

SOC 460/560 – Topic: Sociology of the Environment
Monday
6:00 pm - 8:45 pm

Instructor: Paul Prew
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Course Description

The environment tends to be taken for granted, and it is often assumed to be separate from society. People are an inseparable part of nature and must interact with it if they are to survive. This course will look at this relationship over time and cross-culturally. The course will examine the various ways nature is perceived as well as different ideas about how to understand our relationship with nature. The course will address a number of contemporary concerns regarding the environment, including food production, toxic chemicals, natural resource extraction, and climate change. We shall also contemplate solutions to the current environmental issues facing society now and into the future.

Course Requirements

For the course, your grade will be based on a number of components. Class participation is a significant portion of the grade for this course. Students will be graded on their attendance, effort put into their work, and contributions to the class. There are three in-class essay exams based on the readings, lecture and class content. Students will also be required to deliver a presentation on an environmental issue or movement. The presentations will be used to help inform the your classmates about different environmental issues. Lastly, you will turn in a group paper based on the issues you will present to the class. Extra credit opportunities may be made available and will be posted on D2L or the course web page. The course will be based largely on the student's participation and discussion of the course materials. We will attempt to wrestle with environmental issues and contemplate solutions. You will have opportunities to discuss many different issues in class. Also, feel free to make use of my office hours or make an appointment.

The grading for the course breaks down as follows:

- 30% Class Participation
- 35% In-Class Essay Exams (3)
- 15% Presentation
- 20% Presentation Paper
 - 5% for Proposal
 - 5% for Draft
 - 10% for Revised Paper

Grades for the course will use the +/- scale and will have divisions as follows:

92 and above = A, from 91.99 to 90 = A-, 89.99 – 88 = B+, 87.99 – 82 = B, etc.

Required Texts

- Foster, John Bellamy. 1994. *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Wackernagel, Mathis, and William Rees. 1996. *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Desire 2 Learn (D2L)

You will find the rest of the required readings on D2L.

Critical Thinking

Many of the issues that we will cover in this course are complex and do not lend themselves to easy answers. Hopefully, you will develop more questions as we progress through the class. We will focus on *alternative* views to understanding contemporary environmental issues. Sometimes, the material may make you uncomfortable – this is natural, and it means that you are confronting commonly held beliefs, which is one of the goals of Sociology. We will attempt to contrast various views, but we will not be able to address all of the various perspectives regarding the environment. You are encouraged to contrast these views with your own and contemplate more deeply the ideas you feel are important. It does not mean that you *must* change your perspective, only that you engage in critical thinking to analyze the world around you.

Course Expectations

- I have certain expectations for you when you are in the classroom. A few things are crucial for successful completion of this course.
 - First, students are expected to have completed all of the relevant readings prior to coming to class.
 - Students must complete the readings in order to participate regularly in class discussions.
 - Class participation will be weighted heavily as part of the graded portion of the class.
 - Since you must be present to participate in class, attendance will be part of your participation grade.
 - Mere presence in class is not sufficient for participation.
 - Students using laptops, checking cell phones, or otherwise distracted during the class will be considered absent from class.
 - After the first week, more than two absences will count against participation.
 - Also included in participation are in-class assignments.
 - Your participation and performance will also be evaluated by the professor.
 - **The use of laptops or cell phones is not permitted in the classroom.**
 - Other distractions such as text messages, conversations between students, etc. are not permitted.
 - I will stop the class if students are using laptops, checking cell phones, texting, or otherwise distracting other students in the class.
 - If the problem persists, students distracting others will be asked to leave and/or failed for the course.
 - I request that you abide by these expectations, not for my benefit, but for the students around you.

Group Projects

The Group Projects are designed to give you a chance to pursue your own individual interest in the course topics. Your group projects are broken down into a number of segments.

1. Choose your topic on February 8.
2. Hand in a project proposal on February 22.
3. The first draft of your project is due on March 22.
4. The final draft will be due April 26.
5. Present your group project on April 19 or April 26.

