

SOCIOLOGY 2077: ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

University of Colorado Boulder

Spring 2017

MWF 2:00-2:50 in CLRE 207

Instructor Jessie Luna

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COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Why study the environment from the perspective of sociology? Humans are both social beings *and* part of the natural world. We depend on ecological systems, yet how we think about, impact, and experience those systems – and how they impact us – is largely shaped by social factors. Thus, solving environmental problems requires understanding human societies and behavior. This course provides an introduction to “environmental sociology,” a field that studies the relationships between human societies and the environment. It is designed for students who may have limited knowledge of sociology, but are interested in how the social sciences can help us understand the relationship between humans and the environment. Students will learn about and critique different theories, and make connections between diverse topics. This course does not emphasize a “right answer,” but asks students to engage with various positions and to challenge preconceived ideas.

The course is organized around the following themes:

- 1) **Explaining environmental degradation:** How – and why – do humans impact the environment? What are the major theories of environmental degradation?
- 2) **Environmental inequality:** How and why do different groups of people experience environmental goods and bads differently (along lines of nation, race, class, and gender)?
- 3) **Knowing nature:** How do humans understand and think about the environment and nature? How is this different across time and place, and between social groups?
- 4) **Finding solutions:** Based on what we have learned, how do we think critically – and constructively – about improving environmental problems and environmental inequality?

REQUIRED READINGS

The following book is required:

- Carolan, Michael. 2017. *Society and Environment: Pragmatic Solutions to Ecological Issues*, Second Edition. Boulder: Westview Press

The rest of the class readings are posted on D2L in weekly folders, and indicated in the course schedule by the author’s last name. I will have the course textbook and the course readings on reserve at Norlin library, and you are welcome to read them there if you prefer hard copy and do

not want to print. The reserve desk is at the West entrance to Norlin. The bibliography with full references for additional readings is posted on D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In-class responses and activities (13%): Throughout the semester, I will occasionally ask students to respond to questions about the readings, to take part in group activities, or complete very small take-home assignments. I will provide fifteen of these opportunities, and will keep your thirteen best grades (They are worth 1 point each). You can thus miss two with no penalty. You will receive a minimum of half credit just for being in attendance. This provides me with a way of incentivizing on-time attendance and also gives you a motivation to do the readings ahead of class. These cannot be made up unless you have provided me with a documented absence or contacted me before class.

Short intro essay: (2%) This short essay asks you to reflect on your own pre-existing ideas about the relationship between humans and nature. To receive full credit, you must answer all parts of the question (provided in class) in a thoughtful, organized way.

Course papers: (45%) This set of papers is an opportunity to apply the concepts you have learned in this course to an issue or topic of your choice. The papers are divided into segments that correspond to the units of the course. I will also group students by topic for occasional in-class group work. I will expect you to cite course material and to use course concepts in these papers, and I will hand out additional guidelines in class before these papers are due.

- These papers will be turned in on D2L and in hard copy by the due date.
- Late policy: If either hard copy or D2L is more than one day late it is 10% off your grade (without a legitimate excuse such as a documented illness, death in the family, etc.). If *both* are late, it is 20% off for one day late, 50% off thereafter.
- **When you turn in your Short Intro Essay, you will also select a topic for these papers.** You can choose from the following topics: Climate change, water, agriculture, wilderness and biodiversity, energy, or waste. You may focus on “sub-topics” within these themes if you would like (i.e. the California drought, bees, pesticide pollution, etc.).

Paper 1: Explaining the problem due Week 6: 2/20 (3 – 4 pages) 15%

- What is a basic “problem” with the issue you have chosen? Why do you think this environmental issue is important?
- What are three different theories that explain why this problem came about, and why it continues? What are the shortcomings of these theories, and which one do you think *best* explains the problem?

Paper 2: Inequalities and Knowledge due Week 12: 4/3 (3 - 5 pages) (15%)

- Who considers this to be a problem, and who doesn't? Are there competing narratives about the problem, and why?
- How do people from diverse social groups *perceive* this issue differently?
- What are material inequalities that different social groups *experience* in relation to this problem?

Paper 3: Solutions due Week 16: 5/5 (3 - 4 pages) (15%)

- What are the strengths and limits of different approaches to solving this problem, and which approach do you find most promising? Why? Evaluate based on course material.

