

# ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

SOC 355, SECTION 1

Fall 2020  
(online, asynchronous)

Department of Sociology and Social Work  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point



*Gyre (photograph), by Chris Jordan (2009)*

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

*“Without self-understanding we cannot hope for enduring solutions to environmental problems, which are fundamentally human problems.” Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974*

*“Sustainability, the guiding concept behind ecological modernization, is as much a political-economic dimension as an ecological one: what can be sustained is only what political and social forces in a particular historical alignment define as acceptable.”  
John Hannigan, 2007*

What is the relationship between nature and society? How do human actions, beliefs, and decisions impact the environment and vice versa? How do humans construct their own environment and what does that say about culture and the lived world? What are the long-term effects of these realities and what do these projects say about sustainable existence into the future?

These are important questions not unique to sociology. But by developing and applying a sociological perspective to these issues, fresh reflections result with important consequences and potential solutions. The nature of this course (pun intended!) is to delve into this sub-discipline of sociology. Along the way, connections across other disciplines will be made, such as political science, psychology, religious studies, etc. But a genuine sociological paradigm will be cultivated, which will highlight important relationships between race and gender and the environment; the role of religion in understanding nature and the role of social activism; how social institutions like family and mass media influence attitudes and beliefs about the environment; what agency individuals can and should take in approaching societal problems related to the environment; and so much more!

### **Learning Outcomes**

*Students can/will be able to...*

- 1. Describe and recall major concepts and methods used by social scientists, across multiple disciplines, to investigate globalization and other global phenomena.**
- 2. Apply major ideas and theories to real-world problems and issues that are global in breadth and scope.**
- 3. Develop a personal global identity.**
- 4. Apply discipline-specific standards of oral and written communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized presentation/piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.**
- 5. Critique their own and others' writing/oral presentations to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication.**

## REQUIRED TEXT

- (1) Gould, Kenneth A. and Tammy L. Lewis. (2015). *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. Oxford University Press.
- (2) Supplementary material will be provided throughout the semester

## COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

### **Format**

The format of each class will vary throughout the semester. Since we all learn differently, I will utilize a variety of teaching methods to present the material. These methods will include lectures, in-class activities, video presentations, and class discussions. It is vital that you come to class prepared (i.e., read what you are asked to have read!) and ask questions and make comments when you have them. Not only will the material make more sense, but you will get a lot more out of the class as well.

*Note on Online/Asynchronous learning:* Due to the unique nature of this instructional modality, this course will have a semi-structured feel. New content will be posted each week, leaving the consumption of that material up to the student. It is vital that you do not get behind from week to week for obvious reasons. Assignments will continue to have hard deadlines, just like a ‘normal’ semester.

### **Academic Integrity**

To ensure that the highest level of academic and personal integrity is upheld, it is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities as a student at UWSP (see [Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students](#)). For a complete overview of UWSP academic standards and disciplinary procedures, please visit: the following website: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

### **Disability Services**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP’s policies. Any student who feels that an accommodation may be needed based on the impact of a disability should contact [Disability Services and Assistive Technology](#) at 715-346-3365 in Room 609 Learning Resource Center at 900 Reserve Street. Staff will work to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Technology Policy**

My expectations regarding technology are simple and, hopefully, not unrealistic. I do not expect students to be without their phones, tablets, and/or computers. I completely understand that the schedule for most students may even necessitate this. In fact, our class will even utilize this as a resource at times during the semester; for instance, in-class activities that prompt students to do a quick search online. I also understand that some students prefer to take notes electronically, on a tablet or laptop. (Be warned: [research shows that students retain more information when notes are hand-written.](#)) But, *unless specified otherwise or a circumstantial agreement with me is made, phones should be*

*silent (e.g., airplane mode), and out of sight.* As soon as a device becomes a distraction to the class, I will revoke technology privileges all together.

### **Attendance Policy**

Your attendance and participation will be recorded and calculated as part of your final evaluation. However, I understand ‘participation’ inclusively. This can include the conventional (i.e., asking questions via discussion posts) as well as other forms of interaction in and outside of class (e.g., office hour visits, email discussions, in-class activities). In short, I am looking for students to be engaged in the material, however or wherever that might be.

