



Sociology 3365: Society & Environment
Spring 2022

Instructor: Dr. Michelle L. Edwards

Course section #, classroom & meeting time: Section 252, Derrick 227, M/W 2:00 - 3:20 pm

Seating chart: To be added

Office number: Dr. Edwards – UAC 472

Departmental phone: 512-245-2113

Email: Dr. Edwards – me1149@txstate.edu

Office hours: *Dr. Edwards* - This semester my office hours will be via Zoom and in person, by appointment (my schedule is flexible so I can work around your schedule)

WHAT DOES THIS COURSE ENTAIL?

This course explores the subfield of environmental sociology, especially how sociologists consider modern environmental problems and their solutions. This course is interdisciplinary in its scope (in other words, it brings together geography, sociology, environmental science, etc.), but you will largely be expected to engage and demonstrate knowledge of *sociological* concepts and theories. In the course, we will especially focus on race and class environmental inequalities (local and global). This class is intended to be thought provoking as you critically examine local and global environmental issues. It is expected to be personally challenging as well as you assess your own socio-environmental experiences.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES?

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Compare and contrast the strengths and limitations of different sociological perspectives on social and environmental relationships,
- Identify real-world examples of environmental inequalities (e.g., based on race, class, indigeneity, etc.)
- Assess proposed causes of environmental problems from a sociological perspective,
- Link local and global environmental problems, and
- Critique your personal impacts on the environment and evaluate solutions proposed to address these impacts.

WHERE CAN I FIND COURSE MATERIALS?

Technology

Though you do not need a computer during (in-person) class, I would strongly recommend identifying a place where you can use a computer (e.g., computer lab or library on campus) since our readings and assignments will be posted on Canvas.

Required Readings

These are available for free using your access to the Texas State library website. I will create links to the readings on our Course Calendar. Sometimes these links seem to work on my computer, but not for students. If this is ever the case, just let me know ASAP and I will fix them!

Canvas

I will use Canvas for assignments, to communicate with you, to post material, and to post grades. You will need a Texas State e-mail address and a password in order to access this site. Students are expected to be comfortable in the use of this technology, or become so within the first week of class. All students are expected to check the Canvas site on a regular basis.

HOW ARE GRADES CALCULATED?

Exam 1	125 points	= 25%
Exam 2	125 points	= 25%
Exam 3 (Final)	125 points	= 25%
Reflection Papers	95 points	= 19%
<u>Final Presentation</u>	<u>30 points</u>	<u>= 6%</u>
Total Possible Points:	500 points	=100%

Grading Scale

- A – 450 – 500 points
- B – 400 – 449 points
- C – 350 – 399 points
- D – 300 – 349 points
- F – 250 – 299 points

WHAT DO ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS ENTAIL?

Exams (375 points total)

There will be three exams over the course of the semester, including the final. The exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. For the most part, the exams will NOT be cumulative; however, each piece of knowledge gained lays the groundwork for subsequent knowledge. Therefore, to do well on later exams, students will need to have a solid understanding of concepts and skills learned earlier in the course.

Reflection Papers (95 points total)

There will be 3 reflection papers due at different points during the semester.

Reading Reflection Papers (25 points each x 2 = 50 points): Two (of 3) reflection papers will require you to think critically about one of the course's required readings and connect it to something in the news (current events). Submitted reflection papers should be typed and professionally written and accomplish the following:

- 1) Summarize the main arguments of the reading,
- 2) Describe one finding/point/concept that you didn't agree with or that you found novel or challenging and explain why,
- 3) Connect the reading to a current issue from the news (make sure to cite the news story/reference),

4) Raise at least one thoughtful question prompted by the reading and explain why this question is important.

Experience Reflection Paper (45 points): The third reflection paper will be based on an activity I want you to do for our class. I would like for you to make some change in your lifestyle that signifies an effort to reduce your impact on the environment or serves to bring about environmentally positive social change. This is intended to be a challenging and educational project whereby you experience the structural, social, cultural, and other factors that constrain widespread social change along ecological lines. You will select what type of change in your lifestyle you would like to make. For example, you could change your diet, change your driving habits, change where you purchase products, change your electricity habits, etc. The length of time you will need to continue with this behavior depends on the difficulty entailed. The key point is that the behavior must be a change – i.e., not something you do already. The project does not require that you are successful at making the change, only that you make a sincere attempt at it. The reflection paper will be based on your experiences. You will also make a presentation about your project at the end of the semester.

