

Sociology 549: Sociology of the Environment

Spring, 2018
T/R 9.30 – 10.50 am
3125 Pearson

Instructor

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Office hours: T/R 2.10 - 3 pm, and by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the sub-discipline of environmental sociology. The course is intended to introduce you to some of the most seminal and influential theoretical frameworks and debates that have shaped, and are shaping, our understandings of the relationship between the environment and society. The study of the environment is deeply interdisciplinary and while the course is grounded in the discipline of sociology it also draws on the work of other disciplines such as anthropologists and geographers to help us think about and understand the social causes and social consequences of environmental problems.

Key themes for the course include the social construction of environmental problems; the interrelationship between social inequality and environmental inequality; how race, class, and gender affect one's perceptions, experiences, and responses to environmental problems; and the role of individuals, states, markets, civil society and social movements to bring to bear environmental justice. While it is impossible to be comprehensive, the course attempts to draw on empirical examples to illustrate how these issues and debates play out at both the local and global level, between 'developed' and 'developing' countries, and within rural and (sub)urban spaces.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should have:

- 1) Gained a critical in-depth understanding of the relationship between society and the environment.
- 2) Developed broad familiarity with the major theoretical perspectives, concepts and debates associated with the sub-discipline of environmental sociology.
- 3) Applied these concepts and theories to contemporary environmental problems and debates through in-class discussion and writing.

Course Requirements and Assessment

This course is intended to provide you with the opportunity to critically engage with these ideas through reading, discussions, and writing. The organization of the course and your individual assessment is intended to facilitate this process.

Required Readings (Available at Amazon.com and ISU Library)

Detraz, Nicole. 2017. *Gender and the Environment*. Polity.

Dunlap, Riley and Robert Brulle. 2015. *Climate Change and Society*. Oxford University Press

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. *Strangers in their Own Land*. The New Press.

Taylor, Dorceta. 2014. *Toxic Communities*. New York University Press

All other reading materials are available to download from Canvas: <https://canvas.iastate.edu/>

1. Class Participation

To help structure your reading and prepare you for the discussion, you should be able to answer the following questions from each of the readings (Maurice Zeitlin):

1. What does the author want to know? (What is the central question?)
2. Why? Or, So What? (What is the intellectual rationale?)
3. What's the author's answer? (What is the argument or substantive theory?)
4. How does the author go about finding out if it is wrong or not? (What is the method of confirmation?)

a) In-Class Discussion (10%)

This course is organized as a seminar format rather than as a lecture. Therefore, simply coming to class does not count as participation. Rather, you are expected to **actively contribute to class discussions**, which you can only do if you have read and engaged with the readings, as well as your classmate's questions and commentaries. Your in-class discussion grade is dependent on the degree to which you have read and thought about the readings and commentaries, come to class prepared to discuss the readings, and your ability to actively listen and engage with your classmates.

A: You contributed substantially to the discussion in both a quantitative and qualitative sense. You made thoughtful and insightful comments on specific passages or arguments in the text. You listened carefully to your classmates and sought to respond to their comments in a manner that moved the discussion forward (rather than sideways).

B: You contributed once or twice and provided some relevant insights into the readings and commentaries. You actively listened to your classmates.

C: You contributed to the discussion, but your remarks were off topic or not related to the readings. Little evidence of active listening.

D. You were physically present but provided no evidence of being intellectually present.

b) Discussion Questions (10%)

Before each class (6 pm the previous day) you are required to post on Canvas at least one question per reading that is designed to facilitate class discussion. Exceptional questions strive to take us deeper into (not away from) the reading itself or seeks to link different concepts/theories/ideas from different readings. You should bring your questions to class.

