

Syllabus

Welcome to class, I look forward to learning with you and from you.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

The best way to contact me is by university email, shown above. I will respond to you by email within 24 hours, excluding weekends and University holidays. If you don't hear from me in that time span, please contact me again. Most issues are handled by email, but in some cases we may use Skype (althea_godfrey) to problem solve.

INSTRUCTOR BIO

After spending a decade in non-profit management and another decade in news and magazine writing I returned to graduate school earning a Master's degree in Sociology. I've been teaching since 2010. I specialize in environmental topics because I've always loved the natural world, spending time outdoors, camping, exploring and taking photographs. I've traveled the U.S., visiting many of our most beautiful places. I had my first garden at 9 years old, and earned a Master Gardener certification in 2008. I served on the board of my local nature center before I moved to Colorado. Now I volunteer to maintain native plants in local open spaces.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course focuses on the intersection of the social and natural worlds, specifically the plant kingdom. Plants are often forgotten in conversations about biodiversity, yet they are the basis of life on earth. With few exceptions, from the very beginning of Earth's history plants have created the benevolent conditions where life flourishes. Our reliance on them is complete, from the air we breathe to the food we eat and the water we have accessible. We will investigate the way plants have supported society, the definitions that render them as inferior inhabitants, and the way these definitions change. Because our connection to plants is social and cultural, we will examine the relationship historically and across cultures. Societies have forged surprising relationships with plants: spiritual, medicinal and economic. The use of plants has supported slavery, created prosperity and financial ruin. We will examine home and industrial use of chemicals, and the social definitions that make the use possible. Finally we will examine how the prevailing treatment of plants and the soil relates to sustainability, in the U.S. and abroad. Environmental challenges began as *social* issues, outcomes of institutions, power structures, and consumption norms that influence or determine our production methods, worker rights and the way we treat natural areas and other species. Humans are now trying to create a sustainable world. Do popular ideas about plants, ongoing economic growth, green technology, human rights and the elements of happiness lead toward or away from that goal?

OBJECTIVES: After this course, students will:

- 1) Recognize the complexity of environmental issues and their inherent social (human) element.
- 2) Identify the interrelationship of personal, local and global in environmental problems and issues.
- 3) Recognize resource use is woven into political economy and history, including human oppression and international conflicts as well as the health of the biosphere.
- 4) Apply sociological tools to evaluate human relationships with plants and the natural world.
- 5) Recognize personal tendencies for hierarchical thinking, and compliance with social norms.

- 6) Develop interpersonal and research skills.
- 7) Demonstrate informed citizen decision-making, with advocacy skills.

READINGS: Two required books are listed below. The rest of the course reading will be taken from journal articles, news articles, research summaries, essays, and poetry. Required supplementary readings will be posted online in D2L

TEXTS:

Pollan, Michael. 2002. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World*. Random House: New York.

Montgomery, David R. 2007. *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*. University of California Press: Berkeley.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Over the course of this semester we will deal with controversial issues, and emerging botanical science and it's very likely, as a class, we will differ in our perspectives on these issues. It is entirely appropriate to disagree with *ideas* but it is never appropriate to personally attack the *people* who share them. Be respectful and our discussions will be more lively and interesting, resulting in a richer learning experience for all of us. I also expect you to use the tools and information taught in this course (such as the sociological imagination and social construction) in analyzing the issues. I'd like you to analyze your opinions to see if they are supported by evidence.

You can expect me to:

- treat you with respect and fairness
- provide feedback on your work for the class promptly
- be available during my office hours and by appointment
- respond to emails in a 24hour turn-around time, except on weekends
- challenge you to grow academically and to support you in doing so

I will expect you to:

- treat me and your fellow students with respect
- be open to new ideas
- invest yourself in the course by completing readings, discussions, assignments, and quizzes
- actively participate in and meaningfully contribute to this course
- plan ahead and ask questions/bring up issues in finding assignments and D2L readings early on
- follow the writing expectations provided for your assignments
- to follow the expectations of this syllabus and raise any concerns about it to me during the first week of class (via email or during my office hours)
- regularly check D2L and your student email account for updates and reminders

Grading Criteria:

All of the assignments in this course are designed to provide you with opportunities to work towards reaching the learning objectives of this course. You will have opportunities to strengthen your writing, organization, and critical thinking skills. I want to support your success, so please make use of my email to ask questions. I will provide specific guidelines in assignment descriptions, and support material for unusual assignments. A more general description of the assignments and their proportional grade value follows.

