**SOCY 2077 Environment & Society, Fall 2021**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:35 to 10:25 in Hellems 252

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Environmental sociologists study how human societies interact with the environment – but that’s a deceptively short description of the field. The more you think about it, the more questions you’ll probably start to ask. For example, what exactly is “the environment?” Our first instinct might be to picture postcard-worthy national parks or our beautiful Rocky Mountains. But what about the built environment? That certainly seems to qualify as well, since we, humans, are in fact a part of nature – or are we? We’ll address that question in this course as well. We’ll also address the zone of the environment that’s in constant interchange with our bodies, including the water we drink, the food we eat, and the air we breathe.

And humans – well, that’s a broad category, isn’t it? In this course, we’ll address how power plays into our interactions with the environment. Some humans are better able to access environmental “goods” than others, and those same humans (i.e. those with more power) are generally better able to keep themselves away from the environmental “bads” our societies are currently producing. Of course, these dimensions of power operate on many levels, both within and across local, national, and international boundaries. This is an area of the field referred to as environmental justice, and this will be a main component of our conversations throughout this course.

When we examine our interactions with the environment, we also need to realize that these interactions happen on many levels. You make individual choices that affect the environment in which you live; you also live in a society that is structured in such a way as to influence (sometimes very heavily) the choices you can and will make. Using a sociological lens, we’ll focus in this course on the ways in which societies are structured to encourage certain environmental attitudes and behaviors and to discourage others – and why, in some cases, even those individuals with very strong pro-environmental attitudes find it difficult to engage in pro-environmental behaviors.

This course is a survey of the broad field of environmental sociology, starting with an assessment of the current state of our environment and the problems we’re facing, continuing on to explain why these problems might be emerging, and finally, discussing possible solutions for our current environmental ills – ways you can contribute to the societal conversation surrounding our environment, and hopefully, take action toward addressing these problems.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

*Readings*: There is one primary textbook, available at the bookstore and on reserve at Norlin Library. Additional readings will be posted online.

*An Invitation to Environmental Sociology:* Sixth Edition, SAGE Publications (2021). Michael Mayerfeld Bell, Loka L. Ashwood, Isaac Sohn Leslie, and Laura Hanson Schlachter.

**Grading**

Your final grade will be based on the following course requirements. There are 650 points total.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments** | **Points Per Assignment** | **Total Points** | **% of Grade** |
| 3 Midterm Exams | 100 points each | 300 points | 46% |
| 1 Final Exam | 100 points | 100 points | 15% |
| Recitation assignments (11, lowest grades dropped) | 15 points each | 150 points | 23% |
| 2 Reflection papers | 50 points | 100 points | 15% |

**Course Requirements:**

Three Midterm Exams and the Final Exam:

There will be three midterm exams and one final exam, spaced roughly evenly throughout the course. The exams will cover the textbook readings, lecture material, and supplemental readings and other material (e.g. podcasts, etc.) covered in each of the four quarters of the class. Exams will be mixed format, including multiple choice and short answer.

Reflection papers – two

These papers are an opportunity for you to critically, and sociologically, analyze and respond to two pieces of media: an article on “Cancer Alley” and the film Dark Waters.

The first paper, due at the start of your recitation section on September 10th, will focus on “Cancer Alley,” one of our environmental justice readings. In this paper, you will: (1) summarize the author’s argument in “Cancer Alley” (½ to one page, double spaced), (2) restate the argument in Mills’ Sociological Imagination (½ to one page, double-spaced), and (3) apply the Sociological Imagination to the “Cancer Alley” reading (i.e. describe how some of the main concepts highlighted in the Sociological Imagination reading are exemplified in “Cancer Alley;” approximately one page, double spaced).

The second reflection paper will be done on the film Dark Waters and will be due at your first recitation after Thanksgiving break, on December 3rd. In this paper, you will focus your reflection on (1) summarizing the film’s storyline (approximately ½ page, double-spaced), (2) relating the story to course material by clearly defining three course concepts that are emphasized in the storyline and explaining their relevance to the film (approximately ½ page per course concept, double-spaced), and (3) discussing your reaction to the film ( approximately ½ page, double-spaced). In the second section of the paper, please put the course concepts you discuss in **bold**.

As noted in the guidelines above, each article reflection paper should total between 2-3 pages, double-spaced. Please be concise and do not exceed this length limit. Please use 12 pt. font, ¾ to 1-inch margins, and be sure to put your name and recitation section at the top of your paper.

