



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

Faculty of Arts  
Department of Sociology  
Sociology Department Home Page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

**SOCI 401.55**  
**Environmental Risk: Sociological and Political Approaches**

• Winter 2019	• Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:00-1:50pm	• SA015
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**Instructor: Dr. Dean Curran**

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**Phone: 403-220-6520**

**Office Hours: Monday 11:00am–12:00pm, Wednesday 11:50am–12:50pm**

### **Course Description**

In an age of growing environmental challenges, a series of important questions are raised by these challenges and the social and political responses to these problems. This course will address these issues through covering a selection of sociological and political economy approaches and debates such as: how to conceive of human-nature relationships; environmentalism and its opponents; the treadmill of production; the ‘risk society’ question; the relation of capitalism to environmental change; consumer society and the environment; globalization and its environmental impacts; sociological approaches to science; environmental justice; and the ‘resilience turn’ in addressing climate change.

### **Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, students should have knowledge and understanding of:

- Some of the dominant approaches to environmental sociology.
- The debates regarding environmental risk and politics and society and how these debates relate to social movements, inequality, justice, and rights in contemporary society.
- How these debates over environmental risk relate to key debates in contemporary sociological theory, political economy, and political theory.

This course should also enhance students’ ability to:

- To theorize in a critical and analytical manner about how to conceive of the causes and consequences of environmental risk.
- Write clearly and cogently about different approaches to environmental risk.
- Make a contribution to existing debates in environmental sociology and political approaches to environmental problems.

### *Course Content*

In exploring theoretical approaches to environmental problems, this course is highly theoretical, as well as making extensive reference to empirical evidence to evaluate and apply these theories. While SOCI 331 and 333 are not formal prerequisites for this course, it is advised that students who do not have a basis in theoretical approaches to social life are likely to find the content in this course quite challenging.

### **Required Texts** (The books are available from the U of C bookstore)

- Nathan Young (2015) *Environmental Sociology for the Twentieth-First Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- K. Gould & T. Lewis eds. (2015) *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

### **Methods of Evaluation**

Participation (and discussion facilitation): 15%

Presentation: 20%

Theory Paper: 35% (**Due April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019**)

Final Exam: 30% (**April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019**)

### *Course Participation (15%)*

Students are expected to regularly attend the lectures and other presentations, and to have completed the readings prior to the Wednesday class. It is important that each student be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the readings, both for their own learning and for the benefit of the class as a whole. Additionally, each student will once during the term be assigned a week where they will, with 2-3 other students, help facilitate discussion of the readings on Friday of that week.

### *Presentation 20%*

Given that this is a 400 level course, with capped enrollment, more of an effort will be made to have student participation and contribution in the course. Each student will be expected to present once. The presentations will run from week 3 to week 13. Since the schedule of the presentations will depend on enrollment, more information will be provided on presentations in week two.

### *Theory Paper 35%*

The theory paper is a core component of assessment for this course. The paper assignment is intended to enable students to develop a substantive theoretical paper and to further develop the skills associated with this task. The readings in this course are intended to provide an in-depth introduction to many of the key debates in the social theory and the law. Students are heavily encouraged to plan ahead and consult with the instructor regarding their proposed essay topics. The paper should be 2500 words (10% allowance either way).

### *General Referencing Guidelines*

Always include page numbers of the source you are referencing - just using a date is not enough. Harvard style (in text citations with date and page e.g. (Marx 1848: 139) is recommended)

### *Submission and Late Policy*

The term paper is to be handed in as a hard copy in class to the course instructor the day of class that it is due. The paper will receive a late penalty of FIVE (5) MARKS PER FULL OR PART

DAY (a weekend counts as two full days). Any paper more than one (1) week late without a valid extension will receive a mark of zero (0). Accommodations are unlikely to be allowed for late entry other than illness or another serious and documented situation – talk to me prior to the deadline. Take-home exams that are late will receive a mark of F.

## Technology Use

### *Class Etiquette*

Use of cell phones or internet on laptops distracts other students and the instructor and hence is not permitted. Based on previous feedback from students, the policy for this class will be that laptops without the use of internet is permitted, but that if laptops are used for other than taking notes, permission to use a laptop will be withdrawn.

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## Final Exam Information (30%)

The final exam will be a take-home. It will cover the entire course material, both readings and lectures. Proper citation practice must be used in the take-home essays. The questions will be placed on D2L on April 12<sup>th</sup> and will be due eight days later on D2L, **April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 4pm.** Take-home exams that are late will receive an F grade. **Students are responsible for checking that they have uploaded the correct file – there will be no exceptions for incorrectly uploaded submissions.**

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## Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent range	Grade Point Value	Description
A+	95 – 100%	4.0	Outstanding performance
A	90 – 94.99%	4.0	Excellent-superior performance
A-	85 – 89.99%	3.7	
B+	80 – 84.99%	3.3	
B	75 – 79.99%	3.0	Good – clearly above average performance
B-	70 – 74.99%	2.7	
C+	67 – 69.99%	2.3	
C	63 – 66.99%	2.0	Satisfactory - basic understanding
C-	60 – 62.99%	1.7	
D+	55 – 59.99%	1.3	
D	50 – 54.99%	1.0	Minimal pass - marginal performance
F	<50%	0	unsatisfactory performance

The grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.

