

ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

SOC/ES 261

11:30 – 12:30 MWF

Sage 3218

Spring 2018

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Course Description

This course will introduce you to thinking about connections between social relationships and the natural environment. Environmental sociologists study how environmental problems have social origins, often asking the following questions: How does human organization and action affect the natural environment? How does the natural environment affect human organization and action? How do relationships between humans and non-humans construct and sustain society?

As an “Explore Society” general education course, this class takes an approach characterized under the large umbrella of liberal arts education. Liberal arts is *not* a reference to politics. Rather, liberal arts refers to an approach to education that focuses on broad knowledge and transferable skills while focusing on values, ethics, and community. Along with developing skills described in the course goals, you will also be introduced to several issues that you will encounter as a private citizen and community member long after you leave UWO.

Course Goals

A core Learning Outcome at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is “Knowledge of Sustainability and Its Applications.” Certainly, this course will address the concept of sustainability, and particularly focus on challenges to sustainability faced by environmental advocates at different scales of society. Along the way, we will have an opportunity to engage in critical thinking and quantitative literacy applied to various ethical dilemmas regarding sustainable practices.

Course Materials

Leslie King and Deborah McCarthy (eds), *Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action* (2009)

*Additional materials made available online

Reading Quizzes

Much of this course will rely on a discussion of assigned readings, so it is important that you keep up with the reading schedule and take careful notes. There will be five (open note) reading

quizzes throughout the semester. Your lowest score will be dropped from your grade. Make-up quizzes will only be granted if you give me advanced notice and/or have a documented excuse.

Friday Forums

At seven points in the semester, we will devote our meeting time to a “Friday Forum.” Early in the semester, we will form seven groups (each with a unique topic). Each group will be responsible for delivering a presentation and leading a discussion on their topic for one Friday Forum. Audience members are expected to engage in the discussion, which will often take the form of a debate. Your grade will depend not only on your preparation for and performance during your presentation day, but also upon your attendance at other groups’ forums.

Sustainability Essay

For this assignment, you will write a 3-5 page essay responding to the following questions: How should we define sustainability? Is it a meaningful concept? What systematic behaviors should be reformed to work toward a sustainable future (or, what prescriptions should be avoided in the context of sustainability discussions)? How should we balance individual versus collective action when working toward sustainable futures? Your answer must make reference to the Maniates reading and either/both of the readings assigned on Feb. 12th. Due in D2L dropbox on Feb. 23rd.

Film Review

We will view Hayao Miyazaki’s classic *Princess Mononoke*. You are responsible for identifying an environmental sociological theme present in the movie and analyzing it in light of one of the theories covered earlier in the semester. This film review should be about 4 – 6 pages in length.

Energy Use Ethnography

This assignment is both individual and collective. We will be looking at common ways of assessing energy use before deciding as a class what categories we would like to apply to ourselves. Each of us will document detailed data (in both qualitative and quantitative formats) about the social context of our energy use. I will centralize this data and each of you will write a paper analyzing your energy use. More details will be provided, but if you would like a jump start, you may read ahead to the materials assigned for March 12th or 14th.

GRADING

Reading Quizzes (4)	20%
Friday Forum	20%
Energy Use Ethnography	30%
Film Review	10%
Sustainability Essay	10%
Attendance and Participation	10%

Late work will be accepted up to three days after the due date, with a 10% penalty deducted for each day late.

Your final grade will be computed on the following percentage scale:

A	92.5-100%
A-	90.0-92.49
B+	87.5-89.99
B	82.5-87.49
B-	80.0-82.49
C+	77.5-79.99
C	72.5-77.49
C-	70.0-72.49
D+	67.5-69.99
D	62.5-67.49
D-	60.00-62.49
F	0-59.99

SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Environment & Society

- Jan 29 M Introduction to the Course
- Jan 31 W What is Environmental Sociology?
- *Optional:* Bohr and Dunlap, “Key Topics in Environmental Sociology”
- Feb 2 F Environmental Problems as Social Problems
- Maniates, “Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?” (KM, ch. 22)

Week 2 – Social Construction of Nature

- Feb 5 M Friday Forum Signup
- Feb 7 W Social Construction I
- Robbins et al., “Social Construction of Nature”
- Feb 9 F Social Construction II
- Davis, “Touch the Magic” (KM, ch. 8)
 - Steingraber, “The Social Construction of Cancer” (KM, ch. 18)
 - **Reading Quiz #1**

Week 3 – Science & Environmental Conflicts

- Feb 12 M Sustainability
- Heinberg, “What is Sustainability?”
 - Newton and Freyfogle, “Sustainability, a Dissent”

