

SOCIOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE 295 SPRING 2020

Denial, Risk, and Structure

Dr. J. M. Bacon
baconjul@grinnell.edu
office hrs after class or by appointment

“Though the climate destabilization described in Anthropocene futures may be a distinct ecological challenge for indigenous peoples, we experience it nonetheless as associated with an iteration of patterns of industrial settler strategies and tactics that is very familiar to us from our experiences with and memories of the other kinds of anthropogenic environmental change just described. “ – Kyle Powys Whyte

“The notion that well-educated, wealthy people in the Northern hemisphere do not respond to climate change because they are poorly informed not only appears inadequate...but also fails to capture how in the present global context "knowing" or "not knowing" is itself a political act.” – Kari M. Norgaard

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY 295 : SOCIOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

This class considers the social causes and consequences of climate change.

In particular students in this class will examine how social structure informs human relationships with the environment, how inequality and power intersect with ecological risks, and how people around the world are responding to or not responding to the threat of a destabilized climate.

Some themes we will focus on include climate justice, climate denial, human health and climate change, migration and security, and Indigenous approaches to climate change. By no means are these the only relevant frames for thinking about climate change sociologically and students are encouraged to think broadly about how sociological analysis might be applied to the issue of climate change.

The final product will be a piece of original exploratory research on a sociological climate topic of the student’s choice.

WHAT BOOKS OR SUPPLIES DO I NEED?

You will need reliable internet access and a working device (preferably a computer, laptop, or tablet). If you have technology concerns contact ITS. This link will take you to their student FAQ <https://www.grinnell.edu/about-grinnell/leadership-and-administration/offices-and-services/its/student-faq>

There are required books for this class. If for any reason you are unable to access the books needed for class please contact me as soon as possible.

CLIMATE CHANGE & THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH
FIERCE CLIMATE, SACRED GROUND
STORMING THE WALL

All other readings and video materials will be on our course site on pweb. You will find readings and videos in folders that are organized by module.

HOW WILL THIS CLASS BE TAUGHT?

This course uses a mixture of recorded lectures, synchronous discussion, hands-on activities, writing, and media engagement—including text, film, data sets, and primary source materials to meet the course learning objectives.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO LEARN?

In any course there are many different learning objectives. In the following lists I outline my main objectives for this class. They are divided into conceptual objectives, practical objectives, and relational objectives.

CONCEPTUAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Those who successfully complete this course will be able to answer the following question at an advanced undergraduate level:

What is climate change?

What is climate justice?

What are some of the common issues surrounding climate change in the U.S vs globally?

What is denial / socially organized denial?

How has political polarization of climate change morphed over time?

PRACTICAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Those who successfully complete this course will be able to do the following:

Apply course concepts to observations of the social world

Locate sociologically relevant peer-reviewed articles using a variety of databases

Access and understand data

Create a literature review

Collect a data sample from publicly available social artifacts

Code data

Express ideas in clear and well-reasoned writing

Use American Sociological Association (ASA) style in formal written work

RELATIONAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Those who successfully complete this course will be able to do the following:

Engage in sociologically informed discussions with peers

Give thoughtful consideration to ideas that differ from their own

Approach questions and challenges collaboratively

Be generous in their analysis of writings especially those from other times or cultures
Slow the pace of their responses to allow time for thinking before speaking
Reflect on their thoughts in a way that allows them to consider how new ideas are being integrated into their thinking

WHAT ABOUT GRADES?

Each professor has a different approach to grading and it is important to me that my students understand how I think about grades and assessment.

First, let me assure you that I understand that there are very good reasons for a student to focus on grades. There are risks and rewards attached to grades; this is especially true for those with scholarships. And regardless of risks and rewards, the majority of students entering college have been trained for twelve or more years to see grades as the most significant outcome of any course. **I do not believe this to be true.**

**The intellectual / personal development of my students is my primary goal in teaching.
Prioritizing grades over growth is counterproductive to this mission.**

That said, assessment and evaluation of your progress is a critical part of any class and I will be evaluating how well you meet the course objectives.

In SOC 395 conceptual objectives are assessed via all forms of student work. Basically, anything you write or say should reflect your growing understanding of the concepts we cover in class. Does this mean that you can never say something that's not accurate? Or that you can't ask questions? No. **Growth means getting things wrong and then trying again.** Wrangling with difficult concepts until they are understood is an expected part of the learning process. So ask questions and make mistakes so that your conceptual grasp of sociology can flourish.

Relational objectives are primarily assessed through student participation in discussions, group activities, and challenges. I will be looking for your ability to be collaborative, creative, and generous with others as we work together.

Practical objectives are assessed largely through your written work. Some assignments focus on helping you develop and demonstrate specific practical skills.

