



**Environmental Sociology/
Society and Environment**

Topics in Sociology
SOC 4150/5150

Spring 2016

Dr. Angela Mertig
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Course meets:
Peck Hall 218
T TH 9:40 – 11:05

Office:
Todd Hall 328
904-8349

Office Hours:
MWF 12:00 to 3:00
& by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW:

The basic premise of this course is that the natural environment and human social systems interact in ways that have substantial impacts on the further development of each. Social issues have environmental consequences; environmental issues have social consequences.

This course is of necessity more interdisciplinary in focus than many other courses. The field of sociology has only recently (within the last few decades) taken notice of the importance of the environment in social behavior. Therefore, while some of the readings assigned in this course are written by sociologists, many are not. As always, feel free to disagree with the readings, videos and discussions.

Topics are arranged into roughly two parts (with substantial overlap). Like other animals, humans have material relationships with the environment: we need shelter, food, etc. We depend on the natural environment for our survival and we have an impact on that same environment. The first part of the course is devoted to examining these relationships. How has our relationship changed over time, from when humans existed mostly in bands of hunters and gatherers to now when many of us exist in highly industrialized societies? How have cultures developed due to varying natural environments? What factors play important roles in determining human impacts on the natural environment? What factors need to be considered to address current issues, particularly the global issue of "sustainable development?"

Humans also have symbolic relationships with the natural environment. While dependent upon the natural environment for their continued existence, human social systems have developed elaborate symbolic/cultural schemes that go beyond mere subsistence. Our languages, our artifacts, our rituals, our economic systems...over time these have become exceedingly complex,

and, at times, ostensibly divorced from the natural world which sustains us. In the second part of the course, we will focus on those aspects of society which attempt to address the relationship between humans and the environment. For the most part, this has been a symbolic attempt, where various individuals and groups have argued for different conceptions of nature and how humans should relate to it. Philosophers have continually asked questions about humankind's place in the grand scheme of things. Modern day environmentalists want to change the way we think about the environment as well as the way we behave. The second part of the course is devoted to various people and movements that have aligned themselves on some side of this issue. This part of the course will focus heavily, but not exclusively on American responses to the natural environment.

The class will be run as both a lecture and seminar course; while I will present lecture material, please be prepared to participate in discussion of class material.

COURSE WEBSITE:

A website will be maintained through Desire2Learn (D2L) which can be accessed through Pipeline or directly (using your Pipeline login credentials) at <https://elearn.mtsu.edu/d2l/login>.

Course materials, including the syllabus, essay assignments, powerpoint slides, and handouts are available on the course website. Only the syllabus and handouts will also be provided in hard copy. You need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to retrieve and print course materials. (Free download at: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.)

READINGS:

Available from the bookstore:

Harper, Charles L. 2012. Environment and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues. 5th edition. Boston: Pearson-Prentice Hall.

Available on library reserve:

Nash, Roderick Frazier. 1990. American Environmentalism: Readings in Conservation History. Third edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Additional readings are available on the D2L course website.

The source for each reading is listed on the class schedule on the day for which it should be read. The readings parallel my presentations and we will spend some time each day discussing them.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES:

	Undergraduates (4150)	Graduate Students (5150)	Grading Scale
Class Participation	5%	5%	A = 90-100 ¹
Assignments			B+ = 87-89
Water Use Log and Essay	15%	15%	B = 83-86
Qualitative Research Essay	15%	15%	B- = 80-82
2 Take-home exams	50%	50%	C+ = 77-79
Presentations			C = 73-76
Issue presentation	15%	--	C- = 70-72
Guest lecture presentation	--	15%	D+ = 67-69
	100%	100%	D = 63-66
			D- = 60-62

Attendance/participation:

Class participation will count for 5% of your grade. Attend class and participate in your education. Ask questions. Be critical; think. Bring relevant outside material to class. Attendance will be noted and can help improve your final grade.