++ Exceptional question

+ Good question

- Unsatisfactory question. Little relevance to the readings.

c) Commentaries (10%)

You are required to write **four** response/reaction commentaries incorporating all of that week's assigned readings. These should be very short papers of around 300-400 words max. They should be posted to the Canvas discussion board no later than Monday, 6 pm for that week to ensure that everyone in the class can read each other's postings before we meet. **No late postings will be accepted.**

The goal of these commentaries is to provide evidence that you have critically and thoughtfully engaged with all the required readings. This will help prepare you for the class discussion, as well as writing your essays and final paper. In these responses, you may identify what you found useful, insightful, problematic or puzzling about the readings and why, make connections with previous

readings from the class, explain how the readings helped you to think sociologically and critically about your own environmental topic.

- ++ Exceptional response
- + Good response. You engaged meaningfully with the readings
- Unsatisfactory. You did not engage with the readings.

d) Identification of Environmental Topic

To help apply the sociological theories and concepts we discuss each week, each student will identify an environmental topic that they wish to investigate throughout the semester. By Week 2 (Jan 16), you will have identified a popular article (and posted it to Canvas) that discusses your issue. That week you will briefly discuss your topic in class and why it's an important topic for sociological investigation. As we move through the course, you will be expected to think about the readings in relation to your environmental topic, you will write your essays, develop a bibliography and write a final paper on this topic.

2. Discussion Leader (10%)

Each student will choose one week of classes for which they will introduce the readings and demonstrate how they are applicable to our contemporary social world. The discussion leader will provide a 6-8 minute oral presentation that should: 1) briefly overview the main objective(s) of the paper and argument(s) of the author (s); 2) identify what you think were the 2-3 key points from the readings; 3) apply the reading: identify a key idea, concept, argument from the readings and how it relates to your environmental topic. The discussion leader will summarize these points using bullet points in a one-page handout for the class.

3. Critical Review Essays (15% each)

You are required to write two short critical review essays (1,500 words) of the course readings. The objective is for you to demonstrate that you have critically engaged with the readings and can use sociological theory and concepts to analyze a contemporary environmental problem. Your first critical review essay should select a theory, concept or debate covered in the readings from week 3-6, and then critically assess that theory, concept or debate in relation to your environmental topic. Your second critical review essay should select a theory, concept or debate covered in the readings from week 7-13 and then critically assess that theory, concept or debate in relation to your environmental topic. Final essays will be shared with the class through Canvas.

4. Final Paper (30%)

You are required to write a final paper that engages in the topic of environmental sociology and it must draw on environmental sociological concepts, theories, and readings. The form of the paper is up to you but it should be something that will be useful to you outside this class. For example, it could be the literature review for your dissertation proposal or thesis/dissertation chapter, it could be the basis of a journal article; it could be organized as a response to a possible question(s) on a prelim exam. The paper should be approximately 6,000 words (not including the bibliography). You will hand in different components of the paper throughout the semester.

- a) A half-page abstract of your paper topic (5 percent)
- b) A revised abstract, outline of the paper (1 page), and preliminary bibliography (5 percent)
- c) A rough draft of the paper (5 percent)
- d) Final paper (15 percent)

Additional Grading Criteria

1. All writing assignments will be graded on their structure, writing, and content including clarity, coherence, logic, grammar, and spelling.
2. All papers should have a title, be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt, 1-inch margins, with page numbers, and should be stapled.
3. Proper citation of the evidence that you use from the readings and/or other materials. You may use any citation style, but you must choose one and be consistent.
4. Plagiarism involves misrepresenting someone else's work as you own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense that will not be tolerated. If plagiarism is discovered it will result in a 0.0 for that assignment and possibly a 0.0 for the course. If you are unsure about this, please come and see me.

