

Michael Lengefeld, PhD
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Location: Van Meter, 102
MonWedFri 12:00 PM - 1:10 PM

Office / Hours: Van Meter G18, MonWed 10:30-11:30, and by appointment

Course Description

This course aims to provide students with an overview of major approaches and debates central to understanding the relationship between nature and society. While the course is specifically intended to provide general background to sociology and environmental studies students, it is not limited to such students. Our general goal is to deepen collective understanding of the dynamics of power and inequality that shape individuals, human societies, and their interactions with the natural environment. The class will pursue this goal by contextualizing the early work, reviewing core theories of human-environment dynamics, and using these newfound theoretical skills to consider the issues surrounding the social construction of nature, political economy, environmental justice, and development. We will examine the interactions of these problems through in-depth study of issues including agricultural production, energy use, and resource conflict.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes	Method of Evaluation
1. Evaluate environmental sustainability issues by systematically using discipline-specific knowledge	Two exams, discussion leader, reflection journal, final project
2. Determine how personal and collective decisions and actions affect the environment	Reflection journal, essay questions on two exams, final project
3. Write effectively and analytically about contemporary nature-society relations	Discussions and in-class activities, final project

- 1. Evaluate environmental sustainability issues by systematically using discipline-specific knowledge.** We will examine the discipline of environmental sociology through pieces of writing, information, and data in order to distinguish practices of representing the social world from the social world being represented. Sociology and Environmental Studies majors demonstrate a vivid awareness of the relationship between personal biography and historical conditions.
- 2. Determining how personal and collective decisions and actions affect the environment.** Sociology and Environmental Studies majors make sense of empirical facts and findings as instances of more general social forms, processes, or relationships. They invoke concepts to envision the particulars of social life in context while developing an understanding of how structures of inequality, social institutions, and public policies shape the natural environment and the life courses and life chances of individuals.
- 3. Write effectively and analytically about contemporary nature-society relations.** Sociology and Environmental Studies majors use sociological methods to systematically investigate social phenomena. They organize and analyze empirical materials to develop findings that illuminate social processes and problems, and express themselves thoughtfully and articulate ideas with a continuous respect for others.

Resources and Grading

Required Texts

Uploaded to Canvas – no textbook required!

Students should bring a printed or electronic version of the readings to class each day. **This is the only time personal electronics are allowed in class** (see section on Classroom Civility below for details). All other readings will be available via the course website.

Learning Opportunities and Evaluation

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
1. Individual Meetings with Dr. Lengefeld (2%) and “Letter to Self” (3%)	5%	Meetings must be scheduled by Week 3, “Letter to Self” Due Week 2
2. Participation in Group Discussion/Activities	10%	
3. Reading Assessment Pop Quizzes	15%	--
4. Reflection Journal (4 total, 6.25% each)	25%	2-24, 4-6, 4-20, 5-4
5. Midterm Project	20%	3-27
6. Environmental Sociological Autobiography	25%	5-12

Letter Grade Scale

A 95%-100%	B- 80%-82%	D+ 66%-69%
A- 90%-94%	C+ 77%-79%	D 60%-65%
B+ 87%-89%	C 73%-76%	F 59% and below
B 83%-86%	C- 70%-72%	

*A grade represents my best professional evaluation of a piece of work. It neither is, nor can be, a judgment about the person who submitted the work.

1. Individual Meetings with Dr. Lengefeld: By the end of week 3 of the semester, each student must schedule to meet with Prof. Lengefeld during office hours or by appointment. In these meetings we will discuss learning styles, and your goals for the course worth 2% of the course grade. Students will sign up for these meetings during class. On the first day of class students will complete a “Letter to Self” worth 3% of the course grade.

2. Participation in Group Discussion/Activities: By keeping up with class material and assignments, engaging in debate, and participating in general, you help to create a more dynamic learning environment. Active participation discussion and group activities constitutes 10% of the course grade.

3. Reading Assessment Pop Quizzes: These frequent low-stakes pop quizzes will test for comprehension of the central concepts from assigned readings. Constitutes 15% of the course grade.

4. Reflection Journal: Over the course of the semester, you will complete five 750-1,000 word (ie, ~3 page) essays responding to a prompt given out in class. These individual writing opportunities will allow you to engage in reflection regarding significant topics in the course. Constitutes 20% of the course grade.