Assignments and Exams:

- Assignments are available on D2L.
- Take home exam questions are listed below.
- Due dates are listed on the class schedule. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments/exams are due by 6:00 pm on the day they are due.
- Assignments/exams can be turned in through the appropriate D2L dropbox (preferred), email (D2L or MTSU email), or in person. If emailing your assignment/exam, keep a copy of the sent email in case there are problems; I usually acknowledge receipt within 24 hours.
- Late assignments/exams are accepted but receive only partial credit. The amount of credit given depends upon how late the assignment/exam is and whether it has already been handed back and discussed.
- **Late assignments/exams will NOT be accepted once Final exams have begun—they must be completed as of 6 pm on the “Study Day” before finals.**
- Being able to express yourself competently is one of the most important skills in life. Therefore, use proper English in writing your assignments/exams. Use complete sentences, accurate spelling and proper grammar.
- Type your work using double spacing and 1 inch margins. I must be able to read your work in order to grade it.
- Please do not turn in plastic folders.

¹ For graduate students, 90-92 = A-.

Water Use Log and Essay:

- Objectives: 1) to increase student awareness of their resource use (in this case, the direct use of water); 2) to increase student awareness of differences in resource use cross-nationally; 3) to have students reflect upon their role in environmental issues.
- Estimated length of essay: 2-5 pages.
- Overview: Students are to keep track of their daily use of water over the course of one week, compare their average daily use to that of people in other countries, and write about their experience.

Qualitative Research Essay:

- Objectives: 1) to provide an opportunity for students to conduct qualitative social research; and 2) to allow students to explore how issues covered in class apply outside the classroom.
- Estimated length of essay: 3-5 pages
- Overview: Students will conduct field observation and/or qualitative interviews of people who identify themselves as either pro- or anti-environmental. (The “research” should be roughly equivalent to about one hour of data collection—i.e., two ½ hour interviews or 1 hour of observation or a combination thereof.) Students are to discern what makes them think and behave the way they do about the environment—from their point of view. Students will be asked to turn in a transcript of their observation/ interviews and an interpretation of findings.



Take home exams:

- Objectives: 1) to evaluate student understanding of course material; 2) to evaluate student ability to analyze and synthesize information; and 3) to evaluate and provide an opportunity to improve writing skills.
- Estimated length of each exam: 8-10 pages
- Students will need to draw on and appropriately cite resources from class. Additional materials may be used, but, remember: these are exams; you will need to address information and materials covered in class.
- Each question has room for creativity—you must decide the best way to approach it; indicate why you chose to cover the ground that you did.
- Papers will be graded on the degree to which they adequately and creatively respond to the question, organizational clarity, indications of having done the readings and thought about issues presented there and in class, and use of proper grammar and spelling.
- For each exam, please write the number of the essay you are answering. It may not be entirely clear to me which question you are answering!

QUESTIONS FOR TAKE HOME EXAM #1: (Choose one.)

- ❶ Given the basic premise of this course that human society and the non-human-made environment interact in significant ways, use materials covered in this class to show that this is a two-way relationship. In other words, discuss materials that indicate how environment affects culture/society, both in the past and presently. Further, discuss materials that present how society/culture influence environmental relationships. Why is the recognition of this two-way relationship an important one?
- ❷ Many people who decry the present environmental situation have tried to tackle the question of "how did it get this way?" Using knowledge of how human societies have changed over time and what they currently look like, address this question. What are the root causes of what many consider an "environmental crisis?" What do these suggest for solving environmental problems?

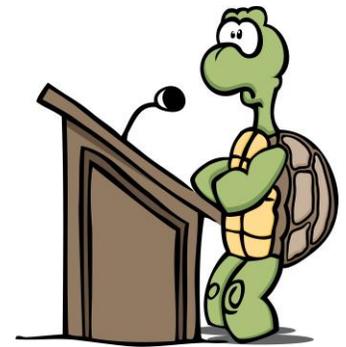
QUESTIONS FOR TAKE HOME EXAM #2: (Choose one.)

