzes will be held roughly once monthly to evaluate your comprehension of the course readings. Focus on the main arguments and concepts introduced in the paper and our discussion of the readings in class (especially as these relate to the [reflection questions](#_LEARNING_OBJECTIVES) for the course).
* You can expect roughly 15 questions on each quiz.
* You are welcome to use your notes for the quizzes.
* Quizzes will be held in the first 20 minutes of class time.

### ***DEBATE NOTES***

After we read about Treadmill of Production theory and Ecological Modernization theory, we will hold an in-class debate. You will be assigned to one side of the debate ahead of time and will be required to draw from the readings and beyond to argue either for or against the role of economic growth in achieving climate justice. You are required to share at least one argument and one rebuttal to the debate. The notes that you submit (ahead of class) can be in bullet-points and should not exceed one page (though references can be included on a separate page).

### ***PROJECT #1: Climate Change & Sociology***

For the first project, your job is to evaluate a government plan to address climate change. Working in groups of 5, you will read a government’s climate plan, summarize and evaluate the plan, and use additional texts to support your evaluation. Specifically, you are asked to integrate answers to each of the course reflection questions in the service of evaluating the extent to which the plan is likely to advance climate justice.

### ***PROJECT #2: Addressing eWaste***

For the second project, you are moving from government to the market. In this endeavour, you will work with a new group of 4-5 students to prepare an informative presentation on the issue of eWaste and the potential for Circular Economy (CE) solutions to address the issue. Based on your group’s inquiry into electronic waste and the circular economy (guided by the course reflection questions) you will prepare a presentation. Your presentation should involve a summary of the problem and solution, an application of the solution to the problem, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of CE to tackle the problem of eWaste.

### ***PROJECT #3: Environmental Citizenship***

In the third and final project, you will work on your own to prepare an overview of a research proposal. You will not need to include a methodological plan, but you do need to suggest an empirical question that is relevant to environmental sociology and that has the potential to make a contribution to the theory and practice of human-environment interactions. The theme for the proposal is around individual responsibilities to protect the environment. Rather than taking a for-or-against stance, you need to identify a research question that builds on existing knowledge and has the potential to teach us something about how societies respond to environmental issues (were the proposal to be implemented). As with the previous inquiry projects, you should ground your investigation in the course reflection questions.

## ***PARTICIPATION***

Because Projects 1 & 2 are done in groups, I will be asking you and each of your group members to evaluate the quality and quantity of your contributions to the project. Participation will be assessed after the final draft of each project is submitted. I will also ask each student to evaluate their participation in the course as a whole and will average your assessment with my own.

## CONFLICTING RESPONSIBILITIES

UBC recognizes that students may occasionally have conflicting responsibilities that affect their ability to attend class or examinations. These may include: representing the University, the province or the country in a competition or performance; serving in the Canadian military; or observing a religious rite. They may also include a change in a student’s situation that unexpectedly requires that student to work or take responsibility for the care of a family member, if these were not pre-existing situations at the start of term.

Students with conflicting responsibilities have a duty to arrange their course schedules so as to avoid, as much as possible, any conflicts with course requirements. As soon as conflicting responsibilities arise, students must notify **their Faculty Advising Office** (e.g. Arts Academic Advising), and can request an [academic concession](http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0#255). Instructors may not be able to comply with all such requests if the academic standards and integrity of the course or program would be compromised.

Varsity student-athletes should discuss any anticipated and unavoidable regular-season absences with the instructor at the start of term, and provide notice of playoff or championship absences in writing as soon as dates are confirmed.

Religious observance may preclude attending classes or examinations at certain times. In accordance with the [UBC Policy on Religious Holidays](https://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2010/08/policy65.pdf), students who wish to be accommodated for religious reasons must notify their instructors in writing at least two weeks in advance. Instructors provide opportunity for such students to make up work or examinations missed without penalty.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### Week 1. Introduction to the Course, Environmental Sociology

Jan 12: Lecture 1, Intro to SOCI 420

* Readings:
  + Syllabus

Jan 14: Lecture 2, What is Environmental Sociology?

* Readings:
  + Pellow, D. N., & Nyseth Brehm, H. (2013). An environmental sociology for the twenty-first century. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *39*, 229-250.
* Optional: Catton Jr, W. R., & Dunlap, R. E. (1978). Environmental sociology: A new paradigm. *The American Sociologist*, 41-49.

### Week 2: Project #1, Climate Change & Sociology (Overview)

Jan 19: Lecture 3, How can sociology help us understand climate change?

