

Sociology 450: Environmental Sociology
Spring 2015

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am-12:15pm

Classroom: Bolton Hall B92

Course Website: <https://uwm.courses.wisconsin.edu/d2l/home>

Instructor: Prof. Oriol Miroso

Office: Bolton Hall 726

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-3pm

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Once upon a time, humanity discovered the power of reason. We realized that we were able to rationally understand the factors that determine the conditions of our existence, and this opened the door to the possibility of controlling such conditions and improving our societies. The modern world, with its embrace of industry and urbanization, technology and entertainment, profit and superficiality, is the product of that project. In the process, human beings came to see themselves as demigods, almost invincible agents in complete control of their destinies. Everything else became a mere accessory to humanity, there only to serve us.

This confident and arrogant view was reflected in the social sciences that emerged as part of the effort to try to understand and rule the modern world. With them, an almost complete conceptual separation between nature and society was born, and the study of these two entities remained disconnected for decades. Soon after World War II, however, the effects of modern society on the natural environment became impossible to ignore. The advent of the nuclear era, the increasing awareness of the toxicity of pesticides, or the first major accidents of oil tankers in the high seas, among a string of other environmental problems, spurred the development of an incipient environmental consciousness and of a social movement that pointed out the effects that human beings had on the natural environment. Yet, the social sciences, and sociology in particular, were built on foundations that made it hard for them to consider the environment seriously. It was at that point, in the 1970s, that environmental sociology was born. At the time, the pioneers of environmental sociology did not think of it as a subfield of the discipline. On the contrary, what they promoted was a new way of doing sociology, one which would not consider the environment as separate from human societies but which would see nature and society as intrinsically interdependent. At the core of environmental sociology, thus, we find the study of the interrelations between society and the environment.

In the last 30 years, environmental sociology has become a fertile field of study that has produced many interesting insights and studies of environmental problems and responses, as well as a wide diversity of approaches and theories. Even if it has fallen short of bringing about a paradigmatic change in the general discipline of sociology, it has become a fruitful subfield in its own right. Nowadays, with the potentially catastrophic effects of social/environmental processes such as climate change becoming increasingly evident, as well as the multiplication of environmental issues (e.g. access to water, deforestation, etc.), environmental sociology is, if anything, more relevant and necessary than ever. In this class, we will explore some of the

theories and empirical studies that environmental sociology has developed in the last few decades with the goal of providing you a general sense of its purpose, structure, and insights.

Class organization

This class will have three well-differentiated components. We will devote the first half of the semester to an exploration of some of the most developed and influential theories and approaches in environmental sociology. These sessions will give us a sense of what environmental sociology is and how it tackles and makes sense of environmental issues. The second part of the class will include the study of some specific environmental problems, such as climate change or global water issues. Finally, the last few sessions of the semester will be destined to the elaboration and presentation of some work that you will do in groups focused on concrete environmental issues that you are interested in.

Through these three different phases, my approach to the class will be similar, even if the specific emphases will vary in each of them: I will lecture to provide you with the necessary background and direction to make sense of a number of theories and environmental problems. Yet a significant portion of each session will be devoted to a discussion of the topics at hand. I am a firm believer that understanding requires working through ideas, and this can only happen if you actively engage with them. If all you do is passively read and listen to me it is unlikely that you will develop the grasp of environmental sociology that I want you to have at the end of the semester. It is fundamental, then, that you come to class and that you verbalize your questions and comments so that we can have a clarifying discussion. For this reason, in the context of this class I establish the principle that **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION**. You should think of this class as a safe space in which we all start from zero and we work together to make sense of the readings and theories. Sometimes the simplest questions or the most misdirected comments are the most productive and illuminating ones, and we need to embrace that in this class.

Assignments and workload

I have designed a grading scheme aimed at encouraging and maximizing the core elements of this class: active engagement with the class material and critical thinking. These are the different components through which I will evaluate you:

Quizzes: to make sure that you can actively participate in class it is necessary that you engage with and absorb the basic materials that will allow you to develop your own thoughts and ideas. That means doing the readings well and paying attention in the classroom. In order to ensure that this is the case, we will have 6 pop quizzes during the first 8 weeks of the semester. These will be short, multiple-choice quizzes which we will do in 5 to 10 minutes (I will give you more specific information about the quizzes separately). Notice, I will not tell you when the quizzes will take place. With this I want to ensure that you do all the readings and that you are paying attention in class. If you do so, you should have no problem performing well in the quizzes, which will only contain basic questions from the readings or things that I say in my lectures. Each quiz will be worth 10 points, and I will drop the lowest grade, so the total number of possible points for the quizzes will be 50.