- ❶ There are several different approaches that humans have taken toward the natural environment. There seems to be a long-standing split between at least three broad groups: 1) those who do not see a problem with historical and current human use of the environment, 2) those who seek "conservation" of the environment, and 3) those who seek "preservation" of the environment for its intrinsic and other values. What kinds of groups (or individuals) have identified with these positions and why? How do their worldviews differ from one another (often to such an extent that rather than arguing with each other, they argue past each other)? This split is not new, so be sure to discuss predecessors to this debate. Why is it important to address such a diversity of views?
- ❷ "Environmental concern" is a key concept of interest to environmental sociologists. How has this concept been used in environmental sociology? What does it mean? What things are included (or should be included) under this idea? How can we determine a person's level of environmental concern? What does research indicate about environmental concern; in other words, how has concern for the environment changed over time and who appears more (or less) concerned in general? How have these results been explained? What appears to lead some people to be more (or less) concerned than others? Is this concept still a meaningful one? Why or why not? (Approach this question as a social scientist would; i.e., focus on general patterns rather than particular instances.)

Presentations:

Issue Presentation: (Undergraduate students only)

- Objectives: 1) to provide an opportunity for students to explore additional topics they may be interested in but that have not been covered in class or that they wish to cover in greater detail; 2) to allow students to learn from each other; and 3) to give students practice in presenting before a small group.
- Estimated length of presentation: 5-10 minutes (per student)
- Date of presentations: Two days have been set aside on the schedule. Students should be prepared to present at any time on those days.
- Overview:
 - Each student should select a social-environmental issue of interest to them and locate at least two different, reliable sources of information on the topic. Sources can include academic journal articles, newspaper/news magazine articles, television/radio news programs, and/or reputable internet sources.
 - Sources should be noted in the presentation.
 - Students can work individually or in small groups.
 - Presentations are expected to be professional but informal.
 - Students will give a presentation that addresses the following:
 - What are the issues involved?
 - Who is involved? Who are the competing parties? What are the different "sides" of the issue?
 - Why is this issue of relevance to society and social science?
 - Students should be prepared to field questions from other students and the instructor after their presentation.



Guest Lecture Presentation (Graduate students only):

- Objectives: 1) to provide an opportunity for students to explore additional topics they may be interested in but that have not been covered in class or that they wish to cover in greater detail; 2) to allow students to learn from each other; and 3) to give graduate students practice in preparing and presenting lectures.
- Estimated length of presentation: ½ of a regular class period (~35-40 minutes).
- Date of guest lecture: one day is reserved on the class schedule.
- Overview: Graduate students are to present a more in-depth and lengthier version of the issue presentation (above) for undergraduates. If desired, graduate students can choose a reading(s) for students to complete prior to the presentation (let me know a few days ahead of time so I can scan the reading and upload to D2L).

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY AND CLASS POLICIES:

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):

FERPA mandates that I cannot disclose your academic progress to anyone (other than you) without your explicit written permission. I cannot discuss your grade or anything else about your class performance over the phone or via a non-MTSU email account. I cannot post grades outside my door. Any discussion about your class performance must be in person or through an official MTSU email account (mtmail or D2L).

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the Disability & Access Center (DAC) website www.mtsu.edu/dac and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or dacemail@mtsu.edu.

Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS):

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you will not be able to regain eligibility at a later time. For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form (<http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/forms/LOTFOD.pdf>) or contact your MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor (<http://www.mtsu.edu/one-stop/counselor.php>).

Academic Conduct:

MTSU takes a strong stance against academic misconduct. Academic Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and fabrication.

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) **Plagiarism:** The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgement.

(2) **Cheating:** Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.

(3) **Fabrication:** Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

To be clear: going online and using information without proper citations, copying parts of other student's work, creating information for the purposes of making your paper seem more official, or anything involving taking someone else's work without proper attribution is **academic misconduct**. If you work together with other students on an assignment when it is not allowed, it is **academic misconduct**. If you have a question about an assignment, please come see me to clarify. All cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs for violating the academic honesty requirements in the student handbook. They may also result in failure for the course. Remember – ignorance is NOT a defense.

the exact words of Mertig without acknowledging the author AND indicating the use of exact words, you are plagiarizing!