Mid-term test: Week 8: Monday, 3/6 (20%): The mid-course test will be multiple-choice and short-answer. It is meant to provide an additional way of evaluating your understanding of course concepts that is not based on writing.

Final exam: During Finals Week: **Thurs. May 11, 4:30 p.m.– 7:00 p.m.** (20%): The final exam will focus on material after the mid-term test, but will build on concepts from the first half.

GRADES:

Grades will be based on the following breakdown, following the university guidelines for grading (A = 93+, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83- 86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, etc.)

In-class responses	13
Short essay 1 and topic choice	2
Papers Paper 1: 15 Paper 2: 15 Paper 3: 15	45
Mid-course test	20
Final exam	20
Total	100

POLICIES:

Class communication

D2L: Class readings are posted on D2L. Grades will also be posted there, and I will post announcements or news on D2L. I expect you to check D2L regularly for announcements.

E-mail: For questions about the course, please read and double check this syllabus first. By university policy, grades cannot be discussed over e-mail; please come to my office hours or set up an appointment. E-mail is official communication and should be composed as such. Do not expect replies to emails outside of normal working hours.

Disability accommodations: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please bring me a letter from Disability Services **within the first few weeks** so we can figure out how to address your needs. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, online, or e-mail dsinfo@colorado.edu. For temporary conditions or injuries, see Temporary Injuries under Quick Links guidelines at the Disability Services website (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>) and discuss your needs with me.

CU-Boulder Honor Code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this

policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aiding academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member involved and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). For more information see <http://honorcode.colorado.edu/>

- **Plagiarism** is an important aspect of this honor code. All work that you submit for this class must be your own work, which means properly citing and quoting all references. Please be careful in your writing to use your own words and cite others' work when you draw upon their ideas. If you are ever unsure of how to cite, just ask. If you reference ideas from lecture, cite them as (9/6/15) in your text, and if you use direct words from lecture, PowerPoint, or the blackboard, put them in quotes, the same as you would for direct quotes from articles or books.

Discrimination and harassment: CU-Boulder is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of "Protected Classes" (race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual, orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status) in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes, or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. More information at www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/. For sexual harassment policies and reporting see www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment or call the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.

Respectful classroom environment: Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important in dealing with subject matters that touch upon race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will do my best to create a respectful classroom environment, and I expect students to do so as well. Class rosters are provided to me with your legal name; please inform me if you prefer an alternate name or gender pronoun. If you have further concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and discuss how we (or I) can improve our learning environment.

Observance of 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. Please inform me in writing by the end of the second week of class if you will be unable to attend class, take exams, or turn in assignments on time because of religious obligations and observances so that we can work out a revised schedule with you to meet course requirements.

Student-Athletes: Please notify me by the end of the second week of class – in person and in writing – about any known conflicts between academic requirements and intercollegiate varsity athletic events.

The Writing Center: I encourage students who want to improve their writing to use the Writing Center, which teaches strategies to formulate and organize strong thesis statements, use and cite evidence appropriately, master style and grammar, and overcome writing anxiety. Services are free to all CU students. The Writing Center is in Norlin Library, Room E-156. Contact wrtghelp@colorado.edu, (303) 735-6906, <http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Items listed for a given date (readings or assignments) should be completed by that date. For example, on 1/20, you should have read Carolan Ch. 1 when you come to class. Carolan readings are from your textbook. All other readings are posted on D2L and are on reserve at Norlin.

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings	Work due
Week 1: Introduction			
W 1/18	Introduction		
F 1/20	What is environmental sociology?	Carolan Ch. 1	
UNIT 1: What are the drivers of environmental degradation?			
Week 2: Classic explanations			
M 1/23	Environmental degradation since the industrial revolution	Brown, "The Sustainability Paradox"	Intro essay
W 1/25	Population	Carolan Ch. 6: Population	
F 1/27	Film: <i>Last Supper for Malthus</i>		
Week 3: Growth and consumer society			
M 1/30	Wealth, growth, and ecological footprints	Arrow et al. "Economic Growth, Carrying Capacity, and the Environment"	Calculate your Ecological Footprint
W 2/1	The Consumer Society	Excerpt, <i>The Consumer Society Reader</i> and Carolan pgs. 254 – 255, "The Sociology of Consumption"	
F 2/3	Case study: Waste	Carolan Ch. 3: Waste	
Week 4: Capitalism			
M 2/6	Capitalism: "The treadmill of production"	Carolan Ch. 10: pgs. 210 - 220 (Fast Facts - Solutions) and Bergmann, "Ecology and the New Work"	
W 2/8	Case study: Food production	Carolan Ch. 8: Food	
F 2/10	Economics and GDP	Cobb, "If the GDP is up, why is America down?"	
UNIT 2: Environmental Inequalities			
Week 5: Ecologically Unequal Exchange			
M 2/13	Colonialism and resource	Clark and Foster,	

