

**University of Manitoba, Department of Sociology & Criminology**  
**Sociology 3838 - A01, Ecology and Society**  
Fall 2019 3 Credit Hours



Image: Curry and Cullman, *When a Tree Falls: The Story of the ELF*

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MWF 12:30-1:20, 308 Tier Building;  
Office Hours: W: 9:30-10:30; F: 10:00-11:00

Sociology 3838 examines changing patterns of social organizations of civilizations, the resultant social constructions of the human/nature interface, the human social contribution to the global ecological crisis, and possible strategies to create sustainable societies. Consideration of topics such as population, consumption, capitalism, and agricultural practices. Prerequisite: [a grade of "C" or better in SOC 1200 (077.120) or SOC 1201 (077.120)] or [a grade of "C" or better in both SOC 1211 (077.121) and SOC 1221 (077.122)].

### **The Point of Taking This Course**

This course will provide you with a thorough foundation to think and act on issues involving the interaction of human societies and nature. By the end, you will have gained two fundamental things. First, you'll have an improved understanding of the social drivers of environmental change, and the consequences of that change for human individuals and societies. That is, you'll tighten your grasp of how human patterns of behavior affect the ecological systems that support us, and how that in turn alters the possibilities for human survival and development. Hopefully, if you haven't already done so, you'll be able to critique the previous sentence from at least one environmental perspective. Second, you'll have a good overview of the emerging sub-discipline of environmental sociology. We'll get an introduction to the major areas of debate among scholars, policy-makers, and activists, and to the range of lenses that all of these actors variously apply to their observation and analyses of environmental degradation.

## **Class Format**

You are not a vessel to be filled, but an active and necessary participant in your own education, as well as that of your colleagues. You'll be expected to fulfill that role. That means coming to class prepared by having completed and reflected upon the assigned readings, and by putting yourself in an active attitude of learning. Don't come to class expecting only to sit and listen.

There will be one or two articles and/or chapters to read for each meeting, which you **MUST** have read prior to class. Failure to do so means that you won't be able to contribute to the class discussion, and will thus be dead weight that your classmates have to carry through the seminar. Don't inflict this on your colleagues. There will normally be a short lecture by the course instructor to set some context, after which we will turn to a discussion of the readings, attempting to connect them to one another, to our own lives, and the lives of others. There will be occasional films or other multimedia presentations as warranted.

## **Required Texts**

Young, Nathan. 2015. *Environmental Sociology in the Twenty-First Century*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press

Dawson, Ashley. 2016. *Extinction: A Radical History*. New York: OR Books.

Additional Readings are in the Course Pack.

## **Assessment**

Your grade in this course will be assessed through the following means:

Research and Change Project Proposal: 30 points

Research and Change Project Assignments:

    Change Component: 110 points

    Research Component: 110 points

Mid-Term Test: 100 points

Final Test: 100 points

In-class and Short Assignments (five): 50 points

Total: 500 Points.

*Research and Change Project:* Gandhi is famous for (among other things) instructing his followers to "be the change you want to see in the world." Here is your chance to follow the Mahatma's teaching (though the taint of coercion already infuses your efforts). Each student will be expected to change an aspect of their regular behavior that negatively impacts on the environment. Here's how you are going to proceed:

1. Pick an “environmental problem.” There’s no shortage to choose from.
2. Research the problem you’ve identified. Provide a description of the scale and/or rate of environmental degradation, and its consequences (for humans and/or non-humans), then focus on its sociological dimensions.
3. Relate it to your life. Do you in some way contribute to the problem? If you can’t find something in your regular or periodic behavior that’s damaging to the environment, or that is constructed as an environmental problem, you aren’t looking very hard.
4. Make a specific commitment to reducing or eliminating that behavior. Write it down in a **proposal** to me that includes **1) a brief description of the environmental issue you aim to address**, and **2) the specific change in your behavior that you plan to undertake**. Changes might include adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet for two weeks (vegetarians are barred from this, since it doesn’t constitute a change), giving up automobile transportation for two weeks, aiming for zero landfill waste for two weeks, or minimizing your energy consumption over a month. Models even exist to test if you can adopt a “zero carbon” lifestyle for period of time. Use your imagination. You should be able to **tell me how you plan on charting progress toward your committed goal. Proposals are due September 27**
5. Write it up: After the specified change period, you will write a report including a **research component** (your description and sociological analysis of the problem—like a short, standard research paper) **and a reflection** on your attempt to address the problem. The reflection will include a description of your attempt to address the problem individually (from your proposal), and a sociological reflection of your experience. You should comment on how your life was affected, what your impact on the environmental problem was relative to the overall scale of the problem, how the experience changed you, problems you encountered in making the change, particularly those involving norms, social structures and institutions, observations on how your friends, colleagues, or family responded to your change, and whether you intend to continue with the shift. **Write-ups should be 3000 words maximum and are due November 18.**

*In-Class or Short Assignments:* These will be assigned on-the-spot during classes, and might either be completed in class, or assigned for the following class. No make-ups allowed, and I will take the best 4 out of five of your assignment grades.

