

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY 295 FALL 2023

Structure, institutions, and agency in social relationships with ecology

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office hrs after class or by appointment

“All progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil.” – Karl Marx

“We need to look at how equity...plays in the nexus of what we look at when we look at the natural environment, the built environment, future environments.” – Dorceta Taylor

“Power is not brute force and money; power is in your spirit. Power is in your soul. It is what your ancestors, your old people gave you. Power is in the earth; it is in your relationship to the earth.” – Winona LaDuke

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY 295 : Environmental Sociology

Welcome to this Introduction to Environmental Sociology. The sub-field of environmental sociology traces its roots to the 1970's and the work of Catton and Dunlap on what they called the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP). The NEP sought to recognize the innovative capacity of humans, but asserted that humans are still ecologically interdependent with other species. From many perspectives this idea is nothing new, but within sociology it was a break with older models of thinking that suggested humanity was in most regards completely separate from the natural world thanks to technological developments.

That said, even the earliest sociologists, people like Marx and Weber for instance demonstrated an understanding that human social life is tied to the ecological world. Environmental sociologists have made these eco-social connections the center of their research.

In this course we will consider the theories and methods employed in environmental sociology and we will look closely at some of the key concepts and issues explored by environmental sociologists.

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 three 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.

Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology
Lessons in Environmental Justice
Strangers in Their Own Land

ISBN-10: 0190088516
ISBN-10: 1544321953
ISBN-10: 1536684937

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 informal lectures, 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 questions at an advanced undergraduate level:

- What is environmental sociology and how is it connected to other sociological fields?
- How do systems of power shape environmental experiences?
- How do people understand and respond to environmental risks?
- How are capitalism and the environment connected?

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

We will have two **challenge days** where I will present the class with a series of tasks to complete. These tasks will require you to demonstrate your conceptual understanding of the course materials, your ability to utilize the practical skills you've built, and an opportunity to work collaboratively with others toward a common goal.

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 295 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 environmental sociology can flourish.

Relational objectives are primarily assessed through student participation in discussions, group activities etc.. 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.

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

WHAT COUNTS AS MEANINGFUL 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

DUE DATES (very likely to change. Consult the PWEB version for most up-to-date information)

Aug 25 - Intros and basic logistics

MODULE ONE: CASE STUDY AND BASICS

Week 1 (Aug 28 - Sep 1)

Monday

Before class read *Strangers* Ch 1& 2 and *Twenty Lessons* Ch 1

Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday

Before class read *Strangers* Ch 3 and *Twenty Lessons* Ch 2

Friday

Paper planning session. Come to class with a list of possible environmental sociology topic ideas.

Week 2 (Sep 4-8)

Monday

Before class read *Strangers* 4 & 5 and *Twenty Lessons* Ch 5

Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday

Before class read *Stranger 6* and *Twenty Lessons* Ch 17

Friday

Before class read *Strangers* Ch 7 and *Twenty Lessons* Ch 3

Week 3 (Sep 11-15)

Monday

Before class read *Strangers* 8 & 9 and *Twenty Lessons* Ch 9

Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday

Before class read *Strangers* Ch 10-13

Friday

Paper work day. Come prepared to work on your paper. (Although we won't be peer reviewing yet, you should have a working draft and should be nearly done collecting sources)

Week 4 (Sep 18-22)

Monday

Before class finish *Strangers*

Write brief response that brings together issues presented in the final chapters with concepts you've encountered from *Twenty Lessons*

Wednesday

CHALLENGE DAY ONE

Friday

Research Report A

MODULE 2: HEALTH AND CLIMATE

Week 5 (Sep 25-29)

Monday

Before class read *Twenty Lessons* 11 & *Lessons in EJ* Ch 11 & 13

Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday

Before class read *Twenty Lessons* 12 & 13

Friday

Research Report B (by this time you should be meeting with Writing Mentors and have a nearly complete draft)

Week 6 (Oct 2-6)

Monday

Before class read *Twenty Lessons* 14 & 15

Wednesday

No reading to complete for today

Friday
Research Report B

Week 7 (Oct 9-13)

Monday
Bring complete first draft of introduction

Wednesday
Bring complete first draft of lit review

Friday
NO CLASS
PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT

MODULE 3: ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS, EJ, and REGULATION

Week 8 (Oct 23-27)

Monday
Before class read *Twenty Lessons 18 & 19* and Lessons in EJ Ch 14
Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday
Before class read *Twenty Lessons 10* and *Lessons in EJ Ch 2*

Friday
Check PWEB for Activity Videos or readings to complete before class

Week 9 (Oct 30- Nov 3)

Monday
Before class read *Twenty Lessons 6* and Lessons in EJ Ch 5 & 6
Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday
Before class read *Lessons in EJ Ch 4*

Friday
Check PWEB for Activity Videos or readings to complete before class

Week 9 (Nov 6 - 10)

Monday
Before class read Lessons in EJ Ch 8 & 10

Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other.

Wednesday

Before class read Lessons in EJ Ch 3

Friday

Check PWEB for Activity Videos or readings to complete before class

Week 9 (Nov 13 - 17)

Monday

Before class read *Twenty Lessons 20* & *Lessons in EJ Ch 17*

Write brief response to this set of readings. Try to think of them in conversation with each other

Wednesday

Before class read *Lessons in EJ Ch 18*

Friday

CHALLENGE DAY TWO

Week 10 (Nov 20)

Monday

Set up presentation groups and prepare reading selections

Wednesday

NO CLASS BUT READING SELECTIONS ARE DUE BY 5PM

MODULE 4: STUDENT DIRECTED PRESENTATIONS

These dates will be assigned to presentation groups on Nov 20 and readings will be posted on PWEB.

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 Jae 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 review quizzes.

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_ASA_Style.pdf

IS IT CHEATING IF I USE CHATGPT OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

Maybe.... If you use AI you must cite your source and AI generated materials should not account for more than a small portion of your work. That said, AI is not especially reliable. It can be thought of as an assistant but not as an expert. Furthermore, I try to create assignments that are unlikely to benefit much from the use of AI (meaning I test them out and I know what AI says as a response).

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 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 at 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. That's my warning.

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.

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

We will also have writing mentors for this course. They will meet with you early in the term to introduce themselves and tell you how they can support your work in this course.

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?

You're right, I will need to give you a grade eventually. Here's how I will calculate your grade.

Activities- 15% (can be turned in up to one week late no problem)

Responses - 15% (can be turned in up to one week late no problem)

Challenge 1 - 15%

Paper - 25% [final paper 15% - Research Presentation 5% - Drafts 5%]

Challenge 2 - 20%

Presentation - 10%

IF YOU ARE SICK PLEASE STAY HOME

***If you miss class for any reason please check the assignments and discussion boards to get a sense of what we did / what you need to do to make up the class.