

Environmental Sociology Section 01

SOCI 141

Fall 2024 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 10/21/2024

Contact Information

Professor: Megan Thiele Strong, Phd.

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-10:25 a.m. in-person DMH 224 or on Zoom

<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/92544100827>

I am available to meet other times during the week by request.

Course Description and Requisites

This course will analyze how human beings interact with their environment from both macro and micro sociological perspectives. The course will address a number of other relevant topics, including environmental classism, environmental racism and policy responses to environmental problems.

Prerequisite: Upper Division Standing

Letter Graded

Program Information

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to think sociologically about the relationship between social structure, interaction, identities, and inequalities.
2. Students will be able to identify and explain major sociological theories and apply them to everyday life.
3. Students will be proficient in qualitative and quantitative research design, data collection and data analysis.
4. Students will be proficient in oral and written communication skills appropriate to the discipline.
5. Students will be able to practice sociology as educated and civically engaged persons.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

In this class, we will explore Environmental Sociology. This course will analyze how human beings interact with, shape and are shaped by their environment from both macro and micro perspectives. Material will be based on both qualitative descriptions and quantitative trends of contemporary environmental sociological research.

This course will challenge the human exceptionalism paradigm and will answer the following questions: How do personal issues and environmental problems overlap? Which environmental concerns garner the most attention? Why? What role does environmental activism play in social change? When do environmental bads become a concern for masses of people? How and when do people commit to change for the environment?

Specific attention will be paid to how environmental harms and social change happens. In the process of examining the social construction and social destruction of the environment and status quo related to our thoughts, beliefs and actions related to the environment, the course will address a number of other relevant topics, including: social inequity, environmental classism, environmental racism, eco-feminism, environmental activism, coping with climate crisis, political responses to environmental problems, and consequences of/for environmental policy.

Institutional Outcomes	Student Learning Outcomes	Assessment Method
Critical Thinking	Students will be able to define the core terms and the major theoretical approaches of Environmental Sociology and apply these concepts to various social manifestations.	Class Discussion, Open-ended questions on assignments and reflections
Communication	Students will be able to articulate insights generated from core terms and major theoretical approaches and discuss how these concepts inform the study of present day Environmental Sociology.	Class discussion, assignments and reflections
Evaluate Empirical Sociological Research	Students will read and evaluate empirical sociological research related to sustainability, environmental justice and climate destabilization.	Class discussion, assignments and reflections
Valuing Diversity and Global Awareness	Students will understand how identities such as race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, and nationality contribute to a range of social experiences and social perspectives regarding Environmental Sociology.	Class discussion, Group work (including group assignments)

Self-Awareness	Students will be able to discuss their interpretation of Environmental Sociology as it relates to their lived experiences by evaluating the impact their structural position has on their lives, as well as the lives of others.	Class discussion, assignments and reflections
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☰ Course Requirements and Assignments

Reading. I expect all of the material to be read with a critical eye. Give yourself adequate time after each reading to reflect on the author’s central argument(s) and take notes.

Dialoguing. I expect you to show up to the class meetings prepared to discuss course material.

Participation. Active participation in class discussion and classroom activities is expected.

Assignments. There will be both in-class and outside of class assignments, sometimes more than one per module throughout the semester.

Quizzes. There may be quizzes assigned throughout the semester.

Facilitation. Please expect to facilitate an informed conversation amongst your peers.

✓ Grading Information

A total of 350 points is possible for this course.

Participation in Class Dialogue and Discursive Space	40 pts total
Dialogue Facilitation	25 pts total
In-class activities, HWs, quizzes, etc.	250 pts. total
Final Project	35 pts.

TOTAL	350 pts.
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Criteria

Grades will be calculated as follows:

331 - 350+ = A
315 - 330 = A-
303 - 314 = B +
293 - 302 = B
280 - 292 = B -
268 - 279 = C +
258 - 267 = C
245 - 257 = C -
233 - 244 = D +
223 - 232 = D
209 - 222 = D -
000 - 208 = F

Type	Weight	Topic	Notes

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

"Unless we change the direction we are headed, we might wind up where we are going."

-Chinese Proverb

Below is the course outline. This schedule is subject to change with fair notice. Reading should be completed by the class lecture date.

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 1 COURSE BASICS Aug 21 st	Course Basics In-class Assignment: Environmental Sociology Introductions and NameCoach Upload your name pronunciation to NameCoach	Check on Canvas for information about course

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 2	<p>Introduction to Environmental Sociology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What do we mean when we say the environment? · What is Environmental Sociology? <p>Review Learning Page: Introduction to Environmental Sociology</p> <p>Readings include "Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action" Hypothesis Available and "Nature's Trust"</p> <p>Activity: Tree Sitting and Forest Bathing</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Reflections on Module 2</p>	

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 3	<p>Environmental Sociology and Theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · How do major sociological theories understand and/or address the environment and society? · What are the major theories specific to the field of environmental Sociology? · How are these theories used to analyze the environment and society? <p>Learning Page: Environmental Sociology and Theory</p> <p>Readings include: Heiner "The Establishment Vs. The Environment" Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Pellow, David N. "The State and Policy" in <i>Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology</i> Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Bring to Class Assignment: Create Two Chat Stations</p>	