#### Grade Cutoffs:

A+	90-100%	450-500 points
A	80-89%	400-449 points
B+	76-79%	378-399 points
B	70-75%	350-377 points
C+	66-69%	328-349 points
C	60-65%	300-327 points

D	50-59%	250-299 points
F	49% or less	0-249 points

## Course Policies and Practices

### 1. Classroom Comportment.

We want to maintain an environment of lively discussion that allows for disagreement and a diversity of views and perspectives. Basically, this means behaving respectfully toward the instructor and toward one another. It also means that you have a responsibility to yourself and to the rest of the class to speak your mind, and to do so in a way that furthers the conversation. We must all be willing and able to speak, to support our arguments with logic and empirical evidence, and to be willing to modify our pre-existing stances and beliefs.

Part of maintaining a respectful environment is being fully present. **Turn off your phones, tablets, and other gadgetry.** If you must take notes on a laptop, keep your computer use to those activities necessary for class participation. Failure to do so is a distraction to yourself and—perhaps more importantly—to those around you. There is also research suggesting that your brain is better at sorting and storing ideas if you take notes longhand, with a pen and paper. Just saying.

### 2. Academic Integrity:

Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, exam personation, ("**Personation at Examinations**" (**Section 5.2.9**) and "**Plagiarism and cheating**" (**Section 8.1**)) and duplicate submission by reading documentation provided at the Arts Student Resources web site at [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student\\_resources/student\\_responsibilities\\_integrity.html](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student_resources/student_responsibilities_integrity.html). Ignorance of the regulations and policies regarding academic integrity is not a valid excuse for violating them.

If you engage in any of the above offenses, expect no mercy from me if you get caught. While most of these acts are pretty straightforward, some students are a bit uncertain about plagiarism.

### **PLAGIARISM: READ THIS. I WILL ACCEPT NO EXCUSES FOR PLAGIARISM.**

While it sounds fancy, **plagiarism** is basically ripping off somebody else's writing and ideas and presenting them as your own. **It is serious, and it is easily avoided.** If you get an idea from somewhere else and present it in your work, whether you are quoting directly from it or not, provide a proper citation in an acceptable format. If it is a direct quote, place it in quotation marks. In the body of your text, you can provide a parenthetical citation like (Smith 2019: 267), where Smith is the author's last name, 2019 is the year of publication, and 267 is the page upon which you found

the idea or quotation. Then give a full reference in a separate reference section at the end, like so:

Smith, Bob. 2019. *My Unbelievably Brilliant Book of Ideas*. New York: Conglomerate Publishing Co.

For citations of journal or newspaper articles, online sources, presentations, and other tricky stuff, consult a style guide like the one found at:

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

Cutting and pasting material from the Web is NOT research. It is plagiarism, and it will be detected. Do not cut and paste from the Web or any other source.

You should also be aware that it is a serious breach of academic integrity to manipulate, falsify, or falsely represent data used in a paper, presentation or thesis. The Faculty of Arts treats data manipulation as exceptional cases of academic fraud, with penalties of 'F' on the paper, 'F-CW' in the course, and suspension ranging from 2-5 years.

### 3. Late Work

I expect you to complete the course assignments by the due dates listed above. Failure to do so will result in a **10% reduction in your grade each day for the first five days, after which time you will receive a zero grade on the assignment.**

In the event that you fall victim to a **documentable** catastrophe, or feel called to participate in a pivotal event designed to bring about revolutionary change in the world, either of which results in a late assignment, come and explain your situation to me, and we'll arrive at an accommodation.

### 4. Unclaimed Work

My office is quite cluttered up as it is. I cannot hang on to your written work, precious though every word is, forever waiting for you to claim it. Thus, any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for four (4) months from the end of the final examination period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will become property of the Faculty of Arts and be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines and using confidential measures for disposal.

