

SOC 139: Topics in Social Inequality

Environmental Sociology

SOCIOLOGY 139 • LEC 001 • Class # 30779

FALL 2023

University of California, Berkeley

Tu 12:30P-1:59P - Room 20 - Social Sciences Building

Instructor: Fatmir Haskaj, Ph.D.

Email: haskaj@berkeley.edu

Office Hours: tbd

I. 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.

II. Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives:

- Apply a sociological perspective and imagination to environmental debates, issues, and phenomena 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.

III. Course Materials

All readings will be available on bCourses.

IV. bCourses & Technology

All course materials will be posted on bCourses. These include the readings, syllabus, quizzes, responses and grades. It is strongly suggested that the students visit the class site daily 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 ensure you have access to a functional computer and internet. In class, I do encourage disconnecting from laptops and digital devices during discussions.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Participation/class attendance and readings: Students are expected to attend 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. We will have in-class breakout sessions, group work, and discussions, these require your presence. Occasionally, we will also hold class outside and do "walk & talks" so wear proper footwear.
- Term paper: This will be a short paper of 6-8 pages. See the assignment for details.
- 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.
- 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.

VI. Class Meetings This is an in-person class.

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

Grading structure:

Participation	5%
Term paper	15%
Quizzes/assignments	20%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

Course Schedule

*Note: All items below including but not limited to readings, lectures, assignments, and quizzes may change at the instructor's discretion.

8/24 Week 1 Introduction

- Rees, William E. 2023. "The Human Ecology of Overshoot: Why a Major 'Population Correction' Is Inevitable." *World* 4(3):509–27.

8/29 Week 2 What is nature?

- Jean Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees* (either read this text or watch the film, your choice.)
- Soper, K. 1995. *What is nature?: Culture, politics, and the non-human*. Pp. 15-34.
- Merchant, C., 2003. *Reinventing Eden*. New York: Routledge, Pp. 10-36.
- Yin, Steph. *The Netherlands' grand rewilding experiment, gone haywire*. PBS. August 23, 2019. <https://why.org/segments/the-netherlands-grand-rewilding-experiment-gone-haywire/>

9/5 Week 3 Environmental Sociology & the Classics

- Wollenberg, C. (2008). *Berkeley: A City in History*. UC Press, Pp. 1-14.
- Hannigan, J. 2014. *Environmental sociology*. Routledge, Pp.1-15
- 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.
- Recorded lecture of J.B. Foster on Marx's *Capital and the Earth* here (optional)
- Reading response to Marx and sustainability

****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 Download "Introduction" in *Environments, natures and social theory: Towards a critical hybridity*. Macmillan International Higher Education. Pp. 1-16.

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

*****The Climate Crisis Is Worse Than You Can Imagine* (Short read on carbon and composting toilets)

9/12 Week 4 Green Backs: Modernity, Markets, and Environment

- Bell, M. M., & Ashwood, L. L. 2020. *An invitation to environmental sociology*. Sage Publications. Pp. 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.
- Quiz 1

9/19 Week 5 Moral Nature

- Justin Farrell talk here (start at minute 3).
- Justin Farrell. 2015. *The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict*. Princeton University Press. Pp. 1-23
- 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.

****Documentary (optional): *Drawn to Yellowstone*. Download *Drawn to Yellowstone*.

9/26 Week 6 Exam

- review
- exam

10/3 Week 7 Revolutionary Nature

- Marcuse, Herbert. "Ecology and Revolution," (16) 1972 :10-12.
- Leiss, William. 1972. "Technology and Domination" in *The Domination of Nature*. NY: Braziller, Pp. 145-55, 161-65. (One doc has both readings)
- Thomas, Julia Adeney. 2003. "'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. Pp. 308-330.
- Short response to "revolutionary nature"

10/10 Week 8 Cheap Nature

- 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.
- 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.

****Optional video lecture by R. Patel.

10/17 Week 9 The Human Nature of Nature

- Bell, M. M., & Ashwood, L. L. 2020. *An invitation to environmental sociology*. Sage Publications, Pp. 286-318.
- Sullivan, Robert. "The Concrete Jungle Scientists now view New York as an ecological hot spot—more diverse in nature than the suburbs and rural counties that surround us." *New York Magazine*, Sept. 10, 2010.
- Quiz 2

****Further reading (optional): Soper, K. 1995. "Nature and sexual politics" in What is nature?: Culture, politics, and the non-human, Pp 119-148.

10/24 Week 10 Political Ecology

- Pages from (Critical Introductions to Geography) Paul Robbins-Political Ecology A Critical Introduction, 2nd Edition-Wiley-Black (1).pdf
- Vayda, A., & Walters, B. 1999. Against Political Ecology. *Human Ecology*, 27(1), 167-179.
- 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.
- Reading response

10/31 Week 11 The Green City

- 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).
- Dooley, B and Ueno, H. 2023. *The New York Times*. August, 23. "Can Shrinking Be Good for Japan? A Marxist Best Seller Makes the Case."
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/23/business/kohei-saito-degrowth-communism.html?searchResultPosition=1>.
- Haskaj, F. (2020). (Community) garden in the city: Conspicuous labor and gentrification. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*,
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X20977872>
- Reading response to: (Community) garden in the City

****Optional film: *The City*- A film from 1939 that encapsulates many of the ideas about nature vs city dichotomy that dominated ideas about "greening" and nature to this day.

11/7 Week 12 Consumption and the Environment

- Robbins, R. H., & Dowty, R. 2008. *Environment and Consumption in Global problems and the culture of capitalism*. Pearson/Allyn & Bacon. Pp.196-220.
- *Big Sugar* (optional documentary)
- Quiz on Robbins

11/14 Week 13 Disasters and the Limits of Nature

- Hannigan, J. 2014. "Risk" in *Environmental sociology*. Routledge. chapter 8.
- Wilkinson, I. 2001. *Anxiety in a risk society*. United Kingdom: Routledge, Pp. 87-112.
- Reading response assignment- RISK

11/21 Week 14 Film and Winter break

- Term paper due 11/21
- Film: *Blue Gold*

11/28 Week 15 Disaster, Domination & Unpredictability

- 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/>
- Merchant, C. 1994. "Introduction" in *Key concepts in critical theory: Ecology*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities. Pp. 1-25.
- Reading response on Tsing

12/5 Week 16 Reading/Review/Recitation

- no class

12/12 Week 17 Exams

- Final Exam