

Sociology 140: Introduction to Community & Environmental Sociology

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Overview

This course is designed as an introduction to the main subfields of community and environmental sociology. It gives students a foundation in the sociological approach to understanding transformations in the human community and the natural environment. We will explore how the processes we call globalization are changing the way we form and participate in communities and our relationship with the natural environment. This will lead us to take on some of today's most pressing socioeconomic and environmental conflicts and controversies in the U.S. as well as abroad. A key theme of the course will be the interconnectedness of events and processes, highlighting the ways that power structures also shape "community" and "environment".

Course goals include gaining an understanding of a set of key concepts: "community," "place," "development," "growth," "environment," "sustainability," "globalization," and "neoliberalism." We will learn how these concepts are involved in contemporary debates about what is fair and desirable for the communities in which we live and the world that surrounds us. We will identify important actors in processes that affect communities and the environment, including government, corporations, international institutions and social movements. Finally, we will develop the ability to critically evaluate arguments about the impacts of global change on local places and processes. To accomplish these goals, we will define our terms, explore the debates surrounding them, and develop a conceptual framework to help us analyze the issues at hand. Then we will examine a series of contemporary issues where communities confront the realities of economic globalization, including: economic integration, environmental justice, job creation, migration, food security, and food movements.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation. 15%. The quality of our collective experience in this course depends on your active participation. Participation means not only attending class, but keeping up with the readings, and being able to share your thoughts on the readings with others in the course. In addition, you will bring in and share at least five news items that are related to the topics that we discuss in class. We will start every class with 10-15 minutes of discussion of current news items that relate to the topic/course in general. I would encourage you to read the newspaper every week to find items that are appropriate to the class. This not only allows you to become a better educated global citizen, but also allows you to make the course more interesting to yourself and others by selecting items that you find thought provoking. News items should be from appropriate news sources, for example The New York Times, The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, etc. Some online news sources such as yahoo news are not appropriate sources. For each news item, you should be prepared to

summarize the article, relevant methods and data and how it relates to class. You will keep track of the title, the day you shared the item and the electronic link in your readings journal at the back on a page entitled “News Items.”

Readings Journal. 20%. Every week you will keep a journal on at least two of the readings for that week. I encourage you to do this for every reading, but that is up to you. You will write a brief summary of the important aspects of the reading. This should include the main argument, the key terms and how the reading relates to the overall topic we are discussing in class. In addition you will note at least one question you have about the reading and your critiques (if relevant). This journal should be kept in a notebook that you use exclusively for this purpose. You should bring it to every class. It will facilitate our discussion and serve as a study guide to you. I will collect these at three points in the semester, see syllabus for dates.

Community Learning Project. 25%. This exercise seeks to serve as a bridge between the academic knowledge we are gaining in the classroom and the experiential knowledge that we can gain in the community. There are three parts to the assignment: proposal outline, fieldwork journal and presentation.

Proposal Outline. Before week 4 begins you must meet with the instructor to seek approval for your proposed project. Please schedule the meeting during my office hours. You will bring an outline of your activity to this meeting. In the outline you should answer the following questions: Why is this particular issue important to you and to the broader community? How does it relate/contribute to your understanding of the course material? In addition you should describe your plan – when will you begin your activity, how often will you participate, what will your participation entail and what methods will you use to gather data.

Fieldwork journal. Once you identify your topic, you need to engage in the community to deepen your understanding of the issue. For example, you can observe social interactions in a farmer’s market, you could attend a town hall meeting on a relevant issue, you could volunteer at a food pantry, etc. Be creative and have fun! This is your chance to enhance your knowledge in an area that is of interest to you in particular and share your excitement for the issue with others in the class. The ideal fieldwork experience will be divided into multiple activities throughout the semester (not just one). Think about what you are trying to understand through a sociological lens and why it is important. You will document this field experience in a journal. You will take notes on what stands out to you, what you learn and observe that relates to the class. You will also use this journal to take your ‘field notes.’ We will spend time in class in week 5 discussing the community learning project and how to get the most out of your experience. It will be a good time to gather valuable feedback to refine your project and to ask questions about doing fieldwork. You will hand in your fieldwork journal in week 14 or 15 on the date you do your presentation.

Presentation. At the end of the semester you will have the chance to share your project with the class. You will have 15 minutes to share your project with others. In your presentation you should 1) describe your project; 2) reflect on the fieldwork experience; 3) apply the concepts and theories from the course to analyze your findings. You can choose the way you share your project. Creativity is encouraged. Tell us (or show us) what you learned!