Whenever you use someone else's work as described above you also need to indicate, usually at the end of the paper, the full source information of that work. There is typically a section at the end of a research paper called "Bibliography" or "References Cited." The in-text citation allows the reader to identify which article (or some other source) you are referring to from your final list of references and usually a more precise page location (here, page 42).

Consult one of numerous style references in the library or online for further information on citing someone else's work and how to incorporate various items into a reference list. While there are several different accepted styles, it is best to choose one and be consistent (especially when you have several references in one paper). Make sure you include all of the pertinent information such as author's full name(s), date, title and source information.

For instance, here is an acceptable way to include a journal article in a list of "References Cited:"

Perrow, Charles. 1979. "Supervising Professionals." American Journal of the Professions, vol. 23, #5, 205-215.

The above example is a *full bibliographic citation* of the article by Charles Perrow. As you can see, all of the pertinent information is included in the citation, allowing the reader to locate the same article. From the reference, we know that the author is Charles Perrow. The article was published in 1979 in the American Journal of Professions, volume 23, issue #5. The article's title is "Supervising Professionals" and it starts on page 205, ending on page 215.

For additional information about avoiding plagiarism, including some self-tests to see if you fully understand what it is and how to avoid it, see the following web addresses (the one from Indiana University is especially good):

MTSU: <http://www.mtsu.edu/provost/acadmisconduct.php>

Indiana University Bloomington: <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>

U. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill: <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/>

U. of Southern Miss.: <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>

Chapman University: <http://www1.chapman.edu/~babbie/plag00.html>

Goucher College: <http://faculty.goucher.edu/writingprogram/sgarrett/Default.html>

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week	Day	Topic	Readings	Due
1	T	January 19	Introduction to the course	
	TH	January 21	Sociology and the Environment	D2L: Dunlap
2	T	January 26	Video: The Environmental Revolution	Harper: ch 1
	TH	January 28	Socio-cultural Evolution and the Environment	D2L: Lenski
3	T	February 2	Socio-cultural Evolution (cont.) Cultural Materialism	D2L: Harris
	TH	February 4	State of the Planet	Harper: chs 2, 3
4	T	February 9	Key Factors in Social-Env. Relationships	D2L: Catton
	TH	February 11	Key Factors (cont.)	Harper: ch 7 Water Use
5	T	February 16	Key Factors: Population	Harper: ch 5
	TH	February 18	Key Factors: Population (cont.)	D2L: Ehrlich/Ehrlich D2L: Simon
6	T	February 23	Energy Use	Harper: ch 4
	TH	February 25	Sustainable Development Video: On the Brink	Harper: ch 6
7	T	March 1	Issue presentations	
	TH	March 3	Issue presentations	



Spring Break – March 7-11



Week	Day	Topic	Readings	Due	
8	T	March 15	American Historical Geography	D2L: Crosby Nash: pp 1-16	
	TH	March 17	American Historical Geography (cont.)	D2L: Cronon Nash: pp 17-30	
9	T	March 22	Cross-cultural Environmental Concern Beginnings of Environmental Concern in U.S.	Nash: pp 31-68	
	TH	March 24	Beginnings of Env. Concern (cont.) The Conservation and Preservation Movements	Nash: pp 69-97	Exam #1
10	T	March 29	Conservation/Preservation (cont.) Video: The Wilderness Idea	Nash: pp 98-112	
	TH	March 31	Conservation/Preservation (cont.) Video: Wild by Law	Nash: pp 113-186	
11	T	April 5	Growth of the Environmental Movement	D2L: Mertig Nash: #s 30, 38, 39	
	TH	April 7	Env. Actors: The public, activists, organizations	D2L: Jones/Dunlap	
12	T	April 12	Environmental Actors (cont.)	Harper: ch 8	
	TH	April 14	Global Environmentalism Grassroots and Environmental Justice	D2L: Freudenberg/Steinsapir D2L: Bullard	Qualitative
13	T	April 19	Radical Environmentalism	Nash: pp 285-315	
	TH	April 21	Opposition to the Environmental Movement	D2L: Switzer	
14	T	April 26	Guest Lecture Presentations		

Take Home Exam #2 due May 4th by 6:00 pm.