	extraction	“Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift”	
W 2/15	Free trade	Wallach & Woodall, <i>Whose Trade Organization?</i>	
F 2/17	Case study: Cotton	Beckert, <i>The Empire of Cotton</i>	
Week 6: Environmental inequalities			
M 2/20	Theories of environmental inequality	Mohai et al., “Environmental Justice” and Downey excerpt	Paper 1 is due
W 2/22	Case study: Pesticides		
F 2/24	Case study: Climate change	Carolan Ch. 2 and Ciplet excerpt	
Week 7: Environmental inequalities in Colorado			
M 2/27	Environmental privilege	Park and Pellow, <i>Slums of Aspen</i>	
W 3/1	Health inequalities	Colorado Health Disparities Report	
F 3/3	Case study: E-waste	Faber, “The Unfair Trade-off”	
UNIT 3: Knowing nature			
Week 8: Social constructions of nature			
M 3/6	Midterm test		Mid-term test
W 3/8	The social construction of nature	Robbins, “Social Construction of Nature”	
F 3/10	Ideas of “nature”	Levinovitz, “What Is 'Natural' Food?”	
Week 9: Controversies over science			
M 3/13	Knowledge and capitalism	Bell and York, “The coal industry and ideology construction”	
W 3/15	Case studies: Climate change and GMOs	ICN, “What Exxon Knew”	
F 3/17	Film: <i>Merchants of Doubt</i>		
Week 10: Race and gender			
M 3/20	Gender and nature	Mellor, “Gender and the Environment”	
W 3/22	Race and nature	Finney, <i>Black Faces White Spaces</i>	
F 3/24	White male explorers	Fletcher, <i>Romancing the Wild</i>	
Week 11: SPRING BREAK !			
UNIT 4: Debating solutions			

Week 12: Environmentalism			
M 4/3	U.S. environmental movements	Cronin, “The Trouble with Wilderness”	Paper 2 is due
W 4/5	Environmental justice movements <i>Guest speaker: Elizabeth Bittel</i>		
F 4/7	The crisis of the bees <i>Guest speaker: Laurent Cilia</i>	Carolan Ch 4: Biodiversity	
Week 13: Technology			
M 4/10	Ecological modernization and the Jevon’s Paradox	Downey and Bonds, “Green Technology” <i>and</i> Carolan pgs. 207- 210	
W 4/12	Case study: Energy	Carolan Ch. 9: Energy	
F 4/14	Case study: GMO crops and risk	Scoones and Glover, “Africa’s biotechnology battle”	
Week 14: Neoliberalism			
M 4/17	Selling nature to save it?	Dempsey and Suarez, “The Promises and Paradoxes of ‘Selling Nature to Save It’” <i>and</i> Radiolab podcast, “The Rhino Hunter”	
W 4/19	Green consumers and eco-labels	Szasz, <i>Shopping our Way to Safety</i>	
F 4/21	Case study: Water	Carolan Ch. 5	
Week 15: Institutions			
M 4/24	Governance and the tragedy of the commons	Carolan Ch. 11	
W 4/26	Case study: Transportation	Carolan Ch. 7	
F 4/28	Ecological economics	Carolan Ch. 10: pgs 220 – 227 (Solutions) <i>and</i> Daly, “Top 10 Policies for a Steady-State Economy”	
Week 16: Changing ideas, changing structures			
M 5/1	Inequality and growth: economics continued	Carolan Ch. 12 (<i>skip</i> pgs. 254 - 260)	
W 5/3	Beliefs and behaviors	Carolan Ch. 13 pgs. 275 - 284 (halfway down)	
F 5/5	Brainstorming pragmatic environmentalism	Carolan Ch. 13 pgs. 284 - end	Paper 3 is due
Finals Week			
Final Exam: Thurs. May 11, 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m			