5. Midterm Project: We will examine the international politics of climate change, and the role of climate change in domestic politics. This will be accomplished by using key theories in environmental sociology

to analyze the environmental and policy positions of important American politicians. More detail about the assignment will be provided in class.

6. Environmental Sociological Autobiography: Who you are is the result of the many lived experiences you have encountered in your life, and the environmental contexts in which those experiences occurred. In turn, these different social experiences and environmental contexts are shaped by your perspective on your relationship to them. The environmental sociological autobiography is a multi-stage reflective and written exercise that draws on your personal history and experiences as you consider the ecological context of some period in your life. The goal is to individually and collectively explore how the landscapes and ecological communities we have inhabited influence us as individuals, set the context of our lives, and how our cultural and social institutions shape our expectations of landscape. In other words, you will tell your life story while using theories in environmental sociology to illuminate your politics of location and your political ecology. Which agents of socialization have influenced you and the natural environments and species that are important to you, and how? Details for this project will be provided, and we will have several in-class workshops to prepare these projects. Constitutes 25% of the course grade.

Attendance: Students are permitted 3 class absences, no questions asked. Unless prior accommodations are established, any further absences will result in grade penalties; any student with six unexcused absences will fail the course.

Missed Examination/Assignments/Late Work: All of the test and assignment due dates are given in the “learning opportunities and evaluation” section above, and in the course schedule. Written documentation of a serious emergency is required to be excused from completing an exam at the scheduled time. Late assignments will be penalized 33% per day late.

Lecture Notes: Students should take notes in class – no cell phone photography is allowed. I do not provide my lecture slides outside of the classroom without a specific and approved accommodation. Students are responsible for obtaining lecture notes from a class peer if they are absent.

Extra Credit: Students can earn up to five points of extra credit on their final grade by writing up to five letters to a legislator(s) regarding a topic or bill they are concerned about. Students must write (or type) and address the letter to the legislator and put it in a stamped unsealed envelope – emails or phone calls are not accepted. All letters must be submitted by the last week of November, and I will grade these based on completion (not content or position) and then mail them for you. No other extra credit opportunities are available in the course. These letters should follow the format found here:

<https://www.nlacrc.org/home/showdocument?id=272>

Classroom Civility: Very simply, do not disrupt the classroom environment. Specifically, please refrain from eating, reading, chatting, and wearing earphones during class. As a commonsense, movie-theater type of courtesy, please turn off your cell phones and do not distract me or others by texting or browsing the web. Do not schedule any activities that will require you to leave early or arrive late to class – please use the restroom facilities before class, during our regular break, or after class. Finally, laptops are a tool, and a tool can very useful for one task and detrimental for others – we would not use a hammer to install a screw. The use of laptop computers, cell phones, or smartwatches in class is allowed only for specifically defined class activities, final presentations, or with my permission. Students will turn off and store these items in their backpack during class. Use of these technologies during exams or quizzes will result in zero credit for the assignment. Research demonstrates that laptops can hinder classroom learning for both users and nearby students, but can be useful for specific learning activities:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254>. Please see me by the second week of the semester if you would like to discuss laptop use.

Email: I ask for your cooperation in using email only when truly necessary, after first checking the syllabus for your answer. In general, it is always best to meet in person for longer questions. If you would like to send me an email, please take your time with the message. Emails to professors are a form of formal writing; they are not the equivalent of sending a text message - "Text message" style responses are not acceptable. For example, your message should include a greeting: ("Hi Dr. Lengefeld," "Hello," "Hi Professor," etc.), sign your email, and proofread. I recommend waiting until you are at a computer before sending your message. This will give you the time and space to send a well-crafted email. The standard response time is 24-48 hours.

Incompletes: To be considered under extreme or exceptional circumstances.

Academic Honor Code: We will be working together as a community of writers and thinkers as we explore topics within environmental studies. While this means that no one will have to go through an assignment without any guidance, it also means that the work you submit as yours must be, in fact, your own. According to Goucher College policy, plagiarism is broadly defined as passing off someone else's ideas or writing as your own work. If you are having difficulties with an assignment and are tempted to use someone else's ideas, please come see me. We will work together to help you present your ideas in a manner that is original and your own. Plagiarism also includes self-plagiarism, or using the same writing in more than one class. If you would like to use writing from another class, you must have permission of both instructors. I take academic integrity incredibly seriously so please familiarize yourself with the guidelines of the Academic Honor Code regarding independent work, proper citation practices, and codes for learning. Please review Goucher's Honor Code: <https://www.goucher.edu/learn/documents/Academic-Honor-Code.pdf>.