## Grade Reappraisal

Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a written response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark. The instructor will reconsider the grade assigned and

will then book a time with the student to discuss his or her work and rationale. It should be noted that a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

### **Email**

Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line, and include a proper salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. It may take up to 48 hours (not including weekends) for me to respond to you. I do not answer emails over the weekend. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be answered. Also, please e-mail me for administrative purposes only, for example to set up an appointment. Please do not use e-mail as a replacement for an office visit, if there is something you want to discuss. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in person during my office hours.

*Office Hours:* During office hours you are free to drop by without an appointment at any time. If you are unable to make that time, please contact me in advance so that we can try to arrange an appointment. Office hours are a very effective and efficient way of providing help and I encourage all students to make use of my office hours.

### **Emergency Evacuations**

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point: Social Science – Food Court.

### **Handing in Papers, Assignments**

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

### **Research Ethics**

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

### **Absences and Deferrals**

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>.

**Deferred Final Exam Form:** Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>

**Deferred Term Work Form:** Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at:

[https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf)

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

### **Student Representation**

The 2018-19 Students' Union VP Academic is Jessica Revington ([suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)).

For more information, and to contact other elected officials with the Student's Union, please visit this link: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/>

You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/contact>

### **Safewalk**

The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

### **Academic Accommodation**

The student accommodation policy can be found at: [ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy).

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

### **Student Resources**

[SU Wellness Centre](#)

[Campus Mental Health Strategy](#)

# Course Readings

Wk	Date	Course Topic	Reading
1	11-Jan	<b>Introduction to Course, Presentation discussion</b>	<b>Introduction to Environmental Sociology</b> , K. Gould & T. Lewis eds. (2015) <i>Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press [henceforth <i>Twenty Lessons</i> ], pp. 1-10
2	Jan 14, 16, 18	<b>History of Environment &amp; Environmentalism and Opponents</b>	Nathan Young (2015) ' <b>Long View of Human-Nature Relationship</b> ' & ' <b>Environmentalism and its Opponents</b> ' <i>Environmental Sociology for the Twentieth-First Century</i> . [henceforth <i>Environmental Sociology</i> ] Chapters 2&3, pp. 19-57
3	Jan 21, 23, 25	<b>Environmental Sociology Overview &amp; Constructionism and Realism</b>	N. Young ' <b>Social Constructionism vs Environmental Realism</b> ' Chapter 4 in <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 58-75
			S.M. Capek ' <b>Social Construction</b> ' Chapter 1 in <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. 13- 27
			J. Bohr & R. Dunlap (2018) 'Key Topics in environmental sociology, 1990–2014: results from a computational text analysis' <i>Environmental Sociology</i> 4(2): 181-195. [D2L]
4	Jan 28, 30, Feb 1	<b>Treadmill and Political Economy of Environment</b>	N. Young ' <b>Scarcity, Treadmills</b> ' Chapter 5 in <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 76-95
			A. Schnaiberg ' <b>Labor Productivity</b> ' & K.A. Gould ' <b>Technological Change</b> ' Chapter 4, 7, in <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. 67-76, 105-118.
5	Feb 4, 6, 8	<b>Risk Society and Environmental Theory</b>	N. Young ' <b>The Risk Society Thesis</b> ' Chapter 6 <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 96-114.
			L. Barbarosa ' <b>Theories</b> ' & D.N. Pellow ' <b>The State and Policy</b> ' Chapter 2 and 3 in <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. 28-66.
6	Feb 11& 13	<b>Capitalism and Ecological Modernization Theory</b>	N. Young ' <b>Making Capitalism Work?</b> ' Chapter 7 <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 115-134
			E.H. Campbell ' <b>Corporate Power</b> ' & S.E. Bell ' <b>Energy, Society &amp; the Environment</b> ' Chapter 5 & 9, <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. 77-94, 137-158.
	<b>Feb 18-22</b>	<b>Break</b>	
7	Feb 25, 27, Mar 1	<b>Globalization and Environment</b>	N. Young ' <b>Globalization and the Environment</b> ' Chapter 8 <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 135-156
			D. Bates ' <b>Population, Demography...</b> ' & J. Konefal and M. Hatanaka ' <b>Producing and Consuming Food</b> ' Chapter 8 & 12 <i>Twenty Lessons</i> pp. 118-136, 191-208.
8	Mar 4, 6, 8	<b>Environment, Science, and Knowledge</b>	N. Young ' <b>Science and Knowledge</b> ' Chapter 9, <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 157-177.