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 4	<p>Human Consumerism and the Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What are commodity chains? · What role do we play in environmental harm? · Are there solutions to our collective environmental problems? <p>Review Learning Page: Environmental Sociology and Consumerism</p> <p>Readings include:</p> <p>"Is it Too Late for Growth?" Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Watch: The Story of Stuff</p> <p>Watch: The Case for a 4 day work week</p> <p>Assignment: Better World Shopping Guide</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Consumerism and Growth Discussion Board</p>	<p>Check Last Day to Drop Courses Without an Entry on Student's Permanent Record (D)</p>

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 5	<p>Vested Powers: The Role of Corporations and Media in Shaping What We Know About the Environment.</p> <p>This week we will explore how corporations impact both what we think and what we feel about the environment and how they do it.</p> <p>Readings include:</p> <p>"Corporate Power: The Role of Global Media" In <i>Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology</i> Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Bellamy Foster, John. "Let Them Eat Pollution." Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Watch: Superfund Site Info.</p> <p>Assignment: Calculate Your Environmental Footprint and In-Class Assignment Module 5: Reflections on Environmental Sociology</p>	<p>Check Last Day to Add Courses & Register Late (A)</p>

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 6	<p>Transnational Environmental Degradation and Harm, the ties that bind: Oil, Gas and Power</p> <p>Watch movie <i>Crude</i></p> <p>Watch: The Story of Rise St. James</p> <p>Watch: What its Like to live in Cancer Alley</p> <p>Read Chapters 3 and 4 from the book <i>Flammable</i></p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Crude and Flammable</p> <p>Host a "Crude" Watch Party.</p>	

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 7	<p>Environmental Racism</p> <p>This week will explore environmental racism and how we are all implicated in it.</p> <p>Review Learning Page: Environmental Racism</p> <p>Readings include: Why Every Environmentalist Should be Anti-Racist.</p> <p>Read: Satcher 2022 "Multiply – deserted areas: Environmental racism and Food, Pharmacy and greenspace Access in the Urban South." Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Read: McKinney and Thomson 2022 "Landfills and disasters: a geospatial analysis of environmental injustice across the United States." Hypothesis Available</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Environmental Racism</p>	

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 8	<p>Eco-feminism. Learners read selections from the book, <i>All We Can Save</i> (Campus Read 2022). It is available through the library if you want to get a head start reading it.</p> <p>http://libaccess.sjlibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2395505&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EK&ppid=Page-_-1</p> <p>Readings include: Ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva</p> <p>What is Ecofeminism by Alicia H. Puleo</p> <p>Listen to Podcast: How Gender Equality Can Save the Planet.</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Eco-feminism</p>	
Module 9	<p>Trash, Electronic Waste and Commodity Chains</p> <p>Readings include: The Global Village Dump: Trashing the Planet Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Electronic Waste: The Clean Industry Exports Its Trash Hypothesis Available</p> <p>Watch: Where Your Recycled Plastic Ends Up</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Commodity Chains and Waste</p> <p>Assignment: Track Your Trash</p>	

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MODULE 10	<p>Environmental Activism, Historical Understandings and The Radical Flank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What is the history of Environmental Movement? · What is the history of environmentalism and environmental Activism in the United States? · What is the Radical Flank <p>Read: Chapter 5: Earth First! In <i>Eco-Warriors</i> by Rik Scarce</p> <p>Watch Movie: <i>If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front</i> (Available through SJSU library)</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Eco-Warriors and ELF</p> <p>Dialoguing outside of class about Environmental Sociology</p> <p>Assignment: Mid-semester Tree sitting</p>	
MODULE 11	<p>Fictional Book reading related to Environmental Sociology</p> <p>Read Chapter 1 of <i>Ministry for the Future</i> by Stanley Kim Robinson</p> <p>Students will be assigned one chapter from the book <i>Ecotopia</i> available online.</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Reading fiction, Share and Respond</p>	

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MODULE 12	Environmental Degradation: Water Read: Drinking by Andrew Szasz Watch Movie <i>Flow: For Love of Water</i> Watch: Tale of Two Cities In-Class Assignment: Water	
MODULE 13	Environmental Degradation: Our Food and Supply Chains Read: "Swines and Hog Farms" in <i>Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology</i> Watch: <i>Cowspiracy</i> (This movie is available through Netflix or other online portals for purchase). Watch: Factory Farming Awareness In-Class Assignment: Food	
MODULE 14	Environmental Solutions, Fracking and/or Green Illusions? Watch: <i>Planet of the Humans</i> Watch: <i>Fracking in America</i> Read: Choose a chapter from the book <i>Green Illusions</i> by Ozzie Zehner to read In-Class Assignment: Planet of the Humans, Fracking and Green Illusions	

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE 15	Thanksgiving Break	
MODULE 16	<p>Finishing Up: Moving Forward, Society and the Environment: Change, Ideas and Actions.</p> <p>We will introduce the precautionary principle and discuss the Green New Deal.</p> <p>Module Assignment: Project Drawdown and the Drawdown Roadmap https://drawdown.org/solutions</p> <p>Read: David N. Pellow: from <i>Total Liberation</i>, Chapter "Never Apologize for your Rage."</p> <p>Read: Integrating the Precautionary Principle.</p> <p>Read: Earth Democracy: Sustainability, Justice and Peace</p> <p>Watch: The Venus Project</p> <p>Watch: Zizek: First as Tragedy, Then as Farce</p> <p>Watch: The Green New Deal Vox</p> <p>In-Class Assignment: Land Acknowledgement and/or a letter to the Earth</p>	

Date(s)	Topics and course content. Links to readings and media are on Canvas	Reminders
MODULE FINAL PROJECT	Final Project Due	