Guest Lecture: Kevin McCartney (UBC Geography)

* Readings
  + Canada’s top climate change risks (CCA) <https://cca-reports.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Report-Canada-top-climate-change-risks.pdf>
    - Read “Key Findings” (ix-xi), plus Chapter 2
  + [Climate change and society](https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054614) (Dietz and Shwom)

Jan 21: Lecture 4, Introduction to Project #1

* I will provide an overview of the task involved in Project #1
* In class you will work in your project groups to identify a plan to analyze. As an exemplar, we will read an excerpt of the Clean BC plan.
* Readings:
  + [Clean BC](https://blog.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/436/2019/02/CleanBC_Full_Report_Updated_Mar2019.pdf), pp.5-16

### Week 3. Project #1, Climate Change & Sociology (Justice)

Jan 26: Lecture 5, How are we impacted by environmental issues?

* Readings:
  + Whyte, K. (2017). Way Beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice.
  + Bacon, J. M. (2019). Settler colonialism as eco-social structure and the production of colonial ecological violence. *Environmental Sociology*, *5*(1), 59-69.

Jan 28: Lecture 6, Climate Justice Solutions

In class today, you will work in your groups to discuss and evaluate the Green New Deal and the Leap Manifesto. To what extent does the Clean BC plan align with these documents? Where does it differ?

* Readings:
  + [Green New Deal](https://youtu.be/d9uTH0iprVQ)
  + [Leap Manifesto](https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/)

### Week 4. Project #1, Climate Change & Sociology (Evaluation)

Feb 2: Lecture 7, Economic Growth: Harmful or Helpful?

* Readings:
  + Gould, K. A., Pellow, D. N., & Schnaiberg, A. (2004). Interrogating the treadmill of production: Everything you wanted to know about the treadmill but were afraid to ask. *Organization & Environment*, *17*(3), 296-316.
  + 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.
* Optional: Fisher, D. R., & Jorgenson, A. K. (2019). Ending the Stalemate: Toward a Theory of Anthro-Shift. *Sociological Theory*, *37*(4), 342-362.

Feb 4: Lecture 8, In-class Debate

* You will be assigned to a pro or con position ahead of time to debate the following question: *The Clean BC Plan promises clean economic growth. Economic growth is a necessary requirement of any attempt to achieve climate justice. Do you agree or disagree?*
* In-class debate
* Submit the notes you prepared to support your position (bullet points are fine) via Canvas before class begins.

### Week 5. Project #1, Climate Change & Sociology (Summary)

Feb 9: Lecture 9, Wrapping up Project #1

Guest lecture: David Tindall (Sociology)

* Readings:
  + Chapter 4, Seth Klein’s *A Good War*

Feb 11: Lecture 10, Project Work Day

* **Quiz #1 (Pellow & Brehm, Dietz & Shwom, Whyte, Gould et al., Mol & Jannicke, Klein)**
* This is a chance to get instructor feedback on your report. Working in small groups, you can polish the summary of the state of equity and climate in the jurisdiction (1/2 page), summary of the plan (1/2 page), evaluation of the plan (1.5 pages), global exemplar (1/2 page box), conclusion (1/2 page) and bibliography (1/2 page). *Note: page lengths are only estimates*.

### Reading Week

* Feb 15-19, no classes, but be sure to **submit your Project #1 report via Canvas by 11:59 pm.**
* **Submit assessment of participation and contributions to the group by 11:59 pm.**

### Week 6. Project #2, Addressing eWaste (Overview)

Stephanie Cairns, Smart Prosperity Institute (Guest Lecturer)

Feb 23: Lecture 11, What is the Circular Economy?

* Readings:
  + [The Global Cost of Electronic Waste](https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/09/the-global-cost-of-electronic-waste/502019/)
  + [Recycling Old Smart Phones](https://www.vox.com/2017/11/8/16621512/where-does-my-smartphone-iphone-8-x-go-recycling-afterlife-toxic-waste-environment)
  + Circular economy readings, TBA (Ellen MacArthur Foundation is a good place to get an overview)

Feb 25: Lecture 12, Project Work Day

* Working in your project groups, your job today is to do the research and synthesis necessary to produce 1-2 slides that offer an overview of the problem of eWaste. Remember to keep track of your sources for your annotated bibliography.
* **Submit your Project #1 report via Canvas by 11:59 pm.**
* **Submit assessment of participation and contributions to the group by 11:59 pm.**

### Week 7. Project #2, Addressing eWaste (Evaluating the Circular Economy)

Mar 2: Lecture 13, Circular Economy in Practice

Guest speaker: Frances Edmonds, Head of Sustainability (HP Canada)