8	Mar 4, 6, 8	<b>Environment, Science, and Knowledge</b>	R. York ' <b>Science of Nature</b> ' & K.N. Norgaard ' <b>Climate Denial</b> ' Chapter 6 & 15 <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. <b>95-104, 246-259</b>
9	Mar 11, 13, 15	<b>Environmental Injustice, Health</b>	M. Mascarenhas ' <b>Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice</b> ' & S. McCormick ' <b>Environmental Health</b> ', A. Driscoll and B. Edwards ' <b>From Farms to Factories</b> ' pp. <b>161-191, 209-230</b>
10	Mar 18, 20, 22	<b>Disaster, Resilience, and Inequality</b>	N. Young ' <b>Disaster, Shock, and Resilience</b> ' Chapter 10 in <i>Environmental Sociology</i> pp. <b>178-196</b> .
			N. Youngman ' <b>Understanding Disaster</b> ' in <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. 231-245
			Curran, D. (2013). Risk society and the distribution of bads: Theorizing class in the risk society. <i>British Journal of Sociology</i> , 64(1), 44–62. [D2L]
			Beck, U. (2013). Why “class” is too soft a category to capture the explosiveness of social inequality at the beginning of the 21st century. <i>British Journal of Sociology</i> , 64(1), 63–74. [D2L]
11	Mar 25, 27, 29	<b>Global South, Indigenous and Environment</b>	T.L. Lewis ' <b>Global South</b> ', B. Tavakolian ' <b>Indigenous Cultures</b> ', & K.A. Gould and T.L. Lewis ' <b>Ecotourism</b> ' Chapters 18-20, pp. <b>300-351</b>
12	Apr 1, 3, 5	<b>Politics and Social Movements of Environment</b>	R.J. Brulle ' <b>U.S. Environmental Movements</b> ' & B.K. Obach ' <b>Labor and the Environment</b> ' Chapter 16, 17, <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. <b>263-299</b>
13	Apr 8, 10, 12	<b>Moving Forward</b>	N. Young ' <b>Putting Humans and Nature Back Together</b> ' Chapter 11 <i>Environmental Sociology</i> , pp. <b>198-214</b> .
			K.A. Gould & T.L. Lewis ' <b>Future of Environmental Sociology</b> ' <i>Twenty Lessons</i> , pp. <b>353-360</b> .

## **Criteria for Papers:**

This is a checklist to help evaluate a paper submitted in this course. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the paper.

### **Thesis Statement**

Is it identifiable and clear?

Is it manageable rather than being too broad for a short paper?

Is it something substantive and does it provide the key argument(s) of the paper?

Does the paper actually then closely follow the thesis?

### **Theoretical Understandings**

Does the paper identify the key elements of the concepts that it is discussing?

Does it explain these concepts clearly and accurately and in sufficient depth?

Does its further discussion of the concepts demonstrate an overall understanding of the theorists involved in the paper, as well as integrating other literatures into the paper well?

Does it move beyond simply describing or summarizing the readings to analyze them and their underlying reasons and understandings?

Can it apply these concepts to new contexts and arguments in an insightful way?

Does the paper manifest a critical understanding of the subject matter of the paper?

Does the paper manifest a certain level of originality or creativity in understanding and critically analyzing the theorists discussed?

### **Writing Quality**

Is the grammar and spelling correct?

Is it clear what the meaning of the sentences and paragraphs is?

Does it follow a clear structure, and provide the reader with an understanding of where the argument is proceeding, rather than being disorganized or disjointed?

### **Evidence**

Does the paper provide reasons for the arguments and conclusions that it makes?

Are the reasons provided clear and persuasive?

In making claims about a certain thinker's ideas does it provide proper evidence of these claims through proper citation (book and page number) and argumentation?

### **A Paper**

The paper will be very good in all these dimensions.

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### **B Paper**

The paper will be good on all of these dimensions, or adequate on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

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### **C Paper**

The paper will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

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### **D Paper**

The paper is poor on some of these dimensions and satisfactory on some of these dimensions.

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### **F Paper**

The paper will be poor on these dimensions or inadequate on one or more of these dimensions.



## **Criteria for Presentations**

Presentation skills are extremely important to develop. Presenting in the context of a university amongst supportive peers can make an essential contribution to developing these skills. The following are some criteria for the marking of presentations. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the presentation.

### **Presentation Style**

Is the presentation style engaging?

Is the language clear and can the presenter be heard clearly?

Does the presenter look at the audience and speak to the audience, rather than just reading his or her notes?

### **Organization**

Is the aim of the presentation clear?

Is the presentation well-organized and does it flow well, rather than feeling disjointed or confusing?

Is the presentation on time, rather than being too short or too long?

### **Understanding**

Does the presentation clearly display knowledge and understanding of the material involved?

Does it move beyond simply summarizing the reading to provide an analysis of the reading?

Is there a critical engagement with the key arguments of the material?

Does the presenter help the audience to better understand the reading or to better understand the issues related to the topic of the presentation?

Is the presenter's question engaging and clear?

Is the presenter able to integrate other knowledge into this specific reading or issue? (Note: this is not compulsory, but can be beneficial)

Does the presenter manifest a certain level of creativity in understanding and applying the content of the presentation?

### **Grade Level**

**A:** The presentation will be very good in all these dimensions.

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**B:** The presentation will be good on all of these dimensions, or satisfactory on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

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**C:** The presentation will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

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**D:** The paper is poor on some of these dimensions and satisfactory on some of these dimensions.

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**F:** The paper will be poor on these dimensions or inadequate on one or more of these dimensions.