Your Group Projects will follow this format:

1. Project Proposal

- a. Your proposal shall have a table of contents that includes the overall theme and a list of the group participants and their specific topics.
- b. Each group participant shall provide a short paragraph outlining your issue of interest and a bibliography of sources that you intend to use.
 - i. Provide a short summary of what topic you will be addressing and how it fits with the larger theme of the project.
 - ii. Provide a bibliography of sources for each person in the group.
 - (1) Do not separate the bibliography from your topic paragraph (this will change for the group project).
 - (2) In other words, each group member will hand in a portion that will cover their specific aspect of the project.
- c. As for the sources you use, you can use the required readings from class, but I expect at least three additional sources, such as book chapters or articles from each team member (you may find that more additional sources are necessary).
 - i. You may use internet sources only if they are directly connected to the movement or issue itself and can only be used in addition to the three required sources.
- d. All of the above elements are to be handed in together.

2. Project First and Final Drafts

- a. The first draft of your paper is an opportunity to get feedback on your logic, presentation and ideas.
 - i. Thus, the requirements for the first draft will be identical to the final paper.
- b. The format of the paper shall be as follows:
 - i. I expect a paper of at least 5-6 pages per person in the group, on a topic relevant to the course.
 - ii. Your paper shall include a table of contents that provides:
 - (1) a title that describes your overall theme
 - (2) a list of the group participants and their specific topics.
 - (3) At the end of your paper, include ONE bibliography. The bibliography must be an alphabetical list of all of the resources used.
- c. Cite your sources properly.
 - i. Put direct quotes in citations.
 - ii. Acknowledge where you obtained the information.
 - iii. See the ASA style guide, or talk to me, for information on how to cite properly and plagiarism issues.
- d. The paper should tie together relevant themes from the class in a coherent manner.
 - i. Do not hand in 5 6 separate papers, but one research paper with an introduction and conclusion that tie all of your ideas together.
 - ii. To receive full credit, the paper must tie the themes of the different sections together.
 - iii. The introduction and conclusion should integrate the issues together and explain the connections or

themes between the ideas.

- e. I am looking for your ability to pick a subject related to the course and analyze it using the authors from your outside sources and the course material.
 - i. You can use the required readings from class, but I expect at least three additional sources, such as book chapter or article from each team member.
 - ii. You may include information from the internet, but internet citations will not be considered an additional resource.

3. Presentations

- a. Attendance is mandatory for these presentations.
 - i. Although this is not typically an issue, do not just show up for your own presentation!
 - ii. Absences during the presentations will be weighted more heavily than during the regular class meetings and will affect not only your attendance grade, but also your presentation grade.
- b. Each group member will provide a brief presentation of their part of the project.
 - i. Since we will take the last two weeks of the term, you have between approximately 10 minutes for each person in your group to present your ideas.
- c. You can be as creative as you wish with your presentations.
 - i. Do not feel like you have to cover every aspect of your portion of the paper.
 - ii. Focus on the most interesting aspects and those that you think are the most important.
 - iii. Each presentation will be given time for questions from your classmates.
 - (1) You may also include an interactive component to get your classmates involved in the presentation.
 - iv. Other issues you could possibly talk about may include:
 - (1) What is important for the rest of us to learn from what you researched?
 - (2) How might this be related to the course or our daily lives?
 - (3) What are people doing to resolve the issue?
 - (4) What might be some possible solutions?
- d. Some things to think about for your presentations:
 - i. What do they have to say about environmental issues?
 - ii. From what perspective are they coming - mechanical, dialectical, complex, indigenous, etc?
 - iii. What are the most significant contributions or core concepts/ideas?
 - iv. What positive progress is there regarding this issue?
 - v. What problems or barriers are there to developing a solution to this issue?
- e. How you will be graded:
 - i. Participation during the Presentations is essential.
 - (1) A significant portion of your Presentation grade will be based on your active engagement and presence during your and your classmates' presentations.
 - (2) I will deduct points if you are daydreaming, texting, twittering, etc.
 - ii. Another portion of your grade will be based on the quality of your contribution to the group.
 - (1) This will include my perception of your contributions to the group's presentation.
 - (a) This may include anonymous assessments of each other's contributions.
 - (2) It will also include an assessment of your role in the presentation itself.
 - (a) Are you prepared?
 - (b) Are you articulate?
 - (c) Do you prompt the class to engage in discussion?
 - (d) Finally, it will be based on your responses to the classmates and professor's questions and comments.
 - (e) I realize that many people are not comfortable in front of others, so I will take this into account.