WRITING: (45 % of your grade) Class assignments include preparatory papers (varying between 400-700 words) on experiences related to the course material: a broad look at ecosystems and society interaction, reflections on a place you know and a socio-historical review of a plant species. The second half of the semester you will organize these papers into a full paper, present the material for classmates in a PowerPoint and make a recommendation to a state (or other) agency on the issue, sending a persuasive letter (electronically) to an influential person requesting a (for example) remedial action or policy change. This project integrates knowledge of the social and botanical realms, and incorporates class sociological understanding, your research into a specific environmental area, and science-based evidence supporting your position. All assignments are turned in on D2L.

ONLINE READING QUIZZES: (20% of your grade). Reading is accompanied by online quizzes accessible on D2L. These reinforce important information and enhance your papers and online discussions. Five to 10 questions are randomly generated from a larger pool of questions. Each quiz is available to be taken twice, so it's likely some of the questions on your retake will be new. Your best score is recorded and the **top 10 scores** are used to determine your final quiz grade (so 3 quizzes are dropped!).. Quizzes close Friday at 7 p.m.. *Because I drop three scores, missed quizzes cannot be made up without a legitimate excuse..* Each quiz is worth 5 points.

FINAL: The final (10 %) is persuasive letter written to a decision-maker concerning the topic of your research project, accompanied by an explanatory statement describing how you used sociological concepts and tools to inform and establish your position. While not strictly cumulative, students will need to apply course concepts and demonstrate comprehensive understanding to receive top marks.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: (25%) Broad social interaction is fundamental to solving social problems. Seems simple, but even a brief look at our society provides ample empirical evidence that this is not so. We do look at some reasons for this, and your participation in class discussion is good practice for participating in civil society. It also demonstrates your competency. I measure participation using objective (submissions completed) and subjective (cogency and depth) measures. Participation points are earned by posts made to class discussions and responses to classmate posts. You will need to compose your own post before you can participate with a response. This should encourage independent thinking and diversity of perspectives. Initial posts should be made each week by Wednesday at 10 p.m. Then read and respond to at least one classmate by Friday at 7 p.m. Posts are worth 10 points and responses 5 points. Your top 10 scores (of an anticipated 12-14 discussions) will be used for your grade. Late posts cannot be accepted.

EXTRA CREDIT: Two opportunities

First: An opportunity for extra points is built into the discussion assignment.

1. Responding to more than one classmate in discussion posts may earn extra credit points.
2. Responding in depth to the prompt may earn more than the available points.
3. Continuing a discussion with a classmate with substantive posts may earn extra points.

Second: The video assignments are accompanied by a feedback sheet. If you complete these sheets you will get credit at the end of the semester. Points will be added to your participation grade. You will receive one-to three points for completing the sheet. There are four opportunities. *Green Fire, Climate Refugees, Champion Trees* and *Healing Power of Plants*. These are bonus points, so they do make a big difference. Doing this will make up for a missed discussion post.

Taking the syllabus quiz and scoring a passing grade will add up to two bonus points to your quiz grade, enough to "bump" your score. You have until the end of the second week to take this quiz. This helps if you miss more than three quizzes.

In addition, extra assignments are offered when a significant portion of the class needs better understanding on an issue. For example, if everyone does poorly on a reading test I *may* offer the opportunity to retake to the entire class. This is done through D2L and can result in a higher grade because the *lowest two* scores are dropped. There is no obligation to retake if you are satisfied with your initial scores.

Finally I do not assign extra credit on an individual basis to improve your grade, so if you're concerned about your grade let me know. I can usually help you improve it.