All assignments should be turned in on Canvas under "Assignments."

Final Presentation (30 points)

This presentation will be based on your experience reflection paper (see above). Students will be assigned a presentation date at the end of the semester. More details to follow.

Extra Credit

There will be at least one extra credit opportunity during the semester. More details to follow during the semester.

Make-up work

There will be no make-ups or late work accepted for reflection papers or the presentation. However, I will provide make-up exams if you have an excused absence (which requires appropriate documentation and prior notification). **Please make arrangements ahead of time if you can!** There will be no make-up for the final exam.

UNIVERSITY-PROVIDED INFORMATION

Students with Special Needs

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services at www.ods.txstate.edu or 512-245-3451. If you will require an accommodation(s) to participate in this course, please contact me as soon as possible. You will be asked to provide documentation from the Office of Disability Services. Failure to contact me in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.

Mental Health Needs

Mental health issues can diminish academic performance and may affect students' ability to participate in activities. The Counseling Center at Texas State provides free and confidential mental health services on

both its San Marcos and Round Rock campuses. For additional information, visit the Counseling Center's or call 512.245.2208. Additional resources are available on the university website, [Minds Matter](#).

Statement about Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

- [Code of Student Conduct](#)
- [The Honor Code](#)

Statement about Academic Dishonesty (quoted)

As members of the university community, students are expected to be aware of and abide by university policies regarding academic honesty. By the same token, members of the faculty within the university community are expected to enforce those policies. Members of the Department of Sociology operate on the assumption that each student has thoroughly reviewed the university policies regarding academic honesty and that the policies will be followed. Accordingly, members of the Department of Sociology will enforce all policies related to academic honesty. The specific policy statements in this regard are to be found at the following websites:

- <http://www.dos.txstate.edu/handbook/rules/cosc.html>
- <http://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/Academic-Integrity.html>
- <http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/07-10-01.html>

The following is not a substitute for the statement of policies found in the above referenced material. Rather, it serves to call each student's attention to the breadth and depth of academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty includes the following: Cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or abuse of resource materials. Each term or phrase is defined in some detail in the above referenced material. Because the offense of plagiarism can be confusing to students, the following information is provided as essential reading by all students.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- downloading or buying a research paper
- cutting and pasting information from several sources to create a paper
- leaving out quotation marks around quoted material, placing quotation marks around some but not all copied information
- leaving out quotation marks around copied information but adding a citation implying that the information is the student's summary of the source
- leaving out quotation marks for more than three consecutive words taken directly from a source
- providing a reference/bibliography page but leaving out the reference citation in the body of the paper
- faking a citation
- unintentionally using words or ideas or quotes without citing them in the body of the paper and on the reference/bibliography page (<http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>)

Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism or having plagiarized in the past without having been penalized does not excuse such acts in the Department of Sociology. Any student charged with plagiarism may appeal in writing in accordance with Texas State University policy.

COVID-19 Information

Due to the ongoing pandemic, I will not be giving points for attendance, but we will be taking roll for contact tracing. I strongly urge you to get your COVID vaccine (I'm already fully vaccinated!) and wear a mask in the classroom.

These are the steps we (the university and me) expect you to follow:

1. **Get tested.** Regardless of vaccination status, get tested before the start of the fall semester and when selected to participate in Texas State's random COVID-19 testing program. The recommendation for testing is every 2 weeks. I think I'll be getting tested every week. Testing information can be found on the [Texas State's COVID-19 Testing, Reporting, and Response Steps webpage](#).
2. **Stay home and get tested if you develop cold-like or other [COVID-19 symptoms](#),** regardless of vaccination status.
3. **Promptly Report to Bobcat Trace** if you test positive for COVID-19 or have had close contact with someone who received a positive test result. Reporting information can be found on the [Texas State's COVID-19 Testing, Reporting, and Response Steps webpage](#).
4. **Isolate if you test positive for COVID-19.** Stay home and away from others for 5 days from the start of symptoms or the positive test if no symptoms & rely heavily on masking for another 5 days to prevent spread of infection.
5. **Quarantine if you have been identified as a close contact** and stay home for the prescribed time period. If you have been vaccinated AND received a booster, and/or if you have had a COVID-19 infection within the last 90 days, you do not have to quarantine but you must wear a face mask when around others for 10 days.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 (no class Monday, class starts on Jan. 19)