This is a seminar and as such the majority of your grade will be based on consistent and thoughtful participation in class discussions.

The mission here is to ***stop worrying about grades and start focusing on your learning.***

WHAT COUNTS AS PARTICIPATION?

Participation can mean many things, but some examples of what I would call meaningful participation include:

Providing an insight into the topic being discussed
Offering a relevant example for analysis
Contributing to an ongoing analysis
Demonstrating logical connections between observations and interpretations
Drawing connections to course materials
Refraining from opinion-based commentary
Interrogating / providing supporting evidence
Raising relevant questions

WHAT IF I MISS A CLASS?

Ideally, students should come to all class meetings and participate in meaningful ways during each class session. I understand however that this may not be possible for any number of reasons. Students can miss up to two discussion sessions without concern. If you are going to miss additional classes please see the make-up instructions in the discussion board section of pweb.

WHEN IS IT DUE?

Unit One: Getting a General Sense of Sociology and Climate Change

1/22 – Nothing Due. We will start Abstract Assignment in class. Some will finish in class others may need until the 27th to turn it in.

1/27 - Read “Public Opinion and Climate Change” and “Elite Cues”. Leader Group 1 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Elite Cues.

1/29 – Read “The Climate Change Divide in Social Theory” and “Only Resist” Leader Group 2 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Only Resist.

2/3 – Read “Civil Society Social Movements and Climate Change” and “Fear, hope, anger, and guilt” Leader Group 3 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Fear Hope Anger and Guilt.

2/5 – Read “Climate Justice and Inequality” and “From Environmental to Climate Justice” Leader Group 4 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for From Environmental to Climate Justice”

Sometime around now you should meet with me one on one to talk about your research

2/10 – Read Intro & Ch 1 of Climate Change and Health (Team M) Response HW 1 due.

2/12 – Read Ch 2 & 3 of Climate Change and Health (Team W) Response HW 2 due.

2/17 – Challenge Day

2/19 – Initial Literature Review

Unit Two: Fossil Fuels, Cultures, and Climate Change

2/24 - Read “Petrography” and Oil Culture Excerpt. Leader Group 1 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Oil and Culture excerpt

2/26 - Read Fierce Climate and Our Ancestors Dystopia. Leader Group 2 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Our Ancestors Dystopia

Sometime around now you should meet with me one on one to talk about your research

3/2 – Read Fierce Climate and Red Alert Excerpt 1 Leader Group 3 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Red Alert Excerpt 1
3/4 – Read Red Alert Excerpt 2 and Grossman Excerpt Leader Group 4 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Grossman Excerpt
3/9 – Challenge Day
3/11 - Expanded Lit Review and Research Q for Proposal
Spring break

Unit Three: Climate Change, Migration, and Security

3/30 – Work day 4/1- Draft proposal
4/6 - Read Storming the Wall 1 & Slow Violence Excerpt Leader Group 1 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Slow Violence
4/8 - Read Storming the Wall 2 & Upending Climate Violence Research: Fossil Fuel Corporations and the Structural Violence of Climate Change—Bonds Leader Group 2 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Upending Climate Violence
4/13 - Read Storming the Wall 3 & *The Secure and the Dispossessed* -excerpt Leader Group 3 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for The Secure and the Dispossessed excerpt
4/15 -Read Storming the Wall 4 & Environment, climate change, and peace Leader Group 4 prepare discussion questions and 1 page handout for Env, Climate change and peace
4/20 – Read Storming the Wall 5 & 6 (Team M) Response HW 3 4/22 - Finish Storming the Wall (Team W) Response HW 4
4/27 – Work Day
4/29 – Complete Draft of paper
5/4 – Presentations 5/6 – Presentations

FINAL PAPER DUE ON EXAM DAY

WHAT ABOUT...?

WHAT ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS?

If you have an accommodation letter please check in with me early to make sure that I have received it and to discuss any concerns you might have about your participation in this course.

In general I aim to design a course that is accessible to all, but I am always learning and will be happy to work with you in any way I can if further changes need to be made.

If you have not spoken with the college about accommodations and wish to do so please contact John Hirschman at hirschma@grinnell.edu

It is important to be aware that at Grinnell you are not required to: register with disability resources; identify yourself to instructors, staff, or other students as having a disability; or

accept accommodations you do not need or want. However, if you need and want accommodations, you are responsible for contacting disability resources and completing the process for requesting accommodations.

<https://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/accessibility-disability/students>

WHAT ABOUT ACADEMIC HONESTY? IS IT CHEATING IF I WORK WITH A FRIEND?

Grinnell College has a handbook on academic honesty which you can read at:

https://www.grinnell.edu/sites/default/files/documents/AcademicHonesty_2017-18.pdf

Generally in this class my expectation is that you will often treat each other as colleagues and collaborators. It is therefore 100% acceptable to work together on activities, papers, and collaborative portions of the challenge day.