Accommodations: We all learn in different ways and have different strengths and capabilities. In an effort to honor all of our abilities, I will strive to create a supportive learning environment. Please feel free to discuss with me questions or concerns regarding disabilities or learning differences (especially invisible ones) by the second week of the semester. Please also take advantage of Goucher's policies: <http://www.goucher.edu/learn/academic-support-and-resources/>

Religious Observance Policy: If you need to request accommodation for religious observance, fill out the following form: <http://www.goucher.edu/experience/getting-involved/religious-and-spiritual-life/documents/religious-holidays/Religious-Observance-Form.pdf> and submit it to me as soon as possible and at least two weeks before the observance. If you communicate with me in a timely manner and complete any mutually agreed upon make-up work, any such absences or schedule changes will be excused and will not adversely affect your grade.

Grade Questions: All questions concerning grades must be discussed with the professor in person, and **grades will not be conveyed via email**. Federal guidelines mandating the protection and privacy of student records (FERPA) can be found here: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/web/97859.asp>

Support Services for Students

Academic Center for Excellence (ACE): The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) is an academic support center that assists students in their effort to prepare for a life of inquiry, creativity, social responsibility and to develop a sense of personal and professional ethics and integrity. ACE provides individual academic coaching sessions, academic and wellness workshops and content-specific tutoring. <http://www.goucher.edu/learn/academic-support-and-resources/ace/>

Center for Race, Equity and Identity: The Center for Race, Equity and Identity (CREI) invites all students to engage in educational and co-curricular opportunities dealing with social justice,

intersectionality and Critical Race Theory (CRT). CREI seeks to foster an environment in which marginalized and oppressed community members feel affirmed and comfortable exploring and expressing their identities. From individual advising to group support and workshops open to the public, many services are offered to help build community and support your success. Learn more at www.goucher.edu/experience/equity-and-identity/center-for-race-equity-and-identity/

Counseling Services: Counseling services provided on campus are free, confidential, and do not require a referral. Services include brief individual counseling (typically 1-12 sessions), couples counseling, group counseling, and outreach and consultation. <http://www.goucher.edu/experience/staying-healthy/counseling-services/>

Office of Accessibility Services: Goucher College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). Because classes change every semester, eligible students must sign a Release of Information form at ACE in order for their professors to be notified to have the accommodations implemented. The Director of OAS (Arnelle Quashie Hanley) is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. Address general inquiries to 410-337-6146 or email access@goucher.edu.

Library: Our librarians are available to help students define and refine their research questions and aid their search for the appropriate supporting materials. www.goucher.edu/library/

Qualitative Reasoning Center: The Quantitative Reasoning (QR) Center supports students in mathematics, science, social science, and other courses with a QR emphasis with programming for student development of quantitative literacy and applications of mathematics and math-based skills to real-life situations. This semester, the QR Center will host drop-in tutoring (no appointment needed!) for students in STEM-based courses who need help with math-based skills or content involved in their coursework. Programming for the QR Center occurs in the Learning Commons (previously Information Commons) in the Athenaeum, and the schedule will be posted on the QR Center website (TBD). Please contact Dr. Justine Chasmar Stauffer at Justine.chasmar@goucher.edu or 410-337-6302 with questions.

Title IX Office: Goucher College seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of discrimination/sexual harassment/misconduct/assault, we encourage you to report this. **If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify our Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident including your name.** For more information about your options at Goucher visit: <https://www.goucher.edu/title-ix/>

Additionally, there are confidential resources available to you on campus who do not have to share your disclosure with the college:

- Health and Counseling Services (first floor of Heubeck Hall): 410-337-6050 for Health Center appointments; 410-337-6481 for Counseling Center appointments, (note walk-ins for counseling services are also accepted)
- Chaplain Cynthia Terry (basement of the Chapel), 410-337-6048
- Rabbi Josh Snyder: 410-337-6545
- Peer listeners: 443-632-7799, call any night between 7 p.m. and 2 a.m. to make an appointment.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center, located on the 3rd floor of the Athenaeum, is available to assist you with any academic, personal, or professional writing project. Writing tutors are trained to work with you on all stages of your writing process, from brainstorming to organizing, to editing your papers. Each tutoring session is individually designed to help meet your particular needs. Simply bring the writing prompt, your

draft (if you have one), and your questions about the writing to your appointment. Here is a link to the Center's website: www.goucher.edu/writingcenter

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

lecture topics are approximate and subject to variation
lecture topics will not necessarily correspond to readings
readings are due on the first day they are listed

Date **Unit/Topic**

Module 1: A Sense of Place

Week 1 (1-27 thru 1-31): The Social Construction of Nature

Questions: What is environmental sociology? What are the course expectations? What are the origins of environmental sociology, and what do environmental sociologists study? How does environmental sociology differ from sociology as a discipline – what are the different starting premises?