EVALUATION: All your assignments, participation and tests contribute to your final grade based on the CU grading scheme of the letter grades A to F. The *approximate* weight of course assignments:

<u>Writing:</u>	45%
<u>Online quizzes:</u>	20%
<u>Class/Group participation:</u>	25%
<u>Final:</u>	10%

General Rubric

Letter Grade	Percentage Grade	Description
		Each of the components of your final grade, as well as the final course grade will be determined based on this general rubric.
A	90-100	Exceeds all required elements of an assignment, and the quality of the work is considerably greater than what was required. The quality of the work is considerably above the class average and impressive to the evaluator.
B	80-89	Meets all required elements of an assignment, and the quality of the work is better than what is required and demonstrated by the class average.
C	70-79	Meets all required elements of an assignment, no more, no less. Quality of assignment is satisfactory for college level work.

D	60-69	Fails to meet all required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is less than satisfactory.
F	Less than 59	Only meets some of the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is considerably lower than satisfactory. 50% of points are not guaranteed. At this level points are only given if some elements of the assignment are met. If not, very low percentages are likely.
Zero	0	Fails to meet any of the required elements of an assignment, and/or the quality of the assignment is well below basic standards of writing, comprehension, and/or ability to follow instructions; assignment is late or incomplete; assignment is not turned in at all; assignment shows signs of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty.

Submission Policies:

You will submit all of your assignments via the D2L dropbox. Discussions, quizzes are also completed directly on D2L. If you submit drafts of papers to me for feedback, please email them directly to my university email: althea.godfrey@colorado.edu.

Quiz scores should be visible to you immediately after you complete your quiz on the quiz site. They are posted to grades after the quiz closing date. Scores for written work are released after all grading is complete. I always strive to provide feedback on papers in one-week turnaround, but longer papers will take more time. Discussion grades will be posted within 7-10 days after the discussion closes. When I can't meet this timeframe, I send an email to let you know when to expect your grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

In the final analysis, the way you produce your work is a demonstration of your work ethic. I expect you to do your own work. Academic dishonesty includes all actions that misrepresent the work of others as your own. For definitions and University regulations regarding academic dishonesty, see the University Honor Code: www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode. The definitions for infractions are found here: <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/about/definitions.htm>

Conduct and courtesy: We all are expected to adhere to the behavior standards listed in the Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Standards of Conduct. The specific policy may be found at www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html.

Sexual harassment is not tolerated. For more information on maintaining a fair and safe environment or sexual harassment policies and reporting see www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment or call the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.

ACCOMODATIONS

Many students deserve accommodations, but in most cases academic policy requires written documentation to receive them. Contact **Disability Services** at 303-492-8671, C4C Room N200, or <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>. Give me the written documentation you receive by the third week of class, or as soon as you receive it.

Language barriers: I welcome students for whom English is a second language. I will accommodate students in writing, and may give extra time on quizzes, based on your familiarity with English (reading, writing, and idioms). Sociology has specific terms that may create confusion, so I work with students to create a glossary.

Religious Observances: If class activities, or tests, assignments conflict with your religious practices please notify me by the third week of class, so I can make alternative arrangements.

Illness: If illness interferes with class—including attendance, tests, and assignment due dates—please use the appropriate procedure:

- **QUIZZES:** If you are too ill to take a quiz, you must notify me by email as soon as possible. Because I drop quiz grades, not all quizzes will be made up.
- **ASSIGNMENTS** if you cannot complete an assignment on time, you must email me by the due date, and attach a copy of the work you have completed thus far.

Late Policy: Some assignments may be late for other reasons and I don't want anyone to fail or drop this class for lateness. To accommodate this, for **writing** assignments I do not close my Dropbox folders. If a writing assignment is late follow the procedure above giving me advance notice by email of the delay with a copy of the work completed so far. Then, when you submit. send a second email to notify me. Important Note: I may not grade late assignments on the same timetable. Please do not pester me for your grade.

In general, quizzes cannot be made up without a legitimate excuse, but three low scores are dropped.

In the case of missed discussion posts, responding to classmates is not possible, but you can make up points by responding to multiple classmates in subsequent discussions.

DETAILED SCHEDULE

PLEASE NOTE: Things happen. Better ideas, including student generated ideas, happen. Changes in the syllabus may become desirable. Any changes will be communicated promptly by email and posting on D2L.

THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MIX

Unit 1	Developing a Sociological Imagination
Read	Mills "Sociological Imagination: The Promise" (on D2L);
Lecture	Sociological perspectives; using sociological terms. Sociological thinking: Asking questions about what I observe
Read	Barbosa, "Theories in Environmental Sociology" (D2L) Montgomery, Chapter 1, "Good Old Dirt" (D2L)
Watch	No video this week

Discussion	Sociological questions—Find images that display a “green thumb” 1. Respond to the discussion prompt by 10 p.m. Wednesday 2. Respond to a classmate by 6 p.m. Friday (<i>this timing is always the same</i>)
Assignment prompt:	No assignment this week
Quiz	Take reading quiz 1 by Friday., 7 p.m.

Unit 2	Social Construction Part One: Defining the environmental as social
Read	Sahlins: The Original Affluent Society White: “The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis”
Lecture	The Spirit of Capitalism, Weber
Watch	“Fierce Green Fire”
Discussion	Reflecting on historical perspectives “A Micmac Responds to the French” and answer prompts. (No need to read the creation story)
Assignment	Video Feedback form: submt for extra credit in Dropbox. Writing assignment #1 Exploring Nature: Ecosystem Awareness What are the problems and assets of a specific location and how are plants affected? Some plants are favored, others failing. Some are native, others adapted, and still others exotic. What are the social implications? These can be wild plants, or cultivated plants (farmland). Include personal reflections. Due: Oct. 1, midnight
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m.

Unit 3	Social Construction Part Two: Defining the Wild
Read	Capek “The Social Construction of Nature” Cronon, “Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” Ruebush “Why Dirt Is Good For You.” Mary Oliver, Some Things...
Lecture	The fluctuating reputations of Weeds, Herbs and Exotic Plants
Watch	Watch Nature speak in a different voice by Conservation International Watch at minimum: Nature, Ocean, Forest, Flower Nature is Everywhere TED talk by environmental writer Emma Marris TED Using nature to inspire: time lapse photography, Louie Schwartzberg Gratitude: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXDMoiEkyuQ
Discussion	Wild or Whatever?
Assignment	
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m.

Unit 4	Technology as Social and Ecological Change
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Read	Montgomery, Chapt. 2, “Skin of the Earth” and Chapter 3, “Rivers of Life”
Lecture	Technology and Environmental Externalities
Watch	Soil for forests US forest service https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlF72lg1ocA Very thorough, watch the description of soil life in soil in the beginning. Farming practices in Eastern WA Warning: the first sequence shows a man “breaking” a horse for the plow. It would likely be categorized as abuse today and may be difficult to watch.
Discussion	Lessons of the Past
Assignment	DUE Sunday midnight. : Ecosystem Awareness
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 5	Plants and Agency
Read	Pollan, Introduction, “The Human Bumblebee” Plants with Family Values http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/nature/plant-family-values.html
Lecture	Critical Realism, plants and agency
Watch	PBS Nature: What Plants Talk About (on D2L) TED: The Beautiful Tricks of Flowers Jonathon Drori TED: Suzanne Simard: How Trees Talk To Each Other
Discussion	Do plants have agency?
Assignment	Writing #2: Changing Identity of Plants—Choose a plant with a social history of changing use and meaning (not Pollan’s plants). Track the shift through time using a sociological perspective, stay alert to overt and hidden messages about the environment, scientific knowledge, economic gain, status or lifestyle. Due Sun. midnight , Oct. 22 in D2L dropbox
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 6	Power of Place
Read	A Space for Place in Sociology” Gieryn PDF Kingsolver: “Knowing Our Place.” from, <i>Small Wonder</i> , on D2L Aldo Leopold, “Birdsong”
Lecture	Place as a sociological context (a la Mills)
Watch	Limuw: A Story of Place Chumash Creation story (Channel Is. Natives) https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm?id=001E77F8-B83B-BC8B-46E2BC668B912189 Champion trees. http://www.aetn.org/programs/championtrees Award winning documentary on these giant Arkansas trees in context.

