



SOCI 3312: Environmental Sociology

Instructor: Roslyn Schoen, PhD

Office: Heritage Hall 204B

Contact: roslyn.schoen@tamuct.edu

Catalog Course Description:

This course examines relationships and interactions between society and the environment. This includes inquiries into how the natural world and its degradation influence the way societies are organized by studying human communities as part of natural ecosystems.

Detailed Course Description:

This course examines relationships and interactions between society and the environment. This includes inquiries into how the natural world and its degradation influence the way societies are organized by studying human communities as part of natural ecosystems. Using the sociological perspective, the materials presented here demonstrate the ways in which environmental issues are fundamentally structural and must be understood as such in order to be addressed. We will focus on the sociological aspects of environmental issues, drawing from literature in political economy, social inequality, social constructionism, sociology of knowledge, and social movements. We will also consider issues of development and globalization to bolster our understanding of the relationship between structural conditions and lived experiences in our own country and abroad.

Course Objectives:

The primary objective of this course is to introduce students to the intellectual and pragmatic issues concerning the relationship between people and the environment. By the end of the course students should be able to:

- understand the role of social structure and state policy in environmental issues
- discuss the various definitions of nature and the environment and understand how those definitions inform how we approach environmental issues
- understand the major theories used to describe and analyze the relationship between humans and the environment
- identify how environmental problems intersect with social inequalities
- think critically about environmental movements and social change
- demonstrate college-level ability in written work, including ability to revise according to instructor feedback
- apply experience in civic engagement activities to broader environmental issues and be able to describe what s/he has learned about her/himself as it relates to civic commitment and public action
- work effectively as part of a team to conduct research and present findings
- demonstrate improved ability in oral communication, specifically in the form of public presentation

SOC 3312: Environmental Sociology
Face to face, service learning

This is a **Writing Intensive** course so writing will be an integral part of measuring student mastery of course content. This also means that you will have several opportunities to work on improving your writing skills. Revising is fundamental to improving writing skills, so this semester you will receive feedback on your writing that you should use to revise and improve toward producing a final version. If you have any questions about this part of the course, please do not hesitate to ask!

Additionally, this course includes a **project-based service learning** component. To this end, students will engage in a group project, the results of which are to benefit a local community partner. This aspect of the course requires some off-campus site visits and group meetings beyond scheduled class time.

Required Textbook/Readings:

- Leslie King and Deborah Auriffeille 2014. *Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action*, 3rd Edition. Rowan & Littlefield Publishing
- Vandana Shiva 2005. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. South End Press
- Other materials listed on the syllabus will be available through Blackboard or the course eReserves page.

Course requirements:

Below is a description of the five main activities for this course. They include (1) reading assignments, (2) participation in class and service activities, (3) taking online quizzes, (4) writing journal entries, and (5) one research project.

- 1. Reading assignments and other materials:** Students are expected to complete the reading assignments before coming to class. Additional readings beyond the texts listed above will be available on the course E-Reserve page. These are listed in the course schedule as “Online” readings and are just as important as the readings from your book. Your professor will also provide you with links to news articles or video clips to consider throughout the semester.
- 2. Attendance and participation in class and service activities:** Attendance and participation in course activities, including service learning activities, will constitute 20% of your grade (100 points). Students can earn points by attending class, arriving on time to meetings or site visits, and being thoughtfully present during all discussions and activities. In order to maximize your points, come to class regularly, having read the materials, and be ready to participate.
- 3. Quizzes:** Students will take 5 quizzes at regular intervals throughout the course. Quizzes are worth 40 points each and will cover the readings and other material assigned since the last quiz. Quizzes will be given during class time or, if we are short on classroom time, online using Canvas.
- 4. Journals:** Students will write 10 journal entries reflecting on the course topics and the service learning project. Journal entries should be 700 words or more and can be written in first person

SOCL 3312: Environmental Sociology
Face to face, service learning

(I, me, my). Journals are your chance to reflect on your thoughts for the week, identify issues in your service project, and apply what you are learning to the broader social world.

5. Research project: All students will conduct a group-based service project that includes individual papers and a group presentation. This research project requires students to engage in a minimum level of service and group work surrounding the chosen topic. Groups will be assigned by the instructor and students will be expected to work as a team as well as produce individual written reports. Further instructions for this project will be available in class and on Canvas. The total points for the following deliverables is 300:

- a. Literature review (25 pts)
- b. Paper draft (100 pts)
- c. Revised research paper (100 pts)
- d. Group presentation (50 pts)
- e. Peer assessments (25 pts)

Posting of Grades:

- All student grades will be posted using the Canvas gradebook and students should monitor their grade status through this tool.
- Students should always refer to the syllabus for total points and points possible. The Canvas gradebook tool has been known to misinform students from time to time.
- Grades will usually be posted within 7-10 days of due dates. Some assignments, like our research paper, require more personalized instructor feedback. These assignments could take longer to grade and so you may need to be patient.

Coursework	Points
Attendance and participation in SL activities (25 days @ 4 points)	100
Quizzes (5 @ 40 pts)	200
Research project Literature review – 25 points Draft – 100 points Paper w/ revisions – 100 pts Presentation – 50 points Peer assessment – 25 pts	300
Journals (10 @ 10 pts)	100
Total:	700

Points	%	Grade
630 - 700	90 – 100%	A
560 - 629	80 – 89%	B
490 - 559	70 – 79%	C
420 - 489	60 – 69%	D
0 – 419	0 – 59%	F

COURSE TOPICS

What is nature? What is society? Are these two concepts in opposition? Weeks 1-3.

Political Economy and the environment. Weeks 4 and 5.

Environmental inequalities: Are all environmental risks evenly distributed? Who suffers more and why? Weeks 6 and 7.

What we see and what we say: Framing and discourses of environmental issues. Week 8.

Natural Disasters: How “natural” are they? Week 9.

Globalization and its impact on the environment. Week 10.

Science, Risk, and Knowledge: How modern stressors, ideas, and experiences shape our view of environmental issues. Week 11.

Democratic and localized approaches to environmental issues: This unit will cover the book *Earth Democracy*, including living cultures, local influence, and living economies. Weeks 12 and 13.

Social and environmental change: How do we get to a better system? Weeks 14 and 15.