

# 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](http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/favge))

## Course Description

Climate change will define 21<sup>st</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup>.**

All readings will be provided online through bCourses.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Thursday, January 21st: Introduction

### Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>: Climate Change and Social Change

- Klein, Naomi. 2014. "One Way or Another, Everything Changes" in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate*. Simon and Schuster.
- Wallace-Wells, David. 2017. "The Uninhabitable Earth." *New York Magazine*.  
<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans-annotated.html>
- **Recommended:** Harlan, Sharon L., David N. Pellow, J. Timmons Roberts, Shannon Elizabeth Bell, William G. Holt, and Joane Nagel. 2015. "Climate Justice and Inequality." Pp. 127–63 in *Climate Change and Society*, edited by R. E. Dunlap and R. J. Brulle. Oxford University Press.
- **Recommended:** Paprocki, Kasia, Daniel Aldana Cohen, Rebecca Elliott, and Liz Koslov. 2019. "The Useful Discomfort of Critical Climate Social Science."  
[\(https://items.ssrc.org/from-our-fellows/the-useful-discomfort-of-critical-climate-social-science/\)](https://items.ssrc.org/from-our-fellows/the-useful-discomfort-of-critical-climate-social-science/).

## PART I: Structural Origins of the Climate Crisis

### Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>: Capitalism's Growth Imperative

- 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.
- Kunkel, Benjamin. 2017. "The Capitalocene" *London Review of Books*. Vol. 39 No. 5 pages 22-28
- **Recommended:** Foster, John Bellamy, Brett Clark, and Richard York. 2011. *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. NYU Press. Pp.13-49

### Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup>: The State and Fossil Fuels

- Aronoff, Kate. 2017. "The U.S. Decided to Show Up for the U.N. Climate Conference — to Lobby for Coal." *The Intercept*. (<https://theintercept.com/2017/11/20/cop23-un-climate-change-clean-coal-ccs/>).
- Newell, Peter and Matthew Paterson. 1998. "A Climate for Business: Global Warming, the State and Capital." *Review of International Political Economy* 5(4):679–703.
- Watts, Michael. 2001. "Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity." *Violent Environments* 189–212.
- **Recommended:** Harvey, David. — *The New Imperialism*. pp.1-25

- **Recommended:** Mitchell, Timothy. 2013. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso Books. Pp.12-42

#### Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup>: Fossil-Fueled Lives

- Huber, Matthew T. 2013. Pp. 23-95 in *Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital*. Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press.

## PART II: A History of Climate Politics

#### Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>: The Social Organization of Climate Denial

- Klein, Naomi. 2014. “The Right is Right” in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate*. Simon and Schuster.
- Miller, Sarah. 2019. “Heaven or High Water: Selling Miami’s Last 50 Years.” *Popula*. <https://popula.com/2019/04/02/heaven-or-high-water/>
- Norgaard, Kari Marie. 2006. “‘We Don’t Really Want to Know’: Environmental Justice and Socially Organized Denial of Global Warming in Norway.” *Organization & Environment* 19(3):347–70.
- **Recommended:** Brulle, Robert J. 2014. “Institutionalizing Delay: Foundation Funding and the Creation of U.S. Climate Change Counter-Movement Organizations.” *Climatic Change* 1–14.
- **Recommended:** Dunlap, Riley E. and Aaron M. McCright. 2011. “Organized Climate Change Denial.” *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* 1:144–160.

**\*\*Assignment 1 due Tuesday March 2<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59 pm\*\***

#### Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup>: The American Environmental Movement

- Dunlap, Riley E. and Angela G. Mertig. 1991. “The Evolution of the U.S. Environmental Movement from 1970 to 1990: An Overview.” *Society & Natural Resources* 4(3):209–18.
- Foster, John Bellamy. 1993. “The Limits of Environmentalism Without Class: Lessons from the Ancient Forest Struggle of the Pacific Northwest” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 4(1):11-41.
- **Recommended:** Gottlieb, Robert. 2005: “Professionalization and Institutionalization: The Mainstream Groups” pp. 167-217 in *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*.

#### Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup>: Environmental Justice

- Taylor, Dorceta. Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 in *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility*.
- London, Jonathan, Alex Karner, Julie Sze, Dana Rowan, Gerardo Gambirazzio, and Deb Niemeier. 2013. “Racing Climate Change: Collaboration and Conflict in California’s Global Climate Change Policy Arena.” *Global Environmental Change* 23(4):791–99.

- Pulido, Laura, Ellen Kohl, and Nicole-Marie Cotton. 2016. "State Regulation and Environmental Justice: The Need for Strategy Reassessment." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27(2):12–31.

#### Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>: Green Consumers and Individual Responsibility

- Maniates, Michael F. 2001. "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?" *Global Environmental Politics* 1(3):31–52.
- Kaufman, Mark. "The Carbon Footprint Sham." *Mashable*.  
<https://mashable.com/feature/carbon-footprint-pr-campaign-sham/>
- **Recommended:** Jaeger, Andrew. 2018. "Forging Hegemony: How Recycling Became a Popular but Inadequate Response to Accumulating Waste." *Social Problems* 65(3):395-415.

#### Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup>: SPRING BREAK

#### Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup>: Carbon Markets & Climate Justice

- Kormann, Carolyn. 2018. "How Carbon Trading Became a Way of Life for California's Yurok Tribe." *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-carbon-trading-became-a-way-of-life-for-californias-yurok-tribe>
- Rosen, Julia. 2020. "Can California's Cap and Trade Actually Address Environmental Justice?" *Yes! Magazine*. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/environment/2020/11/20/california-pollution-cap-trade/>
- Meckling, Jonas. 2011. "The Globalization of Carbon Trading: Transnational Business Coalitions in Climate Politics." *Global Environmental Politics* 11(2):26–50.
- **Recommended:** Mackenzie, Donald. 2009. "Constructing Carbon Markets." Pp. 130–48 in *Disaster and the Politics of Intervention*, edited by A. Lakoff. New York: Columbia University Press.
- **Recommended:** McAfee, Kathleen. 2012. "The Contradictory Logic of Global Ecosystem Services Markets." *Development and Change* 43(1):105–31.

**\*\*Assignment 2 due Tuesday April 6<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm\*\***

### Part III: Climate Futures

#### Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>: Technological Deliverance?

- Holthaus, Eric. 2018. "Why Elon Musk's Ambition Is an Antidote to Climate-Pessimism" *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/why-elon-musks-ambition-is-an-antidote-to-climate-pessimism-196804/>
- Sapinski, J. P., Holly Jean Buck, and Andreas Malm. 2020. "Critical Perspectives on Geoengineering: A Dialogue" in *Has It Come to This?: The Promises and Perils of Geoengineering on the Brink*. Rutgers University Press.

- **Recommended:** Mitchell, T. 2002. “Can the Mosquito Speak?” Pp. 19-53 in *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

#### **Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup>: Authoritarian Climate Regimes**

- Wainwright, Joel and Geoff Mann. 2013. “Climate Leviathan.” *Antipode* 45(1):1–22.
- Knights, Sam. 2020. “The Climate Movement Must Be Ready To Challenge Rising Right-Wing Environmentalism.” *Jacobin*. <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/11/climate-change-right-wing-environmentalism-alt-right-eco-fascism>

#### **Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>: De-growth & Eco-Socialism**

- Hickel, Jason. 2019. “Degrowth: A Theory of Radical Abundance.” *Real-World Economics Review* (87) 1-15.
- Hickel, Jason and Giorgos Kallis. 2019. “Is Green Growth Possible?” *New Political Economy* 1–18.
- Pollin, Robert. 2018. “De-Growth vs a Green New Deal.” *New Left Review* (112):5–25.

#### **Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup>: A Green New Deal**

- Aronoff, Kate, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Aldana Cohen, and Thea Riofrancos. 2019. *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal*. Verso. pp.12-87

**\*\* Final paper due Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm\*\***