Quality of Work and “Academic Honesty”

- Students are responsible for ensuring that their assignments, essays and general intellectual contributions are their own.
 - In other words, I demand that the students’ contributions are the result of their own creativity and critical assessment of the material covered during this course.
 - I encourage students to study together and discuss the course material outside of class, but do not write your assignments together.
 - Intentional or unintentional similarities in papers, exams, assignments or answers **will result in the students failing the course.**
 - This includes but is not limited to:
 - borrowing portions or whole essays from another source such as a friend, website or “paper mill.”
 - using authors’ ideas without proper credit,
 - submitting a paper that is not your own work,
 - similarities between student papers,
 - copying answers from others in class,
 - using notes during exams,
 - submitting work for others such as attendance sign in, assignments, etc.

Students’ Needs

- If you are having trouble in the class understanding the material or doing well on the exams, **I encourage you to contact me.**
 - If you are worried about how you are doing in the class, contact me early in the term.
 - If you wait until the 3rd or 4th exam, it will be too late.
 - There are also resources on campus to aid your study skills and provide tutoring.
 - Check the list of resources on the next page, or ask me about your options.
- Please let me know if you have any need for accommodations in the classroom to meet your needs.
 - I realize that students have different learning styles and different needs.
 - While this is a large class, I will do my best to help you in any way I can.
 - My objective in this course is to get you to look at the world in a different, more sociological, way.
 - My goal is not to “weed out” those who cannot do well on a test.
 - In this way, I do encourage you to use my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the course material, concerns you may have, or general issues relevant to the course.
- For those of you who may have more specific needs, MSU-Mankato provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in education programs, activities or services.
- Students with disabilities requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with the Office of Disability Services (contact info below) and then contact me as soon as possible.

Resources for Students on Campus

There are many resources on campus for students, especially those new to the campus. Below you can find the location and contact information for various services on campus. They are there for you, so take advantage of them. All of these resources are aimed at helping you succeed and excel while you are here. Please ask me if there is anything I can help you find. I may be able direct you to other offices that can help you out.

Tutoring and Other Services for All Students

Center for Academic Success
Memorial Library in ML 125 (lower level)
Phone: 507-389-1791
Email: academicsuccess@mnsu.edu
<http://www.mnsu.edu/supersite/academics/success/>

General Information and Help with Study Skills

Student Relations, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
Advising "U"
Armstrong Hall 114
Phone No: 507-389-6306
<http://sbs.mnsu.edu/prospective/advisingu.html>

Resources for International Students

The International Student Office (ISO)
Kearney International Center
250 Centennial Student Union
Phone: 507-389-1281 (V) or 800-627-3529 (MRS/TTY)
E-mail: iso@mnsu.edu
<http://www.mnsu.edu/iso/>

Facilities and Resources for Students with Disabilities

Office of Disability Services
132 Memorial Library (lower level)
Phone: 507-389-2825 (Voice/TTY)
Email: julie.snow@mnsu.edu
<http://www.mnsu.edu/dso/index.html>

Ethnic Student Population Resources

Office of Multicultural Affairs
243 Centennial Student Union
Mankato, MN 56001
Phone: 507-389-6300
<http://www.mnsu.edu/cultdiv/programs/>

Academic Support In Writing, Reading And Computer Literacy For Underrepresented Students