Although you will be sharing ideas **it is your responsibility to write your own findings**. In other words, no two papers or activities should say the exact same thing.

If you receive support from a peer on an assignment that is not explicitly a group assignment indicate this in an acknowledgement. For example : Acknowledgements – Thank you to Jan Smith for her review and suggestions.

Citation is the other major form of acknowledgement that must be attended to in this course. Whenever you are summarizing, paraphrasing or directly quoting anything you must provide ASA formatted citation. This is a way of giving credit to the original source of the information that you are using.

You can find how to form an ASA citation at the following website

[https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick Tips for AS A Style.pdf](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_AS_A_Style.pdf)

CAN I RECORD / SCREENSHOT / REPOST PARTS OF THIS CLASS?

No. No aspect of this course should be recorded / screenshot or shared in anyway outside of this course. This is the online version of not bringing strangers to class without getting permission. This policy is to protect the privacy and intellectual rights of all those involved.

HOW SHOULD WE WORK TOGETHER? WHAT IF A GROUP HAS A PROBLEM?

This class relies heavily on collaboration and community. Even though we are meeting in an online space it is essential that we work well together. Sociology is in many ways about connections so please prioritize making connections and developing your ideas both while engaging course materials and while engaging with each other.

Our ability to cultivate and maintain good relationships is our best chance for a just future. Remember that we must stay humble. None of us knows everything. None of us is perfect.

In this class there will be many occasions when you will be working with other people. It is critical that we all respect the time, boundaries and contributions of those we collaborate with.

If you find that you are in an unworkable situation, please contact me immediately baconjul@grinnell.edu and I will sort things out.

WILL THERE BE CONTENT WARNINGS? / WHAT ARE CONTENT WARNINGS?

Content warnings are notices that precede potentially sensitive content. Almost every issue that sociology explores i.e. race, gender, class, sexuality, social control, requires us to consider situations that are often unjust, violent, and upsetting. In other words these issues are the content of sociology. If any reading or video seems especially graphic in its depictions of violence I will place an asterisk next to it. This is not just for your information, but could also be especially useful if you are working in an environment where young children are present.

WHAT IF I NEED HELP WITH SOMETHING?

If you need help with something specific to this course or have general questions about sociology you should email me. I will either answer your questions through email or arrange a time for us to meet online for office hours.

If you need help with writing a paper I am happy to talk with you. However, you may also benefit from working with folks at the Writing Lab. The Writing Lab offers one-on-one instruction to support student writers. They can be reached at: writing@grinnell.edu

There are a number of similar labs which may be of use to you as a student beyond this class. Here are some helpful links:

Math Lab - <https://www.grinnell.edu/academics/majors-concentrations/math-stats/math-lab>

Reading Lab - laniuska@grinnell.edu Phone (641) 269-3118

Digital Liberal Arts Collaborative (DLAC) - dlac@grinnell.edu

Data Analysis and Social Inquiry Lab (DASIL) - dasil@grinnell.edu Phone (641) 269-9734

If you need help with your computer or with a program you are running for class, reach out to Information Technology Services ITservices@grinnell.edu Phone (641) 269-4901

If you need to contact Student Health and Wellness please call SHAW at (641)-269-3230

If you need to talk to a counselor call the 24/7 Counseling Hotline – (641)-269-4404

REALLY THOUGH...WHAT ABOUT GRADES?

It's true, at the end of the term I will need to submit a grade. Here's how I will calculate your grade.

DISCUSSIONS: 50% - We will have daily discussions. You are advanced undergraduates and I expect discussions to be robust, focused, and detailed without much prodding or interjecting on

my part, except as a participant in the discussion. You can miss up to two discussion sessions without penalty.

Seriously lagging discussions aren't good for anyone. Come prepared. Pitch in your thoughts, questions, ideas. Keep focused on the text of course but be open to making connections with other materials. Share those extra materials so that we can all join in the conversation. (If you miss class please see instructions for making up class in the discussion boards)

FACILITATION 20% - I will divide folks into three groups. Depending on what group you're in you will have an extra responsibility on that day to bring discussion questions, or other facilitating supplemental materials to class to help the discussion along if people run out of things to say.

PAPER BUILDING ACTIVITIES: 10% - We'll work on your major project throughout the course. Any activities designed to promote paper development / revision would be under this umbrella.

FINAL PRESENTATION: 10% - End-of-course presentation of research.

FINAL PAPER / PROJECT: 10% - You will have a few options to choose from for a final paper assignment. Each will involve finding relevant peer-reviewed sources, constructing a literature review, and analyzing some raw data.