Participation: I am a big fan of class discussion. For that reason, 15 points of your grade will be devoted to participation in our discussions. My main goal with this component of your grade is to encourage you to think critically about the readings and bring questions, comments, doubts, and observations to class. I am not expecting everyone to talk in every class, but to be generally engaged and contribute regularly. However, I am aware that it is hard to ensure everyone's participation in class because we are a relatively large group and because people have different personalities and it is hard for some of you to speak in public. For that reason, I have set up a discussion board on D2L where you can post comments and questions about the readings and our sessions. I would not want you to think that writing online posts means that there is no need to participate in the classroom. My main goal is to have a lively class discussion, and thus you should think about the online posts as a way to complement your participation in class. If you are someone who is usually engaged and active in class you do not need to write anything online, but if you are on the quiet side and want to get the 15 points for participation you should regularly make meaningful contributions to the online forum. And notice that I say 'regularly'. Submitting several posts in the last week of class will not make up for no participation in the previous fourteen.

Exam: at the end of the first component of our class, we will have an exam in which I will test your knowledge and understanding of the material seen in the previous weeks. The exam will be worth 75 points.

Group presentation and report: the last component of the class will involve work that you will do in groups. I will give you more details on what I expect from you when the time comes, but the basic idea is that you will work in groups of 2 to 4 people exploring an environmental issue or case of your choice (I will be happy to assist you in choosing a topic and appropriate materials). Then you will give a short presentation and lead a few minutes of discussion in class, and finally write a report on the experience. The presentation and report will each count for 30 points, totaling 60 points for this component of your grade.

This is all you will need to do for this course. There are no final exams or term papers. The only other requirement for the course will be attendance to class. Attendance is required and I will take attendance each and every class. I will allow up to 4 unjustified absences. These are supposed to cover illnesses and other uncontrollable circumstances, they are not a free pass to miss four classes without reason. Therefore, if anyone misses more than four classes I will need to see a justification for ALL the absences if you do not want to be penalized. With this, I am trying to avoid the cases of those who miss four classes without justification early in the semester, and then they get sick and feel entitled to miss more sessions. You are expected to be in class every day, and therefore any non-justified absence beyond the allowance of 4 will subtract 3 points from your final grade. And just to be clear: attending a class implies being there for all (or most) of the class and being 'active and engaged'. Leaving right after a quiz, as well as showing up late or leaving early without reason will be counted as an absence. In the same way, sleeping in class or not paying any attention to me or your classmates when they speak will also be counted as an absence, and I will be the only judge of whether you are 'active and engaged'.

The grading scheme, therefore, will be the following:

5 quizzes	x	10 points each	=	50 possible points (25%)
1 exam	x	75 points	=	75 possible points (37.5%)
1 Presentation	x	30 points	=	30 possible points (15%)
1 Report	x	30 points	=	30 possible points (15%)
Participation			=	15 possible points (7.5%)
TOTAL			=	200 possible points (100%)

The final letter grades, then, will be applied over the total possible 200 points for the class in the following manner:

A	186-200	C	146-153.9
A-	180-185.9	C-	140-145.9
B+	174-179.9	D+	134-139.9
B	166-173.9	D	126-133.9
B-	160-165.9	D-	120-125.9
C+	154-159.9	F	0-120

This scheme will be strict. If you get 185.9 points your grade is A-, not A. You are warned from the very beginning so if you want a higher grade work harder and take advantage of the different opportunities available to improve your grades. Complaints of the “but I am so close!”-type at the end of the semester will not have any effect. A further comment on ‘complaints’ about grades: I am happy to discuss with you any concerns you might have about how you are evaluated and about your grades. However, I will only make changes to your grades if I made an obvious mistake. My main concern when I evaluate you is to make sure that I am fair to everyone in relation to each other. If somebody comes to see me and ‘convinces’ me to increase his or her grade that puts those who just accept their grade and do not come to see me at a disadvantage, and therefore as a policy I do not change grades.

