Environmental Sociology
Sociology 3480-090
University of Utah, Summer 2021

Instructor: Karen Xuan Zhang
Email: xuan.zhang@soc.utah.edu
Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

Course Description

Environmental sociology is a sub-discipline of sociology that focuses on the interrelationships between human systems and the environment. Environmental sociologists examine the extent to which humans influence ecosystems and also influenced by the biophysical world. They catalog the myriad social consequences of anthropogenic (human-induced) environmental change and explore how people are responding to anthropogenic environmental disruptions. Environmental sociology is interdisciplinary, and we will discuss environmental issues related to globalization, class, race, gender issues etc.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify the major perspectives within environmental sociology.
2. Apply key concepts to specific environmental cases.
3. Examine the environmental issues critically, and explore the potential solutions through a sociological perspective.
4. Critically understand and analyze the complexities between nature environment and human society in different regions of the world.
5. Develop critical reading, thinking, and analyzing skills.

Course Requirements

*Complete the readings and watch the lecture video prior to weekly discussion.* This class is rooted in reading and group discussion. Class participation is an essential part of the learning process. Students are responsible for their learning and are required to actively participate in all components
of the course. Students are expected to complete the readings, videos, and assignments for each module. You should complete the readings before you post your discussion essay, to have reflected critically and analytically on those readings, and to examine and discuss them in groups. Open and critical discussion associated with the course material is welcomed and encouraged at all times.

**Student Expectations**

The following is expected of all students in this class:

- Students will log in to the course a minimum of 2 times per week.
- To do well in online courses, students must be self-motivated, organized, and willing to stay on top of their schedule. Students should take control of their learning while in this course.
- Students will engage with the course, students, and the instructor in a respectful and professional manner at all times.
- Students will inform the instructor of any university-sanctioned absences (debate, athletic events, etc.) to ensure they can receive appropriate accommodations.
- Students will communicate needs for accommodations due to health and disability in a timely manner.

**Your final grade will be based on the following criteria:**

1. **INTRODUCTION 5% (30 points):** Use the Self-Introduction Discussion page available on Canvas to introduce yourself to the class. This has to be accomplished within the first week. Please introduce: Who are you? What do you study? Where have you traveled to or where is your dream place to visit? What impressed you about the place? And say hi to at least two of your classmates.

2. **Bonus Points (5 points):** Complete a quiz after reading the syllabus.

3. **WEEKLY REFLECTION PAPER/DISCUSSION 40% (12*20=240 points):** Write a weekly reflection paper (200-500 words) to discuss what perspective you learned that week, to what extent do you agree/disagree with the perspective (make sure to use cases/examples to support your arguments), explain something that you found interesting in the reading, and pose a question that the reading raised for you that as not answered in the reading. **AND post a thoughtful comment on at least 2 other essays in your group (5 points).**
The reflection paper is due every Wednesday, and the comments/discussion is due every Saturday. Late assignment will be penalized. Please contact the instructor if you have any difficulty in turning in your assignment.

All students will be randomly assigned into groups. Please post your reflection and comments on your group discussion board.

4. EXAM 20% (120 points): Students will take an exam on Week 8 (Available from Friday, March 12th to Sunday, March 14th). Study guide of the exam will be provided in advance to help students prepare. The exam is based on course readings. The question format will be multiple choice.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE PROJECT PROPOSAL 5% (30 points): Propose what you plan to do for your final project. Briefly state the environmental significance of your choice, and why you choose to make this change. The proposal is due by March 14th. (No more than one page)

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE PROJECT 30% (180 points): This project involves you making a change in your lifestyle that reduces your impact on the natural environment or serves to bring about environmentally positive social change. This exercise is intended to be a challenging and educational project whereby you can experience the social structural and cultural factors that constrain and/or facilitate widespread social change along ecologically sensitive lines. You will select what type of change in your life you would like to make. Some examples of changes include becoming a vegetarian or vegan, using public transportation instead of driving, walking/biking instead of driving, purchasing only locally produced products, reducing your use of electricity, giving up single-use plastics, buying only secondhand items, etc. (including some behavior changes related to COVID-19 if there is any potential environmental consequences). Before settling on the topic, do some research on the environmental impact of the change to make sure it will be impactful. You may also engage in some form of environmental activism (such as working with an environmental organization, attending a rally (only if the pandemic no longer exists), etc.) related to your behavior change (although this is not required). The length of time you will need to continue with this behavior depends on the difficulty entailed. For some projects, I expect that a few weeks will typically be a sufficient amount of time for most types of lifestyle changes, although some may be much shorter (for example, giving up electricity for one or two days would probably be sufficient).
The key point is that the behavior must be a change—i.e., it cannot be something you already do. The project does not require that you are successful at making the change, only that you make a sincere attempt at it. The requirements for the project are outlined in the rubric.

It might be difficult to attend certain activities during this pandemic. I sincerely hope you stay safe and healthy. DO NOT RISK your health.

The project should be submitted by May 2\textsuperscript{nd} 11:59 pm.

Total points: 100

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Questions, discussion, and getting help

If you have questions, please email me or TA. The emails will be responded in 48 hours.

Readings: (All readings will be available on Canvas)

Week 1 Introduction and Syllabus Review

Week 1 Social Construction of Nature

Week 2 Risk Society


Week 3 Ecological Modernization Theory, Environmental Kuznets Curve, and Post-materialist Values


Week 4 Treadmill of production


**Week 5 Human Ecology**


**Week 6 Energy, Society, and the Environment**


Week 7 Mid-term Exam and Project Proposal (March 8th - 14th)
Mid-term Exam will be available from March 12th to March 14th.
Project proposal is due by March 14th.

Week 8 The Metabolic Rift


Week 9 The World Systems, and Unequal Ecological Exchange


Week 10 The World Polity (March 29th-April 4th)


Week 11-1 Environmental Justice, Class, and Race


Week 11-2 Environmental Justice, Gender, and Children


Week 12 Social Responses to Environmental Issues


Week 15 (April 26th – May 2nd) Final project

**University Policies**

*The Americans with Disabilities Act.* The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CD&A will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

*Sexual Misconduct.* Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

*Wellness Statement.* Your personal health and wellness are essential to your success as a student. Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive in this course and at the University of Utah. Please speak with the instructor or TA before issues become problems. And, for helpful resources, contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.
CSBS EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There’s an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at alert.utah.edu/headsup to access the following resources:

- Emergency Response Guide: Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.
- See Something, Say Something: Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus. If you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!

Safety Escorts: For students who are on campus at night or past business hours and would like an escort to your car, please call 801-585-2677. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.