Global Environmental Crisis
Sociology 3486-001
University of Utah, Fall 2019

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Office Hours: By appointment
Office location: BEHS 319

Course Description
The main goal of this course is to examine the pressing global environmental crises facing us, and study the causes and potential solutions for them. The course primarily focuses on two issues: the disruption of the commons and global unequal exchange. These issues will be considered from local to global scales.

In the context of environmental science, the commons are taken to mean shared resources, which can include air, land, and water. The major issue is how to manage these resources and space in sustainable way. The earth sustains not only humanity but millions of diverse species via a complex web of interactive natural systems. However, humankind is increasingly impacting the environment on a global scale, and in some ways, endangering the earth’s life support system and the welfare of future generations. In this course, the core global environmental issues we will cover are: oceans, water, forests, atmosphere and non-renewable energy resources.

In the second half of this course, we will investigate how ecological unequal exchange influences social and environmental conditions. We will examine the relationship between global environmental crisis and economy, health, and equality. In order to better understand these relationships, it is critical to develop a basic understanding of the ecological, social, political and economic factors involved, and who are able to manage these problems, and with what solutions.

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

1. Understand and assess the cause of global environmental crisis.
2. Apply key concepts to environmental problem case studies.
3. Examine the environmental issues critically, and explore the potential solutions through a sociological perspective.
4. Critically understand and analyze the complexities between the environment and human society in different regions of the world.
5. Develop critical reading, thinking, and analyzing skills.

**Course Requirements**

*Complete the readings prior to class.* This class is rooted in reading, presentation, and group discussion. You should complete the readings by the beginning of every week, to have reflected critically and analytically on those readings, and to examine and discuss them in class. Active participation is only possible when you are present. Should you miss class due to illness please provide the instructor with documentation if at all possible. It is your responsibility to ensure you get notes from fellow class members. You can also be excused if you cannot attend class during religious holidays or because you are traveling for university-sanctioned events. Please contact me about any possible conflicts as soon as possible.

You can have ONE unexcused absence without penalty. For each additional unexcused absence, I will lower your overall grade by 5 percentage points - i.e. if your overall score is 100% and you have 3 unexcused absences your final score will be a 90%.

*You will find all readings on Canvas.* It is not required, but I recommend you read the book: *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment.*

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

PRESENTATION 20%: On each Tuesday, two or three students will lead class discussion, preparing a presentation on assigned readings. The presentation should be 20-30 minutes. At the end of the presentation, you should post at least two questions to all students. The questions can be the ones you have for the readings, or the ones you want to explore with other students. Each student has will do two presentations throughout the semester. Each presentation is worth 10% of your final grade. You will sign up for presentations on the first day of class.
CASE STUDY 10%: On certain Thursdays, two or three students will present cases of global environmental crisis for everyone to discuss. The materials can be drawn from the news, a short video (no more than 20 minutes), or a story. Also, feel free to deploy your creativity. You have to upload/post the cases on the Canvas discussion board by 12:00 pm of the Sunday preceding the class week in which it is scheduled. Each of you have provide at least one case, and each case has to be closely related to the topic of that week.

DISCUSSION 20%: This class is a discussion-based class. Students will discuss questions in groups. Class discussion must be firmly rooted in the text in order to better flesh out the arguments and concepts from the readings. At the end of the class, each group should submit a summary paper for all the questions we discuss, with group members names signed on it.

MIDTERM 20%: There will not be an in-class examination for midterm. However, a final paper proposal no more than one page must be submitted via Canvas to me before fall break ends (10/13, 11:59pm). If you are unsure about your final paper topic, please consult with me well before that deadline.

FINAL 30%: Write a 5-8 pages paper (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins) on a topic of interest that is connected to the course content. The topic must be identical to the midterm proposal. You must address global environmental concerns through a sociological perspective. You will find the rubrics on Canvas. Final papers must be submitted via Canvas Tuesday, December 10 at 11:59 p.m. In-text citation and references must be included in your paper.

Total points: 100

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Questions, discussion, and getting help
If you have questions, please email me or visit me by appointment.

Course schedule and readings
Tuesday and Thursday 12:25-13:45

Week 1 Introduction to Sociological Perspectives on Global Environmental Crisis

Week 2 The Commons
Stephen J. Dunber and Steven D. Levitt "Not-So-Free-Ride" The New York Times

Week 3 Oceans


Week 4 Water


Week 5 Forest


**Week 6 Atmosphere I**


**Week 7 Atmosphere II**

Week 8 Fall Break

Week 9 Global Environmental Crisis, Unequal Exchange, and Economy I


Week 10 Global Environmental Crisis, Unequal Exchange, and Economy II


Week 11 Global Environmental Crisis and Health


Nguyen, Linh. 2015. “Cancer Villages in China.” 77-87


**Week 12 Working Environment and Occupational Disease**


Bangladesh Is Burning and Sweatshops are the Fuel: https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidvolodzko/2019/03/05/bangladesh-and-the-fire-next-time/#28e545702ca1

In the Global Apparel Industry, Abusive and Deadly Working Conditions are Still the Norm: http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/18066/out_of_sight_eric_loomis

**Week 13 Global Environmental Crisis and Inequality (Social Classes/Race)**


**Week 14 Global Environmental Crisis and Inequality (Gender/Children)**

Vinyeta, Kirsten, Kyle Powys Whyte, and Kathy Lynn. 2015. *Climate Change Through an Intersectional Lens: Gendered Vulnerability and Resilience in Indigenous Communities in the*

Climate change “impacts women more than men”:

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Climate Change and Children:

UNICEF. “Climate Change and Children’s Environmental Health.”


Week 15 The future?


Week 16 Final Paper (Due by Tuesday, December 10th, 11:59 p.m.)

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. CDA 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.

Safety statement. The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To
report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS
(801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding
campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available
training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.
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.