Last day for voluntary withdrawal: **November 18, 2019**. Grades for the Paper Research and Change Project proposal, and the Midterm Test will be returned to you by this date at the latest.

## **Topics and Reading List**

September 4: Introductions

September 6: What does Sociology have to say about “The Environment?”

Young, Ch. 1 & 2

September 9: Social Constructionism and Realism I

Young, Ch. 4

September 11: Social Constructionism and Realism II

Coursepack: Wood, “The Many Voices of Business.”

September 13: Bioenvironmentalism I: Human Ecology

Coursepack: Malthus, T. “An Essay on the Principle of Population”

Coursepack: Hardin, G. “The Ecological Necessity of Confronting the Problem of Human Population.”

September 16: Bioenvironmentalism II: Deep Ecology

Coursepack: Naess, A. “The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movements”

Coursepack: McLaughlin, A., “The Heart of Deep Ecology”

September 18: Risk Society?

Young, Ch. 6

September 20: Sustainable Capitalism? Market Liberalism and Institutionalism

Young, Ch. 7

September 23: Capitalism and the Environment: The Treadmill of Production

Young Ch. 5

September 25: Capitalism and the Environment: Eco-Marxist Approaches

Coursepack: Kovel, J. “Capital.”

Coursepack: Foster, Clark, and York. “The Midas Effect”

September 27: Capitalism AS the Environment: Eco-Marxism II

O'Connor: "The Second Contradiction of Capitalism." Available at: [http://www.columbia.edu/~lnp3/second\\_contradiction.htm](http://www.columbia.edu/~lnp3/second_contradiction.htm).

September 30: Political Economy, Globalization, and the Environment

Young, Ch. 8

October 2: Political Economy, Globalization, and the Environment

Young, Ch. 8 (con't)

October 4: Consumption 1

Course Pack: Princen et al. "Confronting Consumption"

October 7: Consumption 2

Course Pack: Princen et al. Ch. 2 "Externalities of Consumption"

October 9: Consumption 3

Course Pack: Maniates, Ch. 3 "Individualization"

October 11: Consumption 4

Course Pack: Manno, Ch. 4 "Commoditization"

October 14: THANKSGIVING: No Classes

October 16: Mid-Term Review

October 18: **Mid Term Test**

October 21: Consumption 5: Making Consumers

Coursepack: Bonneuil and Fressoz, "Phagocene"

October 23: Environmental Justice I: Environmentalism to Environmental Justice

Coursepack: Pellow, Wienberg, and Schnaiberg, "The Environmental Justice Movement"

October 25: Environmental Justice II: Dimensions of Justice

Coursepack: Page, "Salmon Farming in First Nations' Territories"

October 28: Environmental Justice III: Environmental Injustice and Settler Colonialism

Coursepack: Whyte, "Indigenous Experience, Environmental Justice and Settler Colonialism"

October 30: Environmental Justice IV: Expanding EJ with Indigenous Traditions

Coursepack: McGregor, "Mino-Mnaamodzawin: Achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice in Canada"

November 1: Posthumanism

Coursepack: Carter and Charles, "The Animal Challenge to Sociology"

Online: Heller, "If Animals have Rights, Should Robots?" Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/28/if-animals-have-rights-should-robots>.

November 4: Science and Environmental Management I

Young: Ch. 9

November 6: Science and Environmental Management II

Coursepack: York, "The Science of Nature and the Nature of Science"

November 8: What Is To Be Done?: Global Governance and Climate Change

Coursepack: Clémonçon, "Two Sides of the Paris Climate Agreement"

November 11: Remembrance Day: No Classes

November 13 & 15: Fall Break: No Classes

November 18: Global Governance and Biodiversity

Dawson Ch. 1-2

November 20: Reports on Environmental Change I

November 22: Reports on Environmental Change II

November 25: The Environmental State: Canada, Oil & Gas, and Climate Policy



Coursepack: Davidson, "Chipping Away at Democracy: Legislative Slippage in Alberta's Energy Development Zone."

November 27: The Environmental State: Green New Deal?

Dawson Ch. 3

November 29: Non-State Regulation

Dawson Ch. 4

December 2: Final Test Review and Discussion of Dawson

Dawson Ch. 5-6

December 4: "Radical" Environmentalism

Online: Klein, "Science is Telling Us to Revolt," online at  
<http://www.newstatesman.com/2013/10/science-says-revolt>

December 6: In-class Final Test