Exams. 40%. There will be a midterm and a final exam in this class (20% each). They will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. Your readings journal will be an excellent guide to assist you in the studying process. I will offer a studying guide prior to the exam.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is essential to your learning experience in this class. It is mandatory and will make up part of your participation grade. You are allowed three unexcused absences throughout the semester without penalty to your participation grade. If you must miss more than this, for a legitimate reason, i.e. you have an ongoing medical issue that prohibits you from attending class, you should contact me as soon as possible so that we can make alternate arrangements. Do not wait until the end of the semester when it is too late to make any adjustments.

Assignment Policy

You are required to submit all assignments on time. Late assignment will be penalized a letter grade per day they are late. All assignments should include your name in the heading and should use 12-point, Times New Roman font, single-spacing, 1-inch margins. If you do not follow these guidelines, you will lose significant points. Please spell check and proof read all assignments.

Academic Honesty

The University takes academic honesty very seriously. If you are found to be cheating on a paper, you will be reported to the Dean of Students. All of the work that you submit for the class must be your own work. You are required to quote and cite all references properly. Although this appears straight-forward, it can be sometimes confusing. Whenever you are unsure about quoting and citing, please come to see me to figure out the best strategy. If you use a web-based source, you can always cite the URL.

For additional information about the plagiarism policy:

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

Use of Technology

No use of laptops, tablet, phones or other electronic devices will be permitted in this class. Although these can be valuable tools for research and study, they often hinder participation and collegiality in the classroom. Several studies have documented how student learn less in the classroom when they rely on these devices. See the New Yorker's article for some insights on this: <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>

Communication

I will make an effort to announce any changes to the syllabus in a timely fashion. This changes will be announced in class or via email. Please read any emails you receive about this course. It is ultimately your responsibility to read your email and attend class. If you have trouble receiving course emails, please let me know as soon as possible.

You are welcome to communicate with me via email. The subject line for your emails to me should detail the course number and title. Please expect a reply within 48 hours. However, I will not respond to questions that are answered in the syllabus or in class. You are encouraged to get the contact information from a classmate the first day of class so that if you miss class you can contact them for their notes. I am happy to offer clarifications of those notes, but I will not provide lecture notes for those that miss class.

Accommodations

I wish to include any student with special needs in this course. In order to enable you to participate fully, please let me know (the earlier the better) if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction or evaluation procedures. The McBurney Disability Resource Center (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>) will provide useful assistance and documentation.

Reading Materials

This book is available at the University Bookstore and other locations.

- 1) McKibben, Bill. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*.
- 2) Course reserve readings (indicated by “Rdr” in the syllabus).

Readings

Week 1: Introduction to Community and Environmental Sociology

- ✓ Carefully read the syllabus
- ✓ Maniates, Michael F. 2001. “Individualization: Plant a tree, buy a bike, save the world?” *Global Environmental Politics* 1(3): 31-52
- ✓ Laszewski, Chuck. 2008. “The Sociologists’ Take on the Environment.” *Contexts* 7 (2): 20-24.

Week 2: The meaning of Community

- ✓ *Deep Economy*, Chapter 2.
- ✓ C. Wright Mills. “The Promise.”
- ✓ Wolfgang Sachs. “One World.”

Week 3: Social Capital

- ✓ Portes, A. 1998. “Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 24: 1-24.
- ✓ Hart-Brinson, P. 2011. “New Ways of Bowling Together?” *Contexts*. 10 (4): 28-33.
- ✓ *Deep Economy*, Chapter 3.
- ❖ DUE: Proposal for Community Learning Project

Week 4: Development or Growth: Measuring and Understanding

- ✓ Amartya Sen. “The Ends and Means of Development.”
- ✓ Gertner, Jon. 2010. “The Rise and Fall of the GDP.” *New York Times Magazine*. May 16, pp. 60-71.
- ✓ Elinor Ostrom, et. al. “Revisiting the Commons.”
- ✓ Jackson, T. 2009. “Redefining Prosperity.” *Prosperity without growth: Economics for a finite planet*. London: Earthscan.

Week 5: Sustainability

- ✓ Vandana Shiva. “Resources.”
- ✓ Michael Bell, “The Treadmill of Production.”
- ✓ *Deep Economy*, Chapter 5 and afterward
- 📺 Watch in class: “The Story of Stuff”
- ❖ Discuss Community Learning Project



DUE: Readings Journal (content weeks 1-4)

Week 6: Globalization and Neoliberalism

- ✓ Anthony Giddens. “Globalization.”
- ✓ Dollars & Sense Collective. “The ABCs of the Global Economy.”
- ✓ Robert Pollin. “What’s Wrong with Neoliberalism.”
- ✚ Watch film in class: “The High Cost of Low Price.”