### **Assignment Submission and Late Policy**

All assignments (unless specified otherwise) should be submitted by the respective deadline electronically via Dropbox on CANVAS. Turnitin (originality checking software) is activated with results viewable to you and me. Please use this as a tool for writing. Late work is accepted up to one week after the specified deadline (5-point reduction), also via the appropriate CANVAS dropbox. I will not accept assignments after this.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATIONS**

### **Unit Discussion Boards**

Unit Discussion Boards are *critical* dialogues covering aspects from class and organized in a popular online format via Canvas. This will allow your fellow students to comment/discuss in a productive and respectful manner. This interactive approach is vital for working through new material. The specific requirements and directions will be discussed in class.

*6 Weekly Discussion Posts (10 points each) = 60 points*

### **Group Roundtables**

Group Roundtables will serve as extensions from the unit-specific group discussions you’ll have on Canvas. Specific requirements and expectations about the roundtables will be discussed in class.

*3 Group Roundtables (20 points each) = 60 points*

### **Unit Assignments**

Unit Assignments are more organized assignments that approach a specific topic or problem. The requirements and expectations for these papers will be discussed in class. In general, these are assignments that allow you to apply the concepts and ideas we have discussed in class to a specific setting/problem. These papers will require some research and activity outside of class to complete.

*3 Unit Assignments (50 points each) = 150 points*

### **Final Project**

The final project will serve as a conventional closing assignment, bringing together concepts and themes from the entire course. Specific details about the project will be discussed in class.

*Final Project = 80 points*

**Attendance/Participation**

Attendance is crucial to succeed in this class. Keeping up on your reading in order to actively participate in class will ensure that you are adequately prepared for the assignments. My teaching philosophy is based on a cultivation of *active learning*. This means that I aim to provide an environment whereby students are able to ‘experience’ the material. However, this is a dual relationship. Students must also be willing to learn in order to make this happen. By *being* in class regularly (not just present), an active and invigorating culture of learning can be developed. *Attendance and Participation will be recorded via Canvas activities and discussions throughout the semester.* This being said, life is always full of unexpected events and emergencies. If you think you will miss a class, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements.

*Attendance/Participation = 50 points*

**Evaluation**

Evaluation of this course is based on the standard UWSP grading scale.

Course Evaluation:

Discussion Posts =	60 (6, 10 points each)
Group Roundtables =	60 (3, 20 points each)
Unit Assignments =	150 (3, 50 points each)
Final Project =	80
<u>Participation =</u>	<u>50</u>
Total =	400

Grading Scale		
Letter Grade	Percent	Points
A	92-100	366<
A-	90-91	358-365
B+	87-89	346-357
B	83-86	330-345
B-	80-82	318-329
C+	77-79	306-317
C	73-76	290-305
C-	70-72	278-289
D+	67-69	266-277
D	60-66	238-265
F	<60	<238

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic/Activity	Reading	Assignment
31-Aug	Introductions	Intro (text); King Ch1 (Supp)	
7-Sep	ES Basics: History, Concepts and Theory	Ch1 and 2 (text)	
<b>Physical</b>			
14-Sep	Disasters	Ch14 (text); King Ch13 (supp)	
	Built environment	King Ch8 (supp)	
21-Sep	Food	Ch12 (text)	DP1
	Population/demography	Ch8 and 9 (text)	
28-Sep	Health	Ch11 (text)	DP2
	Technology	Ch7 (text)	
5-Oct	Case Study		
	Group Roundtable		
<b>Ideological</b>			
12-Oct	Consumption/materialism	King Ch10 (supp); Bell Ch2 (supp)	UA1
	Family, Politics and Identity (take home)	Strangers in their own land (supp)	
19-Oct	Religion, Gender, and the Environment	Bell Ch7 (supp)	DP3
	Globalization	King Ch14 and 15 (supp)	
26-Oct	Social inequality	Ch10 (text); King Ch7 (supp)	DP4
	Media	Ch5 (text)	
2-Nov	Case Study		
	Group Roundtable		
<b>Organizational</b>			
9-Nov	Science (astrosociology)	Ch6 (text); King Ch17 (supp)	UA2
	Political Economy	Ch3, 4 and 17 (text)	DP5
16-Nov	Social change - historical	Ch16 (text)	DP6
	Social change - critical	Ch18 (text); Pellow Ch1 (supp)	
	Change and you - living with it	Ch20 (text); King Ch21 (supp)	
23-Nov	Thanksgiving Week - no new content		
30-Nov	Case study		
	Group Roundtable		
7-Dec	Final project presentations		UA3
12/17 11:59pm	Final Exam		Final Project