

Sociology 4007- 002

Global Human Ecology

Spring 2018

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Seeing the interconnections. Knowing “what’s hitched to what,” Asking the question, what then? This is, broadly speaking, our course objective, our shared mission, to explore our global human ecology using a systems perspective.

The promise of sociology is that of a sociological imagination, the ability to see the link between the individual and society and thus, grasp the role of social forces in our lives. It is necessary and quite urgent that young sociologists recognize and begin to include in our analysis, the vital role of natural systems in which social systems are imbedded, and seeing the nexus points. The individual, the social, the ecological and the interconnections therein, this is our analytical framework.

Our objective this semester to is to enhance our sociological imaginations and develop even more potent ecological imaginations, that is to say, to include the critical role of natural systems in our emergent sociological analyses. Ecological thinking encourages a quality of mind that: understands the earth’s vital signs, is aware of the speed and extent of the global ecological crises, comprehends interrelationships, understands the dynamics of global capitalism and, leads to attitudes and behaviors of care and stewardship.

I have designed this course to highlight the current “sociology of climate change” literature; this includes – energy / driving forces, matters of political economy, production and consumption, mitigation, adaptation, population, vulnerability, politicization and consequent human migration, a contemporary social issue of tremendous import. I believe these foci to be of critical importance and perhaps the most vital topics confronting all societies in this age of globalization. Understanding and innovating sociology’s unique contribution to this topic should be of great appeal. I hope you can locate yourself and your own interests somewhere in this vibrant and expanding field of hydro-sociology.

We will begin by learning to think in systems terms. For this segment of the course we will read – on-line – *Thinking in Systems* by Donella Meadows. This 2008 classic provides us the language and imagery to move more comfortably between social and natural systems. We will highlight key system features – stocks, in-flows, out-flows; balancing loops, reinforcing loops, delays, etc.; sources of system stability and system growth and change; as well as system surprises, traps and leverage points. Some of the biggest problems facing the world today are essentially system failures, they cannot be solved by fixing one system in isolation from other systems. It is my hope that through a series of rich discussions and shared readings you will have an opportunity to cultivate a new “systems thinking” through which to see the intersections of society and environment, social systems and natural systems.

The four (print) books I have chosen for this course were written and designed to facilitate your understanding of the “system dimensions” via a rich array of chapter foci / readings. These texts are diverse in format and purpose. These four books are, I think, wonderfully valuable in conveying potent insight into our global human ecology, and the research / design / governance challenges that lie ahead. The authors have worked hard to make a number of complex ideas as understandable as possible. You must do a little work as well. You will be expected to have read and assimilated the required readings for each class meeting.

The four required texts for this course are available at the UMC Bookstore:

- **Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet by Mark Lynas**
- **This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate by Naomi Klein**
- **Thinking in Systems: A Primer by Donella Meadows**
- **Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives by R. Dunlap and R. Brulle**

Exams and Grading: I expect lively and thoughtful participation by all members of this class. I expect you to read the appropriate material for each class meeting and come ready to talk, share, apply, refine, and/or challenge the topic at hand. I favor frequent and informed participation. I strongly encourage you to make every effort to become a “regular member” of this class. Please bring your book(s) to each class meeting. Your grade for this course will be based on the following criteria:

* Class Engagement (to be used for determining all “borderline grades”): Your regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities is an essential component of this class. You are expected to regularly engage in civil discourse on issues and readings relevant to each session, as well as help co-facilitate our class discussion. We all have a responsibility to make a small seminar-style class such as this work well.

*Five (5) quizzes (10% each/ 50% of final grade) covering lecture and text material.
Quiz dates: 2/6; 2/27; 3/20; 4/17; and May 1. (Note: there is no “final exam” for this course).

*Five (5) “sociology of climate change” individual / group projects. (10% each / 50% of final grade). Each of these five projects will require both a brief written report and a class presentation. Two of these projects will be individual projects and three of these projects will be group projects. “Project” groups, topics, criteria; and due-dates to be assigned in class.

Schedule of Readings / Quizzes / Presentations

Jan. 16 – 18 Course Overview

Jan. 23, 25, 30, Feb 1. – readings from Thinking in Systems

Feb 6. - Quiz 1

Feb. 8 – Project #1 Presentations

Feb. 13, 15, 20, 22. – readings from Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet

Feb. 27 – Quiz 2

Mar. 1 – Project #2 Presentations

Mar 6, 8, 13, 15, - readings from Climate Change and Society

Mar. 20 – Quiz 3

Mar. 22- Project #3 Presentations

Mar. 27 & 29 Spring Break – no classes

Apr. 3, 5, 10, 12 – readings from This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate

Apr. 17 - Quiz 4

Apr. 19 – Project # 4 Presentations

Ap. 22, 24, 26, -readings from Climate Change and Society

May 1 - Quiz 5

May 3 - Project #5 Presentations

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) (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](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

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. In this class, *{{insert your procedures here}}*. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

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. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation: The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

Honor Code: All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#). Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#)