

Sociology 285: Environmental Sociology
Tuesday & Thursday, 1:30pm-2:55pm
Johnson 303

Instructor: John T. Lang
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 8:30am-10am
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When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.
-John Muir

INTRODUCTION

Environmental sociology brings sociological understandings to the conversation between social groups and “the environment” as it explores questions probing the environment-society nexus: How does society define what constitutes “the environment?” Where are its boundaries, and in what ways do social groups shape that environment? And, reflexively, in what ways is society shaped by it? Who has differential access to environmental resources and why? Why and how are some members of societies victims of environmental injustices?

Guided by these questions (among others), by the end of the semester you will be able build arguments (verbal and written) to support environmental claims and solutions.

Please Note

Prerequisite: Sociology 101.
First year students or graduate students may not enroll in this class.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

There are 3 required books for this class. All of them are available at the Occidental College Bookstore or online at your favorite bookseller.

Gould, Kenneth A. & Tammy L. Lewis. 2009. *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
ISBN-13: 978-0195371123

Park, Lisa Sun-Hee & David Naguib Pellow. 2011. *The Slums of Aspen: Immigrants vs. the Environment in America's Eden*. New York: New York University Press.
ISBN: 978-1479834761

Szasz, Andrew, 2007. *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
ISBN: 978-0816635092

GRADING

I do not give extra-credit assignments. I will base your final grade on the following:

Reading Reflections – 35%	Critical Analysis #2 – 20%
Critical Analysis #1 – 20%	Leading Discussion – 25%

Attendance, Reading & Class Participation

Our time together is brief and we have a wealth of ideas to exchange and explore in that limited period. I expect you to come to class on time and remain here until class is over. You may miss 2 class sessions without penalty. After that, for each missed class your final course grade will drop one fraction of a letter grade. For example, if your work is above average and earns you a B, that absence will cause your final grade to drop to a B-. For every additional absence, the grade will continue to fall by the same fraction of a letter grade.

Arriving late or departing early twice equals one absence. I have this policy to encourage students to attend class and to do well in the course. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. You are, therefore, strongly encouraged not to miss class carelessly because of the possibility of unexpected or unavoidable absences during the semester. No matter the reason, it is always your responsibility to contact other students to learn what you've missed and to get notes.

Reading Reflections – 35%

For each class you must bring a 200-250 word typed reflection on the readings. Outlines are NOT acceptable. Reflections will be graded using a “check” or “plus” format. Reflections receiving a “check” are those that just review the readings, and engage with discussions in a summary fashion, but do not expand much beyond this. Reflections receiving a “plus” are those that carefully engage the readings, are focused and coherently integrate examples with explanations or analysis. The reflection demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. In short, it reflects in-depth engagement with the topic.

I won't collect these every day and you may miss 2 of these per term without penalty.

Critical Analysis 1 – 20%

To build an effective argument requires you to critically assess the quality of existing scholarship. In this 2-3 page assignment you'll reflect on *The Slums of Aspen* by Park & Pellow. The strongest work will show clear evidence of having written several drafts.

Critical Analysis 2 – 20%

To build an effective argument requires you to critically assess the quality of existing scholarship. In this 2-3 page assignment you'll reflect on *Shopping Our Way to Safety* by Szasz. The strongest work will show clear evidence of having written several drafts.

Leading Discussion – 25%

Each student will be responsible for presenting and leading discussion for one class session. Outside research on your topic can greatly assist you in this endeavor. High quality leadership includes 1) a handout that summarizes key points; 2) questions for discussion or activities to promote student engagement with the readings; 3) additional relevant material to guide and provoke discussion. These materials must be turned in during the class session when the readings are under discussion. No late handouts will be accepted.

COURSE GRADES

Do NOT count on a curve. I will assign letter grades for the entire course as follows:

93.0 and higher = A	73.0 to 76.99 = C
90.0 to 92.99 = A-	70.0 to 72.99 = C-
87.0 to 89.99 = B+	67.0 to 69.99 = D+
83.0 to 86.99 = B	60.0 to 66.99 = D
80.0 to 82.99 = B-	59.99 and lower = F.
77.0 to 79.99 = C+	

Letter grades in this class have the following meaning:

- A *Outstanding performance.* You have demonstrated very thorough knowledge and understanding of all the material, truly superior critical thinking, and expressed insightful and original thoughts clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been among the best in the class.
- B *Good performance.* You have demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the material and good critical thinking. You have also shown the ability to express your ideas clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been of good quality.
- C *Satisfactory performance.* You have demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of the major concepts taught in the class and some critical thinking. You have completed all or most of the required assignments and they have routinely been free of significant problems.
- D *Deficient performance.* You have only acquired a limited understanding of the class material. You have failed to complete all the required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.
- F *Failure.* You have failed to learn a sufficient proportion of the basic concepts and ideas taught in the class. You have failed to complete many required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I will hold you responsible for the information in this syllabus, so I expect you to read it, understand it, and ask questions about anything you don't understand.

