

Environmental Sociology

SOCIOLOGY 139 • Spring 2021

University of California, Berkeley

TuTH 2-3:29 online

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1. Course Description

This course suggests a new take on an old concept- the “sociological imagination”-by engaging with the two most universally pressing concern of the 21st century, the environment and global society. The combination of these two concepts gives us the “*environmental* sociological imagination” which enables us to understand our lives as minute points in the intersections of biography and history within a global society and world ecology. We will be thinking about the ways we as individuals are interacting and impacting as well as how we are a part of the environment. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate topics such as the greening of capitalism, externalities, consumption, risk, governance, the corporation, alternative approaches to capitalism and the relationships between the local and the global. The essential components to be completed for credit are readings, class discussions, quizzes and exams.

2. Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives:

- Apply a sociological perspective and imagination to environmental debates, issues and phenomenon by mastering the basic concepts, theories and literature of environmental sociology.
- Master core concepts and methods from economic, political, and social analysis more broadly, as they pertain to the evaluation of environmental policies, institutions and social practices.
- Analyze and understand the causes, consequences and solutions to environmental issues.
- Introduce students to the wealth of research by environmental sociologists so students are able to apply the findings, frameworks and paradigms in real world situations.
- Develop critical thinking skills about the subject matter of the course and develop their own methods of inquiry into human societies and the environment.

- Reflect critically about their roles and identities as citizens, consumers and environmental actors in a complex, interconnected world.

3. Course Materials*

All readings will be available on bCourses.

4. bCourses & Technology

All course materials will be posted on bCourses. These include the readings, syllabus, quizzes, exams, responses and grades. It is strongly suggested that the students visit the class site on a daily basis to access these course materials and announcements.

Students will not be excused for not having access to bCourse for any period of the semester. If you have an issue please contact UCB's IT department or the help desk. It is your responsibility to insure you have access to a functional computer and internet.

5. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. *Participation/class attendance (online via zoom) and readings:* Students are expected to attend online classes regularly and to complete all reading assignments. The lectures will cover aspects of the readings but will also supplement them with additional material. Doing well on the examinations and assignments will thus depend on diligently attending lectures and keeping up with weekly readings.
2. *Short response:* There will several short response papers due over the course of the semester. These are designed to check your comprehension of the readings and lectures and must be **in your own words and cannot contain quotes.**
3. *Quizzes:* Periodically there will be quizzes based directly on the readings. These will usually be multiple choice but may also contain short answer questions or brief responses. Check bCourses weekly.
4. *Final exam:* The final exam will be composed of multiple choice, short answer and one essay question. It will be timed and scheduled during our normal exam period.

6. Class Meetings: We will meet once per week virtually (zoom) on **Thursday** at 2-3:29pm PST. This course is a “remote” “synchronous class”. Tuesday's class will be a lecture recording available on bCourses.

7. Office Hours: Office hours will be held virtually via zoom. Please check the calendar in bCourses for available meeting times.

8. Grading: Due dates for all assignments, quizzes and exams are firm.

Grading structure

Participation:	20%
Response papers:	10%
Quizzes:	40%
Final:	30%

Grading scale is as follows:

A+	<100 %	to 99.9%
A	< 99.9 %	to 95.0%
A-	< 95.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 83.0%
B-	< 83.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 73.0%
C-	< 73.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 63.0%
D-	< 63.0 %	to 60.0%
F	< 60.0 %	to 0.0%

Schedule (Note: due to the pandemic this schedule may change)

Week 1 Introduction. What is nature?

How do we define the environment and our responsibility to It?

First week we will meet twice during our regularly scheduled class times TuTh 2-3:29. For the rest of the semester there will be a recorded lecture on Tuesday and then a required virtual class meeting on Thursdays.

Readings for January 19 & 21:

- Jean Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees*
- Soper, K. (1995). What is nature?: Culture, politics, and the non-human. pgs 15-34.
- 📌* Assignment: A short essay response to the readings.

Week 2 Environmental Sociology & the Classics

This session focuses on disciplinary boundaries, perspectives and contributions

Readings for Jan 26:

- Hannigan, J. (2014). Environmental sociology. Routledge. Pgs.1-15

****Further reading (optional): White, D., Rudy, A., & Gareau, B. (2015). "Introduction" in *Environments, natures and social theory: Towards a critical hybridity*. Macmillan International Higher Education. Pgs. 1-16.

Readings for Jan 28:

- Foster, J. B. (1997). The crisis of the earth: Marx's theory of ecological sustainability as a nature-imposed necessity for human production. *Organization & Environment*, 10 (3), 278-295.

****Further reading (optional): York, R., & Mancus, P. (2009). Critical human ecology: Historical materialism and natural laws. *Sociological Theory*, 27(2), 122-149.

Week 3 Green Backs: Modernity, Markets and Environment

Readings for Feb 2:

- Bell, M. M., & Ashwood, L. L. (2020). An invitation to environmental sociology. Sage Publications. pgs. 114-147.

**** Goldman, Michael. 2005. "The Rise of the Bank" in *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*, Pp. 46-99.

