

SOCI 390¹

Sociology of the Environment

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Course Description:

This seminar will examine environmental problems and their solutions through a sociological lens. After a broad introduction to the field of environmental sociology, we will examine environmental problems, focusing on climate change, but also studying wider issues of environmental degradation (e.g., resource depletion, habitat destruction and pollution) and their unequal impacts. The driving forces of climate change and environmental degradation will be explored through major theories in environmental sociology, such as treadmill of production and ecological rift, fossil capitalism and ecological modernization, ecofeminism and critical animal studies. The next stage of the course examines solutions to environmental issues and the organization of socio-environmental change, looking at market/corporate, state/institutional and civil society/social movement centred solutions. In the final section, we examine emerging projects for energy transition and green transformation, assessing their theoretical foundations and considering their advantages and limitations as social responses to environmental issues.

Topics may include:

- Sociological explanations of the causes of environmental degradation and climate change, focusing on major theories, such as treadmill of production and ecological rift, ecological modernization and risk and ecofeminism.
- Environmental inequality (uneven ecological exchange and unequal exposure to environmental harms).
- Fossil capitalism and ‘path dependencies’ of fossil fuel energy system
- Agribusiness, factory farming and their role in zoonotic diseases.
- Social movements for environmental and climate justice.
- Emerging projects for energy transition and green transformation (e.g., green capitalism and the Green New Deal).

Potential journal articles/ book chapters that will make up the course readings:

Agyeman, Julian, Peter Cole, Randolph Haluza-DeLay, and Pat O’Riley. 2010. “Introduction.”

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

- Pp. 1–26 in *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*. Vancouver B.C.: UBC Press
- Clark, Brett and Richard York. 2005. “Carbon Metabolism: Global Capitalism, Climate Change, and the Biospheric Rift.” *Theory and Society* 34(4): 391–428.
- Gould, Kenneth, David 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.
- Klein, Naomi. 2019. “The Capsule Case for a Green New Deal.” Pp. 280-291 in *On Fire*. Toronto: Knopf Canada.
- LaDuke, Winona. 2014. “Ending the Age of Fossil Fuels and Building an Economics for the Seventh Generation.” Pp. 229–39 in *A Line in the Tar Sands*.
- Mol, Arthur and Martin Janicke. 2009. “The Origins and Theoretical Foundations of Ecological Modernisation Theory.” Pp. 17-27 in *The Ecological Modernisation Reader. Environmental Reform in Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Norgaard, Kari Marie. 2012. “Climate Denial and the Construction of Innocence: Reproducing Transnational Environmental Privilege in the Face of Climate Change.” *Race, Gender & Class* 19(1/2):80–103.
- Pellow, David and Holly Brehm. 2013. “An Environmental Sociology for The Twenty-First Century.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, 229-250.
- Salleh, Ariel. 2003. “Ecofeminism as Sociology.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 14(1):61–74.
- Wallace, R., Liebman, A., Chaves, L., & Wallace, R. (2020). “COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital.” *Monthly Review*.

Online Course Delivery and Evaluation

Soci 390 will be taught online using Brightspace and Zoom (Brightspace is UVic’s new learning management system that has replaced CourseSpaces, beginning fall 2020). Brightspace will serve as our ‘home site’ where all course content (lecture links, videos, outlines, announcements, grades) will appear.

The course will mostly consist of pre-recorded (asynchronous) content, but we will have a live (online) tutorial on several Fridays throughout the course. Key components of the course include:

1. *Lectures*. Pre-recorded (asynchronous) lecture videos will be posted on CourseSpaces on **Tuesdays and Fridays** (except on Fridays when there is a tutorial).
2. *Tutorials*. A synchronous (live) tutorial will be held **every second Friday from 2:30-3:20** on Zoom. The purpose of tutorials is to discuss the course material and to offer live/synchronous clarifications of readings and lectures. During tutorials you will complete a short group assignment, which will contribute to your participation grade.
3. *Discussion Forums*. Every second Tuesday, a Q&A discussion forum will be posted. I will pose a question in the initial forum post. Students are asked to reply to forums with a short post (2 paragraphs) and respond to each other. Posts make up the second component of your participation grade for the course.
4. *Assignments*. Assignments will likely consist of reading responses/critical commentaries (summarizing and analyzing course readings) and a final research essay.