* Readings:
  + Atasu, A., Agrawal, V., Rinaldi, M., Herb, R., & Ülkü, S. (2018). Rethinking Sustainability in Light of the EU’s New Circular Economy Policy’. [*Harvard Business Review*](https://hbr.org/2018/07/rethinking-sustainability-in-light-of-the-eus-new-circular-economy-policy). July 3, 2018.
  + Ioannou, I., & Serafeim, G. (2019). Yes, sustainability can be a strategy. [*Harvard Business Review*](https://hbr.org/2019/02/yes-sustainability-can-be-a-strategy)*,* Feb 11, 2019.

Mar 4: Lecture 14, Project Work Day

* Your task today is to complete the final set of slides and the 1 pg annotated bibliography. Prepare at least 2 slides evaluating CE, finalize your presentation, and type up your annotated bibliography.

### Week 8. Project #2, Addressing eWaste (Evaluating the Circular Economy)

Mar 9: Lecture 15, Looking Critically at the Circular Economy

* Readings:
  + Kirchherr, J., Reike, D., & Hekkert, M. (2017) Conceptualizing the circular economy: An analysis of 114 definitions. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 127, 221-232.
  + Hobson, K. (2020). [The limits of the loops: critical environmental politics and the Circular Economy](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09644016.2020.1816052?casa_token=_1IqQBKzNR0AAAAA:no4cLVmlSVEQ6KEYu1UogP_e7JpmRUeGjUOJAy-3oHr7jmiTwpwk9FFQ_V5PXm2qp44KqsUJ1Ml2). *Environmental Politics*, 1-19.

Mar 11: Lecture 16, Project Work Day

* Your task today is to complete the final set of slides and the 1 pg annotated bibliography. Prepare at least 2 slides evaluating CE, finalize your presentation, and type up your annotated bibliography.

### Week 9. Project #2, Addressing eWaste (Presentations)

Mar 16: Presentations from Groups 1-3

* **Due: Please ensure one group member submits the slides and annotated bibliography by the end of the day.**

Mar 18: Presentations from Groups 4-6

* **Due: Submit your evaluation of participation and contributions of each group member (incl. yourself)**

### Week 10. Project #3, “Environmental Citizenship Research Proposal” (Overview)

Mar 23: Lecture 16. Whose job is it to protect the environment?

* **Quiz #2 (all CE content)**
* Readings:
  + Dobson, A. (2007). Environmental citizenship: towards sustainable development. *Sustainable Development*, *15*(5), 276-285.
  + Maniates, M.F. 2001. Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World? *Global Environmental Politics,* 1(3): 31-52.

Mar 25: Lecture 17. The Lorax

* View and discuss The Lorax; apply insights to the issue of environmental citizenship

### Week 11. Project #3, “Environmental Citizenship Research Proposal” (Theoretical Framework)

Mar 30: Lecture 18. Evaluating environmental citizenship

* Readings:
  + Anantharaman, M. (2018). Critical sustainable consumption: a research agenda. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, *8*(4), 553-561.
  + Kennedy, Emily Huddart, and Josée Johnston. 2019. “If you love the environment, why don’t you do something to save it? Bringing culture into environmental analysis." *Sociological Perspectives*, 62(5): 593-602.
* Based on your reading of the overview to the special issue, select one paper to read for Thursday and use as the basis for your research proposal.

Apr 1: Lecture 19. Culture & Environment Jigsaw

* Be prepared to discuss a paper from the special issue and describe how you might use it to identify a new area for research that is relevant to the question: “Whose job is it to protect the environment?”

### Week 12: Project #3, “Environmental Citizenship Research Proposal” (Theoretical Framework)

Apr 6: Lecture 20. Why do we consume?

* Readings:
  + Shove, E. (2010). Beyond the ABC: Climate change policy and theories of social change. *Environment and planning A*, *42*(6), 1273-1285.
  + Kennedy, E. H., & Krogman, N. (2008). Towards a sociology of consumerism. *International Journal of Sustainable Society*, *1*(2), 172-189.

Apr 8: Lecture 21. Quiz and Movie

* **Quiz #3 (Dobson, Maniates, Kennedy & Johnson, Shove, Kennedy & Krogman)**
  + Film (via Kanopy): [Consumerism & The Limits to Imagination](https://www.kanopy.com/product/consumerism-limits-imagination)

### Week 13: Course Review

Apr 13: Lecture 22. Course Summary (no readings)

* Remember to turn in your proposal by April 15th.