Discussion	Place reflection
Assignment	DUE: Plant Topic Selection
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 7	Consequences of a Poor Harvest
Read	Montgomery: Let them Eat Colonies, PDF Characteristics of Peaceful and Resilient Societies
Lecture	Globalization and Development Environmental Justice/Racism
Watch	Climate Refuges UN website, Development Programme
Discussion	Alternatives to Globalization? Getting beyond the locavore movement
Assignment	Video Feedback form, Climate Refugees
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m
Unit 8	Consumption -- Need and Desire
Read	Pollan, Chapter 5, Desire: Intoxication Plant: Marijuana Wilson: Biophilia
Lecture	Biophilia vs. Socially-Acquired tastes Nature and healing
Watch	Numen: The Healing Power of Plants (delivered through kanopy, so on-campus access or log in to the CU VPN with student identikey could be needed) https://colorado.kanopystreaming.com/video/numen-healing-power-plants
Discussion	Human needs for nature?
Assignment	DUE:Paper #2 Changing identity of plant/place Oct. 22 by midnight
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 9	Growing movements
Read	Montgomery, "Westward Hoe"
Lecture	Topics covered: Environmental Inequality, Tragedy of the Commons , Precautionary Principle, Participatory governance
Watch	Rockstrom Planetary Boundaries TED US Conservation System Buz Kloot "Precision Agriculture" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wD7cX-2yvas
Discussion	Governance for Sustainability
Assignment	Begin assembling final project. Outline due Nov. 12
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 10	Finding Fertility
Read	Pollan Desire: /Plant: Potato TBD: Home Gardening
Lecture	Treadmills : Fertilizer and Seeds Metabolic Rift Environmental Justice
Watch	The Value of Soil https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=403sT9CGRI0 “Unacceptable Levels” documentary about the body’s chemical burden and how humans (including infants) accumulate toxins, mostly through small “acceptable” levels in everyday products. (using SOCY imagination)
Discussion	Organic and Conventional farming Pesticide safety
Assignment	Video Feedback Unacceptable levels PowerPoint due next week, see Project Description
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m.

Unit 11	Agriculture or agribusiness
Read	Pollan, Plant: Tulips White, owl, vs timber families
Lecture	So you Think it’s the Economy? Treadmill of Production
Watch	News report on Flower growing in India https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sWaH659Ezo Commodity agriculture positive view encouraging floriculture 2009. Explore India’s economic plan for floriculture TEDx talk the case for GMO trees Genetically Engineered Trees-The Increasing Threat Narrated by David Suzuki D2L
Discussion	Sustainability and Profit? Effects of the capitalist business model on agriculture. Does it “work”?
Assignment	PowerPoint (basically an early outline of paper) Due Nov. 12
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 12	Plants and Climate
Read	Montgomery, Dust Blow Investigate blogsite Remembering Teresa, Farmworkers and pesticide
Lecture	Plants, Ecosystems and Climate Change Changing Models of Development Natural Capital

Watch	So God Made A Farmer : Paul Harvey The Plow That Broke the Plains
Discussion	Farming's Romance and Reality
Assignment	Paper due Dec. 3!
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 13	Energy—servant or addiction?
Read	Montgomery: Islands in Time ; Lifespan of Civilization Adams: Is the Climate Crisis Inevitable?
Lecture	Fermi Paradox Sustainability-- Powered by Plants:
Watch	Naomi Klein Addicted to Risk , TED
Discussion	Human Potential and the Fermi Paradox:
Assignment	Full Paper due Sunday by midnight Dec. 3
Quiz	Take quiz 1 by Friday 7 p.m

Unit 14	Final Words
Read	Pollan Epilogue
Lecture	Encouraging Movements, Environmental Action
Watch	Power of Letters: TED talk
Discussion	Finals questions /
Assignment	Letter due Dec 7 Friday at 7 p.m. with rationale on D2L.
Quiz	Class assessment (extra credit)

FINAL DUE on D2L: You will need to turn in your final letter and a description of your sociological reasoning **by 7 p.m. Friday Dec 7** You will be able to submit this final at an earlier time