Readings for Feb 4:

- Quiz on Bell

Week 4 Moral Nature

Readings for Feb 9:

- Farrell, Justin. 2015. The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict. Princeton University Press. pgs. 1-33

Readings for Feb 11:

- Stoll, M. (2015). "Building the moral society" in *Inherit the holy mountain: religion and the rise of American environmentalism*. Oxford University Press, USA. Chapter 3.

Week 5 Revolution and Nature

Readings for Feb 16:

- Marcuse, Herbert. "Ecology and Revolution," *Liberation*. (16) 1972 :10-12.
- Leiss, William. 1972. "Technology and Domination" in *The Domination of Nature*. NY: Braziller, pgs. 145-55, 161-65.

Readings for Feb 18:

- Thomas, Julia Adeney. "'To Become As One Dead': Nature and the Political Subject in Modern Japan," in *The Moral Authority of Nature*. Eds. Daston and Vidal. U of Chicago Press. pgs. 308-330.

Week 6 Cheap Nature

Readings for Feb 23:

- Patel, R., & Moore, J. W. (2017). *A history of the world in seven cheap things: A guide to capitalism, nature, and the future of the planet*. Univ of California Press. Introduction & chapter 1.

Readings for Feb 25:

- Patel, R., & Moore, J. W. (2017). *A history of the world in seven cheap things: A guide to capitalism, nature, and the future of the planet*. Univ of California Press. Chapter 5.

☛ Assignment: A short essay response to the readings.

Week 7 The human nature of nature

Readings for Mar 2:

- Bell, M. M., & Ashwood, L. L. (2020). The Human Nature of Nature in *An invitation to environmental sociology*. Sage Publications. pgs. 286-318.

Readings for Mar 4:

- Angelo, H., & Jerolmack, C. (2012). Nature's looking-glass. *Contexts*, 11(1), 24-29.
- Quiz on Bell

Week 8 Political Ecology

Readings for Mar 9:

- Robbins, P. (2020). Political versus Apolitical Ecologies in *Political ecology: A critical introduction, 3rd ed.*, John Wiley & Sons. Chapter 1.

Readings for Mar 11:

- Vayda, A., & Walters, B. (1999). Against Political Ecology. *Human Ecology*, 27(1), 167-179. Retrieved January 14, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4603312>
- Walters, B. B. (1997). Human ecological questions for tropical restoration: experiences from planting native upland trees and mangroves in the Philippines. *Forest Ecology and Management*, 99(1), 275–290. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-1127\(97\)00211-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-1127(97)00211-9)

Week 9 The Green City

Readings for March 16:

- Foucault, Michel. Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias, *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* October, 1984; (“Des Espace Autres,” March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec).

Readings for March 18:

- Haskaj, F. (2020). (Community) garden in the city: Conspicuous labor and gentrification. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 0308518X20977872

- ☛ Assignment: A short essay response to the readings.

Week 10 Spring Recess

No classes Monday, March 22–Friday, March 26, 2021

Week 11 Consumption and the Environment

Readings for March 30:

- Robbins, R. H., & Dowty, R. (2008). Environment and Consumption in *Global problems and the culture of capitalism*. Pearson/Allyn & Bacon. pgs.196-220.

Readings for April 1:

- Quiz on Robbins

Week 12 Risk & Resilience

Readings for April 6:

- Hannigan, J. (2014). “Risk” in *Environmental sociology*. Routledge. Chapter 8.

Readings for April 8:

- Tierney, Kathleen. 2015. “Resilience and the Neoliberal Project: Discourses, Critiques, Practices—And Katrina” *American Behavioral Scientist* September 59: 1327-1342.

Week 13 Disaster, Domination and Unpredictability

Readings for April 13:

- Tsing, A.L. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton U. Press. Pp. 1–6, 17–25.
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/04/060418-chernobyl-wildlife-thirty-year-anniversary-science/>

Readings for April 15:

- Merchant, C. (1994). “Introduction” in *Key concepts in critical theory: Ecology*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities. pgs. 1-25.

Week 14 Water

Readings for April 20:

- Sach, Wolfgang. 2010. “Environment” in *The Development Dictionary*. New York: Zed Books. Pp. 45–58.
- Bakker, Karen. 2010. *Privatizing Water: Governance Failure and the World's Urban Water Crisis*. Cornell U. Press. Chapter 7.

Readings for April 22:

- Film: *Blue Gold*

Week 15 “Commoning” Nature: Mobilizing the Just Ecological Society

Readings for April 27:

- Bell, M. M., & Ashwood, L. L. (2020). Mobilizing the Just Ecological Society in *An invitation to environmental sociology*. Sage Publications. pgs. 323-350
- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*. 162(13):1234-48.
- *Suggested: Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge university press.

Readings for April 29:

- Quiz on Bell and Hardin
- *Classes End* *Friday, April 30, 2021*

Week 16 Reading/Review/Recitation

Monday, May 3–Friday, May 7, 2021

Final Exam Mon, May 10 • 11:30A - 2:30P