A note on participation in class discussion

As I mentioned above, your active participation will be a key element of the learning experience in this class, so I want to make sure that what I mean by that is clear: participating properly in class is not a function of speaking a lot or of making only brilliant points. My main criterion for evaluating participation is: is this contribution bringing the conversation forward? This can happen by asking a very simple question of clarification, or by saying something that is completely wrong yet allows us to confront an issue that we had not considered before. Someone who speaks non-stop or who shuts other people off is in fact stifling debate, and that is the exact opposite of what I am looking for. As I said before, I want to encourage you all to participate, thus the principle that there is no such thing as a stupid question or comment in this class. But I do ask you to be mindful: you are part of a group, and our goal is to move forward and learn together. Using participation to disrupt the conversation or to put someone else down is not acceptable and I will be strict about that.

Phone, tablets, laptops

Although I understand the potential value of using personal devices in the classroom, in my experience they tend to be much more of a distraction than a productive tool, and therefore their use is not allowed in this class. I want you to be paying attention and engaged in class, not taking notes frantically to the point that you cannot process what I am saying, and for that reason after each class I will give you access to my lecture slides (which are quite verbose and self-explanatory). Hopefully this will mean that you will only have to take limited, pointed notes during class and there will be no need to use any electronic devices. If for a particular reason somebody needs to use a device, you have to get explicit permission from me first.

Office hours, email

I will hold office hours every Tuesday, from 1 to 3pm. You should see this as a resource to which you have access in order to seek clarification, to discuss issues both with the material and the functioning of the class, or simply to make your views known about specific topics and readings. Please use them!

You can also contact me by email at any point during the semester. I will try to reply to your messages promptly. However, you should always allow 24-72 hours for my replies. Therefore, you should not wait until the last minute to ask me important questions. Plan ahead!

Required texts

All of the readings that we will use this semester are available as electronic reserves. I am not asking you to buy any books at this point, but you might have to for the work in groups that you will do in the last few weeks of the class, depending on what you choose to work on. The readings for the second part of the course, devoted to specific environmental problems, will be determined later in the semester.

Desire2Learn

I have set up a class website on D2L (<http://d2l.uwm.edu>). There you will be able to follow your grades and attendance for the class, access the online discussion board, and download the different class materials (on the 'Content' tab). As I mentioned above, I will be posting the class slides to the website after each session.

Credit hours and workload

Following university guidelines, this course requires at least 9 hours of work outside of the classroom every week. You should expect to spend about 3.5 hours doing the readings and writing comments online, 3 hours studying and preparing for the quizzes and the exam, and 2.5 hours working on your final project (this is an average – you will be spending much more time working on the project and less doing the readings at the end of the semester).

Calendar of sessions and readings

Tue 1/27 The Syllabus (no reading)

Thu 1/29 Introduction to Environmental Sociology

Laszewski, Chuck. 2008. "The Sociologists' Take on the Environment." *Contexts* 7(2):20–25.

Krieg, Eric. 2008. "The Greenwashing of America." *Contexts* 7(2):58–59.

Catton Jr., William R., and Riley E. Dunlap. 1978. "Environmental Sociology: A New Paradigm." *American Sociologist* 13(1):41–49.

Dunlap, Riley E., and Brent K. Marshall. 2006. "Environmental Sociology." Pp. 329–340 in *21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook, Vol. 2*, edited by Clifton D. Bryant and D. Peck. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tue 2/3 What Is Nature?

Bird, Elizabeth Ann R. 1987. "The Social Construction of Nature: Theoretical Approaches to the History of Environmental Problems." *Environmental Review: ER* 11(4):255–264.

Cronon, William. 1996. "The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History* 1(1):7–28.

Thu 2/5 Consumption, Materialism, and Natural Limits

Rockstrom, Johan et al. 2009. "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity." *Nature* 461(7263):472–475.

Durning, Alan. 1993. "How Much Is Enough?" *Social Contract* 3(3):177–179.