Office Hours: I hold three official office hours each week. I also encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime to see if I'm available. I am happy to discuss class concepts, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.

Feedback: I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox in the administrative offices in Swan Hall.

Class Demeanor: While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.

Technology in Class: Please turn off your cell phones when you come to class. Similarly, text messaging will not be tolerated in class. You are welcome to bring your laptop to class and use it to take notes, access readings we're discussing, and the like. You are not welcome to surf the web, check email, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. Here's my best advice: If you aren't using it to perform a task specifically related to what we are doing in class at that very moment, put it away.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences: Students with documented disabilities who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the instructor at the beginning of each semester or as soon as possible thereafter. Any student who experiences significant physical or mental impairments may contact Disability Services at (323) 259-2969 to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>

Assignments: A hard copy of all papers/assignments must be handed in at the start of class on the scheduled date. I do not accept assignments via email. Late assignments are docked 1 grade per day. Computer and printing problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline. Make sure to print your papers early enough to be able to address any problems before class. Keep a paper and electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.

Academic Integrity: As is always the case, you are responsible for your own work. If you find yourself questioning whether you have documented or cited your sources properly, it is your responsibility to come see me about these issues prior to submitting an assignment. If you are thinking about submitting work that is not your own due to pressure, frustration, perfectionism, or any other reason, please talk to me. I am here to help you resolve these issues before they become a problem for your academic career. Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. A description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage:
<http://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics/academic-ethics>

CLASS SCHEDULE

Although I will do my best to keep us on schedule, it is possible that we will make some adjustments during the semester. I will give as much notice - both in class and on the course website - when changes are necessary.

AUGUST

29 Welcome to the class

SEPTEMBER

3 What is Environmental Sociology?

(20L, Ch1) Gould & Lewis, "An Introduction to Environmental Sociology"

(20L, Ch2) Capek, "The Social Construction of Nature"

5 What is Environmental Sociology?

Goldman & Schurman, "Closing the 'Great Divide'"

10 How to Lead Discussion

What to do when you lead the class

12 How to Read and Write

Reading articles for meaning and understanding

17 Social Causes of Environmental Disruption

(20L, Ch4) Pellow "The State and Policy"

(20L, Ch6) Campbell, "Corporate Power"

- 19 Social Causes of Environmental Disruption
Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons."
(20L, Ch8) Gould "Technological Change and the Environment."
- 24 Social Causes of Environmental Disruption
(20L, Ch9) Bates, "Population, Demography, and the Environment."
- 26 Social Consequences of Environmental Disruption
(20L, Ch10) Mascarenhas, "Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice."
(20L, Ch11) McCormick, "The Sociology of Environmental Health."

OCTOBER

- 1 Social Consequences of Environmental Disruption
(20L, Ch12) Edwards & Driscoll. "From Farms to Factories"
- 3 Social Consequences of Environmental Disruption
(20L, Ch13) Youngman, "Understanding Disaster Vulnerability: Floods and Hurricanes."
(20L, Ch14) Roberts, "Climate Change: Why the Old Approaches Aren't Working."
- 8 How to Write
Critically analyzing an argument
- 10 Environmental Justice
Park & Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*, Intro & Ch1 (pp. 1-67)

15 NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.

- 17 Environmental Justice
Park & Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*, Ch2 & Ch3 (pp. 68-126)
- 22 Environmental Justice
Park & Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*, Ch4 & Ch5 (pp. 127-198)
- 24 Environmental Justice
Park & Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*, Conclusion (pp. 199-210)
- 29 Evaluating *The Slums of Aspen*
Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, "Environmental Justice"
- 31 Working Session: Editing
DUE: Draft Critical Analysis of Park & Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*

NOVEMBER

- 5 TBA
DUE: Critical Analysis of Park & Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*
- 7 Confusing Personal Troubles and Social Issues
Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*, Intro & Ch1 (pp. 1-55)
- 12 Confusing Personal Troubles and Social Issue
Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*, Ch2 & Ch3 (pp. 56-133)

- 14 Confusing Personal Troubles and Social Issue
Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*, Ch4 & Ch5 (pp. 134-168)
- 19 Confusing Personal Troubles and Social Issue
Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*, Ch6, Ch7 & Conclusion (pp. 169-238)
- 21 Evaluating Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*
- 26 Where do we go from here?
(20L, Ch20) Gould & Lewis, "Unanswered Questions and the Future of Environmental Sociology"
DUE: Critical Analysis of Szasz, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*

28 NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING BREAK.

DECEMBER

3 Wrapping Up & In Class Reflections

Grades will be submitted by December 16. Good luck! I'm looking forward to a great semester!