Recitation Assignments

Recitation Assignments will be completed in recitation, sometimes with a small amount of out-of-class prep work required. Your lowest grade will be dropped, allowing you on “free” absence in recitation. If you need to miss recitation due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, you must contact the TA prior to your missed class to receive instructions for completing a make-up assignment in lieu of attending that day.

Please be aware that some course requirements or assigned readings may change during the semester. However, we do not expect the overall workload to increase if changes are made.

**Grading Philosophy:** Below is the standard for the level of assessment of written assignments and overall evaluation for course grades. These standards may be higher than those you may have encountered previously. The distribution of final grades will meet the standards for fair and rigorous evaluation.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Percentage Grade** | **Description** |
| **A** | **90-100** | *Exceptional*: Exceeds all required elements of the assignment, and the quality of the work is considerably higher than what was required. The quality of the work is considerably above the class average and impressive to the evaluator. |
| **B** | **80-89** | *Good*: Meets all required elements of the assignment, and the quality of the work is better than what is required. |
| **C** | **70-79** | *Average*: Meets all required elements of an assignment, not more, not less. Quality of assignment is satisfactory for college level work. |
| **D** | **60-69** | *Below average*: Does not meet all the required elements of the assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is considerably lower than satisfactory.  |
| **F** | **59 and below** | *Failing*: Few of the requirements of the assignment are met and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension, and/or ability to follow instructions.  |

# COURSE POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

# When you email us please put “SOCY 2077” in the subject header. We may delete (and therefore not respond) to emails that do not have this as the subject heading. We check emails once a day during weekdays before 5pm.

* Important announcements will be sent out over email to the addresses listed on the class roster. You are required to check this email account regularly over the course of the semester.

# You are responsible for material and announcements presented during classroom time. It is your responsibility to get missed notes and updates from fellow students, not the instructor or TA. If a due date or other administrative changes are announced, that will supersede the “tentative schedule.” You are responsible for all information communicated in class, whether or not you are in attendance.

* Please do not arrive late or leave early or begin to pack up prior to the end of lecture or discussion. This inhibits other students’ ability to hear and understand the material. If, however, you need to use the restroom during class, feel free to quietly leave the classroom and return.
* We expect that you will attend regularly and participate in in-class activities..
* Please turn off cell phone ringers, and avoid engaging in side-talking, reading, sleeping, texting, or surfing while in class.This is disrespectful of other students and the instructors and disruptive to the learning community. If we notice you doing any of these things, you will be asked to leave the room.
* Studies generally show that students who take notes by hand receive higher grades than those who use electronic devices – and from personal experience, I can tell you laptop use during class is very distracting both to you and to those around you. If you choose to use a computer for notetaking during class, please sit on the periphery of the classroom where your screen isn’t visible to other students. If you have a documented accommodation from disability services that makes this seating arrangement inconvenient, please see me.
* Please do the assigned readings for the class before the first class meeting for which they’re assigned. This makes class more enjoyable for everyone and more useful for you.
* If you know you will be unable to take an exam on the day scheduled for any reason (religious, university event, or any other reason), please let us know as soon as possible to arrange for the essay makeup or other alternative. If you miss an exam, you have 24 hours to inform your instructor. If you do not inform your instructor within 24 hours of missing an exam you will be given a score of zero. It is in your best interest to be at scheduled exams. Please check the syllabus now to determine if there are any conflicts you need to discuss with us.
* Reflection papers are only accepted up to four days after the due date, after which the assignment will not be accepted. Papers will receive a late penalty of ½ letter grade for each day late, for up to four days.
* Please keep all returned work in the event that you have a grade dispute at the end of the semester.  If your calculation of your grade does not match our records, it is your responsibility to provide proof of graded work. You should keep track of your online grade book to catch any errors as early as possible.
* Web Page: The syllabus, some readings, assignments, grades, and other information will be posted on the website. The most recent course information will be available there, as information in this syllabus may be changed over the course of the semester. Email updates will be sent out when important material is posted on the website.
* Accommodation for Disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students/temporary-medical-conditions) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.
* Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior) and the [Student Code of Conduct](http://www.colorado.edu/osccr/).
* Preferred Student Names and Pronouns: CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.
* Honor Code: All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](https://www.colorado.edu/osccr/honor-code)
* Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation: The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0PnqVK4kkIJIZnf), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](http://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.
* Religious Holidays: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you have a religious conflict with a course due date, please notify us at least one week prior to the due date so we can make reasonable accommodations. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams) for full details.