Grading and Evaluation

Due Date	Assignment	Percent
	Active Participation	30
Weekly	- Reading questions	10
(Choose 4)	- Commentaries	10
Weekly	- In-Class discussion	10
Jan 16	o Environmental Topic	
TBA	Discussion leader	10
Feb 22	Critical Essay I	15
Mar 29	Critical Essay II	15
	Final Paper	30
Jan 25	- Abstract	5
Feb 15	- Outline and bibliography	5
Apr 12 (early papers welcome)	- Draft paper	5
May 1, 4 PM	- Final	15
	Total	100

Course Outline, 2018

Week 1 (Jan 9 & 11): Introductions and Course Overview

Introductions, discuss syllabus

Introduction to Environmental Sociology

Catton, William and Riley Dunlap. 1978. Environmental sociology: A new paradigm. *The American Sociologist*. 13(1): 41-49

Pellow, David and Hollie Brehm 2013. An environmental sociology for the twenty-first century. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 39: 229-50

Week 2 (Jan 16 & 18): Environmental Problems and Society

Climate Change

Norgaard, K. 2017. The sociological imagination in a time of climate change. *Global and Planetary Change* (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gloplacha.2017.09.018>

Brulle and Dunlap, 2015. Sociology and Climate Change (Chapter 1). *Climate Change and Society*.

Rosa, et.al, 2015. The Human Driving Forces (Chapter 2). *Climate Change and Society*.

Your Environmental Topic

Toxic Wastes

Pellow, David Naguib. 2007. The Global Village Dump: Trashing the Planet. In *Resisting Global Toxics*. MIT Press: Cambridge.

Supplemental

Rich, Nathaniel. 2006. The lawyer who became DuPont's worst nightmare. *New York Times Magazine*. Jan 6. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/magazine/the-lawyer-who-became-duponts-worst-nightmare.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=second-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&r=1>

Your Environmental Topic

Understandings: Sociological Theories of Society and the Environment

Week 3 (Jan 23 & 25): Political Economy Approaches in Environmental Sociology

NB: Final Paper Abstract due in class Jan 25

Gould, Kenneth, David Pellow, and Allan Schnaiberg. 2004. Interrogating the treadmill of production: everything you wanted to know about the treadmill but were afraid to ask. *Organization and Environment* 17(3): 296-316

Foster, John Bellamy. 2005. The treadmill of accumulation: Schnaiberg's environment and Marxian political economy. *Organization and Environment* 18: 7-18

Bell, Shannon and Richard York. 2010. Community economic identity: The coal industry and ideological construction in West Virginia. *Rural Sociology* 75(1): 111-143

Week 4 (Jan 30 & Feb 1): Ecological Modernization and the Risk Society

Spaargaren, Gert and Arthur Mol. 1992. Sociology, environment, and modernity: Ecological modernization as a theory of social change. *Society and Natural Resources*. 5: 323-344

Buttel, Frederick 2000. Ecological modernization as social theory. *Geoforum* 31: 57-65

Stuart, Diana, Rebecca Schewe, and Matthew McDermott. 2012. Responding to Climate Change: Barriers to Reflexive Modernization in US Agriculture. *Organization & Environment*. 25(3): 308-327

Week 5 (Feb 6 & 8): Neoliberalism and the Environment

McCarthy, James and Scott Prudham. 2004. Neoliberal nature and the nature of neoliberalism. *Geoforum* 35: 275-283

Perrow and Pulver. 2015. Organizations and Markets (Chapter 3) *Climate Change and Society*.

Supplemental

McAfee, Kathleen. 2012. Nature in the market-world: Ecosystem services and inequality. *Development*. 55(1): 25-33

Mansfield, Becky. 2004. Neoliberalism in the oceans: "rationalization," property rights, and the commons question. *Geoforum* 35: 313-326

Konefal, Jason. 2012. Environmental movements, market-based approaches, and neoliberalization: A case study of the sustainable seafood movement. *Organization & Environment* 26(3): 336-352

Week 6 (Feb 13 & 15): Social-Psychological Approaches

NB: Final Paper revised abstract, outline and bibliography due in class Feb 15

Arbuckle, et.al, 2013, Understanding farmer perspectives on climate change adaptation and mitigation. *Environment and Behavior*. 47(2): 205-234.

Shwom et.al, Public Opinion on Climate Change, (Chapter 9) *Climate Change and Society*.