- *Letter to your future self*: starts with "Dear Jane ..." Find a spot in nature and provide a 1-2 sentence description of your spot, and then respond to the following questions: what is the most significant environmental issue of our time? What is my role in this problem? What can I do to ameliorate this issue? What ought to change in order to address this issue?
- Pellow and Brehm 2013.

Week 2: (2-3 thru 2-7) American Environmental History and Ideology

Questions: What is the pristine myth? What does history tell us about how ideology shapes attitudes towards the environment?

In class activity - Rorschach.

- Mann 2002.
- Dunbar-Ortiz 2014a.
- Friday: Discussion 1

Week 3: (2-10 thru 2-14) "Socionature"

Questions: How does the understanding of the conjoint constitution of nature and society shape environmental sociological research?

- Freudenburg, Frickel, and Gramling 1995.
- Friday: Discussion 2

Theories in Environmental Sociology

Week 4: (2-17 thru 2-21) Ecological Modernization

Questions: What is the Kuznets Curve, and why is it important?

- Intro to ecological modernization,
- Fisher and Freudenburg 2001.
- Friday: Discussion 3

Week 5: (2-24 thru 2-28) The Treadmill of Production

Questions: How does this perspective challenge the ecological modernization perspective? What are the major cleavages? How does affluence shape patterns of consumption, and what are the consequences for the environment? What is the relationship between consumption, affluence, and population?

- Gould, Pellow, and Schnaiberg 2004.

- Friday: Discussion 4

Week 6: (3-2 thru 3-6) The Treadmill vs. Ecological Modernization

Questions: What empirical and theoretical evidence supports each claim? What are the weaknesses of each perspective? Strengths?

- Jorgenson and Clark 2012.
- Friday: Discussion 5

Week 7: (3-9 thru 3-13) The Capitalist World Economy

Question: How does the structure of the world economy shape environmental degradation?

- Jorgenson 2016.

Spring Break 3-14 thru 3-22

Week 8: (3-23 thru 3-27)

Midterm Project Due 3-27 @ 5:00pm

Week 9: (3-30 thru 4-3) Consumption and Modernity

Question: How does the individualization of responsibility impact our capacity to address environmental problems?

- Maniates 2001.
- Discussion 6

Week 10: (4-6 thru 4-10) The Nature of Science, and the Science of Nature

Question: How do development narratives shape our perception of nature and its material resources?

- **Reflection 2 Due 4-6**
- Gramling and Freudenburg 1995.
- Discussion 7

Week 11: (4-13 thru 4-17) The American Conservative Movement, Climate Change, and Corporations

Question: is unique about the “corporation” and how does the global media shape our understanding of environmental problems?

- McCright and Dunlap 2010.
- Discussion 8

Week 12: (4-20 thru 4-24) “Natural Resources”

Question: Recycling, Humanistic Values, and the Treadmill of Production

- **Reflection 3 Due 4-20**
- NPR/Frontline Investigation “Plastic Wars: Industry Spent Millions Selling Recycling – to sell more plastic.”
- Discussion 9

Week 13: (4-27 thru 5-1) Violence and the Environment

Question: How does the tension between war and society shape environmental outcomes? What is the treadmill of destruction?

- Smith and Lengefeld 2019
- Discussion 10

Week 14: (5-4 thru 5-7, Last week of Classes) Disasters

Question: How do disasters reveal social and environmental inequality? What are the differences between “natural” disasters and human-made disasters, and how would we recognize them?

- **Reflection 4 Due 5-4**

- Freudenburg et al 2009.
- Discussion 11

Week 15: May 12-15 Final Exam Week

- **Final Reflection Assignment Due 5-12**

Required Format for submission is a Word document saved as: LastName_ES391_Name of Assignment

Note: I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus and course schedule at any time.