Week 7: Globalization in Action: Is Wal-Mart Cheap?

- ✓ Karjanen, D. 2006. “The Wal-Mart effect and the new face of capitalism: Labor market and community impacts of the megaretailer”, in Lichtenstein, N. (eds). *Wal-Mart: The face of twenty-first-century capitalism*. New York: New Press, pp. 143-162.
- ✓ Gary Gereffi, “The Impacts of Wal-Mart.”
- ✓ Liza Featherstone. “Down and Out in Discount America.”
- ✓ Krugman, Paul. 2015. “Wal-Mart’s Visible Hand.” *New York Times*. May 3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/02/opinion/paul-krugman-walmarts-visible-hand.html?smid=fb-share>

Week 8: Citizenship, the State and Labor

- ✓ Ngai, M. M. 2014. “Introduction: Illegal aliens: A problem of law and history.” *Impossible subjects: Illegal aliens and the making of modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press,
- ✓ Harrison, J. L., & Lloyd, S. E. 2012. Illegality at Work: Deportability and the Productive New Era of Immigration Enforcement. *Antipode*, 44 (2): 365-385.
- ✓ Bank Munoz, Carolina. 2008. “Immigration Regime”. *Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender and Shop Floor Politics in the United States and Mexico*. Cornell University Press.
- ✚ Watch film in class: “Crossing Arizona” 2006.

Week 9: Immigration

- ✓ Douglas Massey, “Immigration and the Great Recession”
- ✓ Charles Hirschman and Douglas Massey, “Places and People: The New American Mosaic.”
- ✓ David Bacon, “How U.S. Policies Fueled Mexico’s Great Migration.”

Week 10: Racing to the Bottom? Deindustrialization & Reindustrialization

- ✓ David Moberg, “Maytag Moves to Mexico.”
- ✓ Thomas Sugrue, “Motor City: Story of Detroit.”
- ✓ Charles Fishman, “The Insourcing Boom”



DUE: Readings Journal (content weeks 5-9)

Week 11: Environmental Racism/Environmental Justice

- ✓ Center for Health, Environment & Justice, “Love Canal” (skim)
- ✓ Temma Kaplan, “When it Rains, I Get Mad and Scared.”
- ✓ Beverly Wright. “Living and Dying in Louisiana’s Cancer Alley.”
- ✓ Mohai, Paul, David Pellow and J. Timmons Roberts. "Environmental justice." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. 34 (2009):405-430.
- ✓ Bullard, Robert D. and Beverly Wright. 2007. “Race, place, and the environment in post-Katrina New Orleans.” *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina*. New York: Westview Press.

Week 12: Food Insecurity

- ✓ White, Monica M. “D-Town Farm: African American Resistance to Food Insecurity and the Transformation of Detroit.” *Environmental Practice*. 13.4 (2011): 406-417.
 - ✓ Mark Bittman, “Is Junk Food Really Cheaper?”
 - ✓ Sheryl Stolberg. “A Debate on Food Stamps.”
 - ✓ Holt-Gimenez, Eric and Annie Shattuck. 2011. “Food Crises, Food Regimes, and Food Movements: rumblings of reform or tides of transformation?” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (1).
-  Watch film in class: “Food Inc.”

Week 13: The Politics of Food

- ✓ Nestle, M. 2013. “Politics versus Science: Opposing the Food Pyramid.” *Food politics: How the food industry influences nutrition and health*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- ✓ Guthman, J. 2007. "Neoliberalism and the Making of Food Politics in California." *Geoforum*. 39.
- ✓ Gereffi, Gary, Lee, Joonkoo, and Christian, Michelle. 2009. "U.S.-Based Food and Agricultural Value Chains and Their Relevance to Healthy Diets." *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 4 (3-4): 357-374.
- ✓ Read this article: <http://www.thenation.com/article/week-poverty-immokalee-way/> and skim the related timeline on the Coalition for Immokalee Workers here: <http://genprogress.org/voices/2011/01/10/16187/the-domino-effect-a-brief-history-of-the-ciw/>

Week 14 and 15: Presentations of Community Learning Projects



DUE Week 14: Readings Journal (content weeks 10-13)

- ❖ Hand in Fieldwork Journal after individual presentation.