Shove, Elizabeth, and Alan Warde. 1998. "Inconspicuous Consumption: The Sociology of Consumption and the Environment." On-Line Paper, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University:
<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/research/publications/papers/shove-warde-inconspicuous-consumption.pdf>

Tue 2/10 Neo-Marxist Approaches (i)

Foster, John Bellamy. 2001. "Ecology Against Capitalism." *Monthly Review* 53(5):
<http://monthlyreview.org/2001/10/01/ecology-against-capitalism>

Gould, Kenneth A., David N. Pellow, and Allan Schnaiberg. 2004. "Interrogating the Treadmill of Production: Everything You Wanted to Know about the Treadmill but Were Afraid to Ask." *Organization & Environment* 17(3):296–316.

Thu 2/12 Neo-Marxist Approaches (ii)

Choose only **one** of the following two articles:

Foster, John Bellamy. 1999. "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(2):366–405.

Bunker, Stephen G. 2003. "Matter, Space, Energy, and Political Economy: The Amazon in the World-System." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 9(2):219–258.

- Tue 2/17 Population and Development (i)
- Feeney, John. 2009. "Population: The Elephant in the Room." *BBC News' website*. Retrieved August 27, 2012 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7865332.stm>).
- RAND. 1999. "Population and Environment. A Complex Relationship." RAND Policy Brief: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB5045/index1.html
- McKibben, Bill. 1998. "A Special Moment in History." *The Atlantic Monthly* 281(5):55–78.
- Thu 2/19 Population and Development (ii)
- Hartmann, Betsy. 1995. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs. The Global Politics of Population Control*. Boston: South End Press. Chapter 2: The Malthusian Paradox:13-40.
- Tue 2/24 Market Environmentalism
- Monbiot, George. 2012. "Putting a Price on the Rivers and Rain Diminishes Us All." The Guardian's website. Retrieved August 6, 2012 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/06/price-rivers-rain-greatest-privatisation>).
- Anderson, Terry L., and Donald R. Leal. 2001. *Free Market Environmentalism*. Revised Ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapters 1 & 2:1-26.
- Peet, John. 2003. "Priceless." *The Economist* 8333(July 19th):3-5(Supplement).
- Thu 2/26 Ecological Modernization
- Mol, Arthur P. J. 2010. "Ecological Modernization as a Social Theory of Environmental Reform." Pp. 63-76 in *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology*, edited by Michael R. Redclift and Graham Woodgate. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Carolan, Michael S. 2004. "Ecological Modernization Theory: What About Consumption?" *Society & Natural Resources* 17(3):247–260.
- Tue 3/3 Risk
- Cable, Sherry, Thomas E. Shriver, and Tamara L. Mix. 2009. "Risk Society and Contested Illness. The Case of Nuclear Weapons Workers." Pp. 268–286 in *Environmental Sociology. From Analysis to Action*, edited by Leslie King and Deborah McCarthy. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Higgins, Vaughan, and Kristin Natalier. 2004. "Governing Environmental Harms in a Risk Society." Pp. 77-91 in *Controversies in Environmental Sociology*, edited by Rob White. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thu 3/5 Environmental Justice (i)
- Bullard, Robert D. 2001. "Environmental Justice in the 21st Century." Environmental Justice Resource Center's website. Retrieved August 27, 2012 (<http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/ejinthe21century.htm>).
- Pastor, Manuel, James Sadd, and Rachel Morello-Frosch. 2007. *Still Toxic After All*

These Years. Air Quality and Environmental Justice in the San Francisco Bay Area. Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Justice, Tolerance & Community, University of California - Santa Cruz: http://cjtc.ucsc.edu/docs/bay_final.pdf

Tue 3/10 Environmental Justice (ii)

- Lavelle, Marianne, and Marcia Coyle. 1992. "Unequal Protection: The Racial Divide in Environmental Law. A Special Investigation." *Natural Law Journal* 15(3): <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/nlj.pdf>
- UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All.* New York: United Nations Development Programme: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/>. Chapter 2: Patterns and Trends in Human Development, Equity and Environmental Indicators:23-43.

Thu 3/12 Environmental Movements

- Brulle, Robert J. 2000. *Agency, Democracy, and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective.* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press. Chapter 10: The Dynamics of the Environmental Movement:237-268.
- Brulle, Robert J., and J. Craig Jenkins. 2008. "Fixing the Bungled U.S. Environmental Movement." *Contexts* 7(2):14-18.
- Gold, Tanya. 2012. "This Plastic Bag Conspiracy Is a Truly Deadly Distraction." *The Guardian's website.* Retrieved August 4, 2012 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/03/plastic-bag-conspiracy-deadly-distraction>).

