THE SOCIOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

SOC 190

Time: Thursday 4-6 pm
Location: Zoom
Office Hours: Tuesday 4-6 pm (Signup: www.wejoinin.com/sheets/favge)

Course Description

Climate change will define 21st century societies. This course develops a sociological approach to understanding its history and potential impacts. It draws on a wide range of fields and subfields to examine three major questions: What are the structural origins of the climate crisis? Why have political efforts to address climate change failed? What are the prospects for contemporary social movements and political proposals to address it? As soon-to-be graduates entering the most ambitious and sustained period of climate politics in history, I hope for this course to be of both practical and intellectual use.

Course Requirements

As a capstone seminar, this course is different than any you’ve taken so far. It is designed to emphasize group discussion of the assigned readings. There will be no lectures. Nor will there be exams. Each week we will talk through the key points of the readings, discuss what we appreciated and did not about their arguments and foci, and make connections with previously read work. For this reason, it is imperative that you read the week’s selections carefully, take notes, ask yourself questions, and bring those questions and comments with you to class. Learning to engage in these sorts of group discussions is a key learning objective in this course, and it counts for 30% of your final grade. Two “free” absences are allowed with no questions asked.

Additionally, you’ll write six short (~250 word) responses to the weekly assigned readings. These are meant to spark your critical thinking and allow you to focus your thoughts before we meet as a group. The one requirement is that they should include a discussion question that we could explore during the seminar. They are due by midnight on Wednesday, will be graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis, and account for 15% of your grade.

You will have one major assignment: a research paper. We’ll work through these in two preliminary stages. You will first propose a research question and suggest potential sources for answering your question from scholarly and other secondary sources. The second assignment will be a draft of your paper in the form of bullet points. In total, this will account for 55% of your grade, broken down into the following components: 15% for both of the first two assignments, and 25% for the final paper. Each of these will be due on a Tuesday. The final 10-15 page (double spaced) paper will be due on Tuesday, May 11th.
All readings will be provided online through bCourses.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 21st: Introduction

Thursday, January 28th: Climate Change and Social Change

PART I: Structural Origins of the Climate Crisis

Thursday, February 4th: Capitalism’s Growth Imperative

Thursday, February 11th: The State and Fossil Fuels
- **Recommended**: Harvey, David. – The New Imperialism. pp.1-25

Thursday, February 18**: Fossil-Fueled Lives

PART II: A History of Climate Politics

Thursday, February 25**: The Social Organization of Climate Denial
• Miller, Sarah. 2019. “Heaven or High Water: Selling Miami’s Last 50 Years.” *Popula.* https://popula.com/2019/04/02/heaven-or-high-water/

**Assignment 1 due Tuesday March 2** by 11:59 pm**

Thursday, March 4**: The American Environmental Movement

Thursday, March 11**: Environmental Justice
• Taylor, Dorceta. Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 in *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility.*

Thursday, March 18th: Green Consumers and Individual Responsibility


Thursday, March 25th: SPRING BREAK

Thursday, April 1st: Carbon Markets & Climate Justice


**Assignment 2 due Tuesday April 6th by 11:59 pm**

Part III: Climate Futures

Thursday, April 8th: Technological Deliverance?


**Thursday, April 15th:** Authoritarian Climate Regimes


**Thursday, April 22nd:** De-growth & Eco-Socialism


**Thursday, April 29th:** A Green New Deal


**Final paper due Tuesday, May 11th by 11:59 pm**