Topic: Who Are Environmentalists? (And, Getting to Know You)

Readings/Videos:

- Buni, Catherine. 2016. "Toward a Wider View of 'Nature Writing.'" *Los Angeles Review of Books*. [Link](#)
- Finney, Carolyn. 2020. "Whose Story Counts." [Link \(YouTube video\)](#)

And then, at least one from the below list (ordered alphabetically):

- Parks, Cecily. 2020. "Dispatch from the Alley." [Link](#)
- Nelson, Marilyn. 2001. "Arachis Hypogaea." [Link](#)
- Nevada Diggs, Latasha N. 2013. "My First Black Nature Poem™." [Link](#)
- Wong, Jane. 2015. "Thaw." [Link](#)
- Ybarra, Priscilla Solis. 2019. "The Land Has Memory." Interview with Cherríe Moraga in Orion Magazine. [Link](#)

Week 2 (Jan. 24, 26)

Topic: Where Does Nature Begin and End?

Readings:

- King, Barbara. 2013. "When Animals Mourn." *Scientific American*. [Link](#)
- McCaughey, Martha. 2010. "Got Milk?: Breastfeeding as an 'Incurably Informed' Feminist STS Scholar." *Science as Culture* 19(1):79-100. [Link](#)
- Tierney, John. 2008. "What's Natural About Olympic Athletes." [Link](#)

Assignment: Extra credit poem (worth 5 points) due by Jan. 24 at 5 pm

Week 3 (Jan. 31, Feb. 2)

Topic: (White) Settler Colonialism as Ecological Violence

Readings:

- Brown, Matthew and Felicia Fonseca. 2021. "Boom in Native American oil complicates Biden climate push." *AP News*. [Link](#)
- The Red Nation. 2021. "To End Fossil Fuels, End Settler Colonialism." *Yes Magazine*. [Link](#)
- Silva, Néstor L. 2020. "Cattle, Fracking, and the Problem of Latent Control in American Settler Ecology." [Link](#)
- Whyte, Kyle Powys. 2018. "White Allies, Let's Be Honest About Decolonization." [Link](#)

Week 4 (Feb. 7, 9)

Topic: Consumption

Readings:

- Heglar, Mary Anaise. 2019. "I work in the environmental movement. I don't care if you recycle." [Link](#)
- King, Barbara J. 2015. "Does Being Vegan Really Help Animals?" [Link](#)
- Semphere, Takondwa. 2020. "Our Distance from Dirt." *Africa Is a Country*. [Link](#)
- Ward, Justin. 2019. "Boycotting Amazon Won't Work." [Link](#)
- Wicker, Alden. 2017. "We Have No Idea How Bad Fashion Actually Is for the Environment: But it's definitely not good." *Racked.com*. [Link](#)

Week 5 (Feb. 14, 16)

Topic: Environmental Doom and Gloom or Optimism?

Readings:

- Lamb, Gavin. 2020. "How to Talk About Climate Hope: Energizing Tiny Actions To Save The Planet." *Medium*. [Link](#)
- October's (2021) issue of *The Climate Optimist* ("We interrupt your doom scrolling with a message from reality"). [Link](#)
- September's (2021) issue of *The Climate Optimist* ("Letting go of climate guilt in 5 easy steps."). [Link](#)
- August's (2021) issue of *The Climate Optimist* ("Self care in the time of 'OMG really? Now this too?"). [Link](#)

Week 6 (Feb. 21, 23)

Assignment: Reflection Paper #1 due by Feb. 21 at 5 pm

Feb. 21 - Exam 1 Review

Feb. 23 - Exam 1

Week 7 (Feb. 28, March 2)

Topic: Environmental Sociology Theory part I - Can Capitalism Save Us?