Supplemental

Feinberg, M. and R. Willer. 2013. The moral roots of environmental attitudes. *Psychological Science* 24 (1): 56-62.

Impacts: Environmental Inequality: Race, Class, Gender

Week 7 (Feb 20 & 22): Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice

NB: Essay 1 due in class Feb 22

Mohai, Paul, David Pellow and J. Timmons Roberts. 2009. Environmental justice. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 34: 405-430

Schlosberg, D. 2013. Theorising environmental justice: the expanding sphere of a discourse. *Environmental Politics*. 22(1)37-55)

Harlan et.al, 2015. Climate Justice and Inequality (Chapter 5) *Climate Change and Society*.

Harrison, Jill. 2008. Abandoned bodies and spaces of sacrifice. Pesticide drift activism and the contestation of neoliberal environmental politics in California. *Geoforum*: 39(3): 1197-1214

Week 8 (Feb 27 & Mar 1): Gender and the Environment

Detraz, Nicole. 2017. *Gender and the Environment*. Polity. Chapters 1-3

Detraz, Nicole. 2017. *Gender and the Environment*. Polity. Chapters 4-7

Supplemental

Seager, J. 2003. Rachel Carson Died of Breast Cancer: The Coming Age of Feminist Environmentalism. *Signs*: 28(3): 945-972.

McCright, Aaron M. 2010. The effects of gender on climate change knowledge and concern in the American public. *Population and Environment*. 32(1): 66-87.

McCright, Aaron M and Riley Dunlap. 2011. Cool dudes: The denial of climate change among conservative white males in the United States. *Global Environmental Change* 21:1163-1172

Week 9 (Mar 6 & 8): No Classes (read ahead!)

Week 10 (Mar 12-16): Spring Break

Week 11 (Mar 20 & 22): Racism and the Environment

Taylor, Dorceta. 2014. *Toxic Communities*. New York University Press. Chapters 1-3

Taylor, Dorceta. 2014. *Toxic Communities*. New York University Press. Chapters 4-6

Week 12 (Mar 27 & 29): Racism and the Environment

NB: Essay II due in class March 29

Taylor, Dorceta. 2014. *Toxic Communities*. New York University Press. Chapters 7 and 8

Taylor, Dorceta. 2014. *Toxic Communities*. New York University Press. Chapters 9-11

Supplemental

Pellow, David Naguib. 2002. *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago*. MIT Press

Pellow, David Naguib. 2007. *Resisting Global Toxics. Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice*. MIT Press

Week 13 (Apr 3 & 5): Environmental Inequality and “the Right”

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. *Strangers in their Own Land*. The New Press. Chapters 1-8

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. *Strangers in their Own Land*. The New Press. Chapters 9-13

Responses: Individual vs Social Movements

Week 14 (Apr 10 & 12): (White) Privilege and Individual Consumption Practices

NB: Final Paper Draft due in class April 12

Szasz, Andrew. 2007. Suburbanization as Inverted Quarantine. In *Shopping our Way to Safety*. University of Minnesota Press.

Ehrhardt-Martinez et.al, 2015. Consumption and Climate Change (Chapter 4) *Climate Change and Society*.

Week 15 (Apr 17 & 19): Social (Counter)Movements and the Environment

Brulle, Robert. 1996. Environmental discourse and social movement organizations: A historical and rhetorical perspective on the development of US environmental organizations. *Sociological Inquiry* 66(1): 58-93

Caniglia et.al, 2015. Civil Society, Social Movements and Climate Change (Chapter 8) *Climate Change and Society*.

Dunlap and McCright. 2015. Challenging Climate Change: The Denial Countermovement (Chapter 10) *Climate Change and Society*.

Week 16: (Apr 24 & 26): Concluding Observations

No Readings

Week 17: (May 1 & 3): Finals Week

Final Paper Due: 4 pm, Tuesday, May 1 (Hand-in to my Mailbox at 316 East Hall)