Diversity English Institute (IDEI)
Intercultural Center, CSU 269
Phone: 507-389-5594
Email: amy.mukamuri@mnsu.edu
<http://www.mnsu.edu/cultdiv/ei/>

Resources for First-Generation College Students and Others

Student Support Services
355 Wiecking Center
Phone: (507) 389-2797
<http://www.mnsu.edu/sss/>

Confidential Help to Assist Students in Resolving Personal, Social, and Educational Concerns

The Counseling Center
245 Centennial Student Union (CSU)
Phone: (507) 389-1455
<http://www.mnsu.edu/counseling/>

Student Health Services

Medical Clinic
21 Carkoski Commons
Phone: 507-389-6276
Health Education
100 Carkoski Commons
Phone: 507-389-5689
<http://www.mnsu.edu/shs/>

Weekly Readings

Week 1 (January 11)

Introduction to the course.

The Vulnerable Planet: Chapter 1

Week 2 (January 18 No Class – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

How can we measure your impact on the environment?

Our Ecological Footprint: Chapters 1 and 2

Take the Ecological Footprint Quiz at http://www.myfootprint.org/en/visitor_information/

(I will also provide a hard copy on the first day of class)

Watch The Story of Stuff at <http://www.storyofstuff.com/> and complete the one-page assignment at the end of the hard copy of the Footprint Quiz.

Week 3 (January 25)

How much is our own impact on the earth?

Our Ecological Footprint: Chapter 3

Week 4 (February 1)

Ways of Knowing: How do we understand the world around us, and how do sociologists understand the environment?

Joseph Bruchac – The Circle Is the Way

Leslie Marmon Silko – Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories

Leslie Marmon Silko – The People and the Land Are Inseparable

Winona La Duke – Salt, Water, Blood, and Coal: Mining in the Southwest

Salvador Palomino – Three Times, Three Spaces in Cosmos Quechua

Discuss Topics for Paper Presentations

Week 5 (February 8)

Societies and nature: How do various cultures impact the environment?

The Vulnerable Planet: Chapter 2, 3, and 4

Choose Topics for Paper Presentations – February 8 !!!

Week 6 (February 15)

The impact of capitalism: How does the logic of our society ensure environmental destruction?

The Vulnerable Planet: Chapters 5, 6, and 7

Exam 1 – February 15 !!!

**Week 7
(February 22)**

The natural resource industry and indigenous peoples.

Al Gedicks - Resource Rebels: Chapter 2, Big Oil, the Environment and Human Rights

Presentation Paper Proposals Due – February 22 !!!

**Week 8
(March 1)**

Climate change

Paul Mayewski and Frank White – The Ice Chronicles: Chapters 3, 5 and 6

Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall – An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security

**Spring Break
(March 8)**

**Week 9
(March 15)**

Food self-sufficiency

Vandana Shiva – Stolen Harvest: Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Exam 2 – March 15 !!!

**Week 10
(March 22)**

Toxins in our environment

Eddie Girdner and Jack Smith – Killing Me Softly: Chapter 1: The Toxic Political Economy

Eddie Girdner and Jack Smith – Killing Me Softly: Chapter 4: The People's Struggle Against Amoco Waste-Tech in Mercer County, Missouri

Presentation Paper Drafts Due – March 22

**Week 11
(March 29)**

Social movements and solutions to environmental issues.

Julia Fox- Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia

Mik Moore – Coalition Building Between Native American and Environmental Organizations in Opposition to Development

**Week 12
(April 5)**

Social movements and solutions to environmental issues.

Our Ecological Footprint: Chapters 4 and 5

Peter Rosset – Alternative Agriculture Works: The Case of Cuba

Week 13
(April 12)

Prepare for Environmental Issue and Movements Presentations

Exam 3 – April 12 !!!

Week 14
(April 19)

Environmental Issue and Movements Presentations

Week 15
(April 26)

Presentation Papers Due – April 26 !!!

Environmental Issue and Movements Presentations

Final Exam Week
(May 3)

Course Field Trip
(TBA)