Readings:

- Maloo, Zahra. 2021. "Bill Gates and his technofix dream for the planet." *Africa Is a Country*. [Link](#)
- Stoll, John D. 2020. "Sustainability Was Corporate America's Buzzword. This Crisis Changes That." *The Wall Street Journal*. [Link](#)
- Tabuchi, Hiroko and Brad Plumer. 2021. "How Green Are Electric Vehicles?" *The New York Times*. [Link](#)
- White, Katherine, David J. Hardisty, and Rishad Habib. 2019. "The Elusive Green Consumer." *Harvard Business Review*. [Link](#)

Week 8 (March 7, 9)

Topic: Environmental Sociology Theory Part II - Is Capitalism the Problem?

Readings:

- Adler, David and Pawel Wargan. 2019. "Stop Polluting Our Green New Deal." *Jacobin*. [Link](#)
- Hamouchene, Hamza. 2020. "Energy Transitions and Colonialism." *Africa Is a Country*. [Link](#)
- Jackson, Tim. 2021. "Billionaire space race: the ultimate symbol of capitalism's flawed obsession with growth." [Link](#)

Week 9 (no classes March 14, 16)

Week 10 (March 21, 23)

Topic: Environmental Risk, Scientific Norms, & Contested Expertise

Readings:

- Benjamin, Ruha. 2019. "Assessing risk, automating racism." *Science* 366(6464):421-422. [Link](#)
- Guthman, Julie and Sandy Brown. 2016. "Whose Life Counts: Biopolitics and the 'Bright Line' of Chloropicrin Mitigation in California's Strawberry Industry." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 41(3):461-482. [Link](#)
 - If you need help with this, check out the Teen Vogue op-ed by Namrata Verghese (2021) entitled "What Is Necropolitics? The Political Calculation of Life and Death": [Link](#)
- Ottinger, Gwen. 2015. "Is it good science? Activism, values, and communicating politically relevant science." *Journal of Science Communication* 14(2):1-3. [Link](#)

Week 11 (March 28, 30)

Assignment: Reflection Paper #2 due by March 28 at 5 pm

March 28 - Exam 2 Review

March 30 - Exam 2

Week 12 (April 4, 6)

Topic: Mainstream Environmental Movement vs. the Environmental Justice Movement

Readings:

- Brave NoiseCat, Julian. 2019. "The Environmental Movement Needs to Reckon with Its Racist History." *Vice.com*. [Link](#)
 - Paired with Mair, Aaron, Chad Hanson, and Mary Ann Nelson. 2021. "Who Was John Muir, Really?" *Earth Island Journal*. [Link](#)
- Ferguson, Rafter. 2019. "Why We Can't Separate Justice and Sustainability in the Food System." [Link](#)
- Washington, Keith "Comrade Malik". Multiple writings (read at least one): [Link](#) (note: trigger warning - language), [Link](#) and [Link](#)

Week 13 (April 11, 13)

Topic: Climate Change - Looking Nationally

Readings/Video:

- Kahan, Dan. 2010. "Fixing the Communications Failure." *Nature* 463:296-297. [Link](#)
- Herrera, Jack. 2020. "Trump Didn't Win the Latino Vote in Texas. He Won the Tejano Vote." [Link](#)
- Watch PBS "Climate of Doubt" (2012). [Link](#)
 - Paired with Netflix's "Don't Look Up" (2021) and Emma Lee's article (2022) [Link](#)

Week 14 (April 18, 20)

Topic: Climate Change - Looking Globally

Readings:

- Popovich, Nadja and Brad Plumer. 2021. "Who Has the Most Historical Responsibility for Climate Change?" *The New York Times*. [Link](#)
- Sealey-Huggins, Leon. 2017. "'1.5° to stay alive': climate change, imperialism, and justice for the Caribbean." *Third World Quarterly* 38(11):2444-2463. [Link](#)
- Stancil, Kenny. 2021. "Fearing Govt Whitewash, Scientists Leak Draft Part Three of IPCC Report." [Link](#)

Week 15 (April 25, 27)

April 25 & 27 – Final presentations

Week 16 (May 2 – last day of class)

May 2 – Continue final presentations

Assignment: Reflection Paper #3 due by May 2 at 5 pm

Final Exam (Exam 3) on Monday, May 9, 2022 from 2 - 4:30 pm