- Feb 14 W Scientific Knowledge and Environmental Conflicts
- Ozawa, “Science in Environmental Conflicts” (KM, ch. 15)
 - Edwards, “An Ounce of Precaution” (KM, ch. 16)

Feb 16 F FRIDAY FORUM #1

Week 4 – Theorizing Environment & Society I

- Feb 19 M Political Economy
- Robbins et al., “Political Economy”
 - *Optional*: Foster, “The Vulnerable Planet” (KM, ch. 1)
 - **Reading Quiz #2**
- Feb 21 W Ecological Modernization Theory
- Fisher & Freud, “Ecological Modernization and Its Critics”
 - *Optional*: Schlosberg and Rinfret, “Ecological Modernization, American Style”
- Feb 23 F Treadmill of Production
- Schnaiberg and Gould, “Treadmill Predispositions and Social Responses” (KM, ch. 3)
 - **Sustainability Essay Due**

Week 5 – Theorizing Environment & Society II

- Feb 26 M Malthusianism
- Ehrlich and Ehrlich, “Population Bomb Revisited”
- Feb 28 W Eco-Feminism
- Shiva, “Development, Ecology, and Women”
 - *Optional*: Kennedy and Dzialo, “Locating Gender in Environmental Sociology”
- Mar 2 F FRIDAY FORUM #2

Week 6 – Media and the Environment

- Mar 5 M Pop Cultural Nature
- Todd, “Prime-Time Subversion: The Environmental Rhetoric of *The Simpsons*” (KM, ch. 14)
 - **Reading Quiz #3**

Mar 7 W Film – *Princess Mononoke*

Mar 9 F Film – *Princess Mononoke*

Week 7 – Energy & Society

Mar 12 M Household Energy Use I

- Sovacool, “Cultural and Behavioral Barriers,” from *The Dirty Energy Dilemma*

Mar 14 W Household Energy Use II

- Lutzenhiser, “A Cultural Model of Household Energy Consumption”

Mar 16 F **No Class**

- **Film Review DUE (D2L)**

Week 8 SPRING BREAK (Mar 18-25)

Week 9 - Environmental Justice & Vulnerability

Mar 26 M Environmental Justice

- Bullard and Johnson, “Grassroots Activism and Its Impact on Public Policy Decision Making” (KM, ch. 4)

Mar 28 W Climate Change Impacts & Social Vulnerability

- Ribot – “Vulnerability Does Not Fall from the Sky”

Mar 30 F FRIDAY FORUM #3

Week 10 – Climate Change & Climate Change Denial, part I

Apr 2 M Climate Policy

Apr 4 W Individual Denial

- Norgaard, “Emotions, Denial, and Social Movement Nonparticipation” (KM, ch. 21)

Apr 6 F FRIDAY FORUM #4

- **Reading Quiz #4**

Week 11 – Climate Change Denial, part II

Apr 9 M Cultures of Denial
Apr 11 W Networks of Denial
Apr 13 F Film (subject to reading quiz)

Week 12

Apr 16 M Work Day
Apr 18 W Post-materialism (Environmental Values)
Apr 20 F FRIDAY FORUM #5

Week 13 – Environmental Concern & Risk Perception

Apr 23 M Concern, Behaviors, and Risk Perceptions I
 • Carolan, “Sociological Ambivalence and Climate Change”
Apr 25 W Concern, Behaviors, and Risk Perceptions II
 • Carolan, “Do You See What I See? Examining the Epistemic Barriers to Sustainable Agriculture” (Read intro, conclusion, and skim the interview quotes)
Apr 27 F FRIDAY FORUM #6

Week 14 – Consumption

Apr 30 M Consumerism and the Environment
 • Lutzenhiser, “Greening the Economy from the Bottom Up? Lessons in Consumption from the Energy Case”
 • Schor, “Cleaning the Closet: Toward a New Fashion Ethic” (KM, ch. 23)
 • *Optional*: Andersen, “Selling Mother Earth” (KM, ch. 13)
May 2 W Film: *No Impact Man*
May 4 F FRIDAY FORUM #7

Week 15 – Review of Course

May 7 M Individual & Collective Responses

- Re-read Maniates, “Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World” & review your sustainability essay
- Bring to this class: ideas on what inspires (or terrifies) you about environment-society futures (whether social movements, consumer patterns, policy, etc.)
- **Reading Quiz #5**

May 9 W **Energy Use Ethnography DUE (D2L)**