--- Spring Break ---

Tue 3/24 Global Environmental Governance (i)

- Speth, James Gustave, and Peter M. Haas. 2006. *Global Environmental Governance.* Washington, Covelo, and London: Island Press. Chapter 3: From Stockholm to Johannesburg: First Attempt at Global Environmental Governance:52-81.
- Park, Jacob, Matthias Finger, and Ken Conca. 2008. "The Death of Rio Environmentalism." Pp. 1-12 in *The Crisis of Global Environmental Governance. Towards a New Political Economy of Sustainability*, edited by Jacob Park, Ken Conca, and Matthias Finger. London and New York: Routledge.

Thu 3/26 Global Environmental Governance (ii)

- Leach, Melissa. 2012. "Why Rio+20 Must Not Leave Politics Out of Sustainable Development." *The Guardian's website.* Retrieved March 5, 2012 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/mar/05/rio-summit-politics-of-sustainable-development>).
- Shultz, Jim. 2012. "Will 'Green Economics' Help Save the Environment or Just Sell It Off to Corporations?" *AlterNet.* Retrieved June 15, 2012 (<http://www.alternet.org/environment/155892?page=entire>).
- Rootes, Christopher. 1999. "Acting Globally, Thinking Locally? Prospects for a Global Environmental Movement." *Environmental Politics* 8(1):290-310.
- Bello, Walden. 2007. "The Environmental Movement in the Global South." *ZNet.*

Retrieved August 27, 2012 (<http://www.zcommunications.org/the-environmental-movement-in-the-global-south-by-walden-bello>).

Tue 3/31	Catch Up / Debate (no reading)
Thu 4/2	Review Session (no reading)
Tue 4/7	Exam
Thu 4/9	Climate Change (i): The Issue
Tue 4/14	Workshop
Thu 4/16	Video (“Hot Politics”)
Tue 4/21	Global Water Problems (i)
Thu 4/23	Global Water Problems (ii)
Tue 4/28	Presentations (i)
Thu 4/30	Presentations (ii)
Tue 5/5	Presentations (iii)
Thu 5/7	Presentations (iv) and Wrap Up

Overview of Sessions

Jan 27 (T)	Course Overview
Jan 29 (R)	Introduction to Environmental Sociology
Feb 3 (T)	What Is Nature?
Feb 5 (R)	Consumption, Materialism, and Limits
Feb 10 (T)	Neo-Marxist Approaches (i)
Feb 12 (R)	Neo-Marxist Approaches (ii)
Feb 17 (T)	Population and Development (i)
Feb 19 (R)	Population and Development (ii)
Feb 24 (T)	Market environmentalism
Feb 26 (R)	Ecological modernization
Mar 3 (T)	Risk
Mar 5 (R)	Environmental Justice (i)
Mar 10 (T)	Environmental Justice (ii)
Mar 12 (R)	Environmental movements
Spring break	
Mar 24 (T)	Global Environmental Governance (i)
Mar 26 (R)	Global Environmental Governance (ii)
Mar 31 (T)	Catch Up / Debate
Apr 2 (R)	Review session
Apr 7 (T)	Exam
Apr 9 (R)	Climate Change: The Issue
Apr 14 (T)	Workshop
Apr 16 (R)	Video on Climate Change
Apr 21 (T)	Global Water Problems (i)
Apr 23 (R)	Global Water Problems (ii)
Apr 28 (T)	Presentations 1
Apr 30 (R)	Presentations 2
May 5 (T)	Presentations 3
May 7 (R)	Presentations 4 and Wrap-Up

UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that web page is: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf>

Students with Disabilities. Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate material and test accommodations can be found at the following:

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf>

Religious Observances. Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm>

Students called to active Military Duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following:

http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm

Incompletes. You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf>

Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf>

Academic Misconduct. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/osl/dean/conduct.cfm>

Complaint Procedures. Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm>

Grade Appeal Procedures. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at

http://www4.uwm.edu/lets/upload/grievance_procedure.pdf

Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at

<http://www.graduateschool.uwm.edu/students/policies/>

Final Examination Policy. Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm>

Book Royalties. In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.

Update 06/2012