

Community, Environment, and Society

(SOC 304, CRN: 34704)

Spring 2022

Monday & Wednesday, 4:00–5:20 pm

129 MCK

Instructor: Mauricio Betancourt

mbetanco@uoregon.edu

Office: 636 PLC

Office hours: F: 10:00 am-12:00 & by appointment

GE: Erik Rummell

erummell@uoregon.edu

Office: 712 PLC

Office hours: T&R: 4:00-5:00 pm (virtual)

I. Objectives

The objective of this course is to analyze the interrelation between communities, the environment, and society, with an emphasis on the ecological and socioeconomic crises in the Anthropocene. The central theme will be how to create a just and sustainable society as well as how to develop a rational relationship with the rest of nature in today's world. The course will also serve as an introduction to the broad range of issues addressed in environmental sociology as a field. In particular, the class will study how the human relationship to the rest of nature changed through time with an emphasis on the present-day world, as well as reflections on how to possibly transform such relation. A specific focus will be given to interconnections between current lived conditions/lifestyles (*e.g.* the city/country divide, production and consumerism, and the environment) and questions of environmental justice and sustainability in today's world. Students will be encouraged to demonstrate in their work, not only what they have learned directly from the course material, but also, and more importantly, the development of their own informed perspectives.

The objectives of this course coincide with some of the learning outcomes for the University of Oregon's [Department of Sociology](#) and [Division of Equity and Inclusion](#). For instance, it *summarizes* and *differentiates* major scientific concepts and theories used in environmental sociology, which coincides with the Sociology Department's learning outcome #2 pertaining to familiarity with sociological theories. The course also seeks to deconstruct one's experience of human communities and the biophysical environment, and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of different collective actions to affect positive social and environmental change. This learning objective coincides with the Division of Equity and Inclusion's LACE UP! Model, developed by Yvette Alex-Assensoh (2013). This is a Social Science Core (SSC) course. SSC courses are described in the 2021-22 University of Oregon catalog at: <https://catalog.uoregon.edu/genedcourses/#newitemtext>.

II. Assessment

Assignment / Requirement	Due date and time	Points worth
1. Attendance	Each class (Weeks 1-10)	10
2. Reading journal, part 1	April 20 by 11:59 am (Week 4)	15
3. First Essay	April 27 by 11:59 am (Week 5)	20
4. Reading journal, part 2	May 25 by 11:59 am (Week 9)	15
5. Final Essay	June 1 by 11:59 am (Week 10)	20
6. Final Quiz	June 8 by 4:00 pm (Finals week)	20
Total:		100

1. **Reading journals:** The aim of the reading journals is that students can record their engagement with the course materials (**readings and films**) in depth on a continuous basis. This will allow them to review the most important concepts and ideas in the materials, to reflect on them, and to develop an enduring record of their thoughts related to the course.

Journal entries have to be *typed* and uploaded to Canvas as *.doc or .pdf* files in the appropriate column of the Assignments section in the date and time they are due. Entries should be written in a word processor using a *12 font size, 1 inch margins*, and have to be *1.5- or double-spaced*. Entries should be *dated*, and should include reflections on *all readings and films* related to *each week's* material. Students should average *at least three pages* of journal entries *per week*. The format of the journal entries is quite flexible, but entries should unambiguously indicate a *deep engagement* with the course materials. Entries might include extracts from the **texts and films** and *reflections* on them; reflections on class discussions; interrelations with current or past relevant events or personal experiences; notes for students' essays; and so on. Journals are a tool for developing a deep, long-lasting understanding of the ideas treated in class.

The grading of the journals will be based on both the quantity and quality of reflections, with an emphasis on: (1) serious engagement with the materials; (2) imagination and creativity; (3) effort; (4) and the capacity to interrelate the materials to the student's experience and current events. ***Journals that either just copy quotes verbatim from the texts, do not refer to the films, and/or only repeat what the instructor mentions in class or in the notes he uploads, will get poor grades.***

2. **First and Final Essays:** The aim of the two essays is that students engage profoundly with one or more topics of the class *through the development of a sound argument*. Essays have to be *typed* and uploaded to Canvas as *.doc or .pdf* files in the appropriate column of the Assignments section in the date and time they are due. Essays should be *five pages long, double-spaced*, and written in a word processor using a *12 font size and 1 inch margins*. Students should choose an essay topic from a list of selected prompts that will be provided by the instructor through Canvas in due course (Week 3).

The grading of the essays will be based on the (1) correct understanding of class materials; (2) the development of a coherent argument (with a thesis, a body, and a conclusion); and (3) the use of imagination and creativity.

3. **Final Quiz:** The aim of this quiz is that students review the *basic concepts* learned throughout the class. The quiz will consist of 20 questions asked in a multiple choice format and will be made available on Canvas by the end of Week 10.

4. **Absences:** Students' attendance to each class is worth 0.5% of their final grade. Students cannot make-up for those points except for AEC accommodation reasons or unforeseen extenuating circumstances (*e.g.* medical, legal, a family emergency, athletic, etc.). If a student is allowed to make up for their absence, they should turn in a 300-word statement on a topic pertaining to the class they missed. The student should contact the Instructor and/or GE so she/he is informed about the specifics about these statements.

Grading Equivalents:

Grade	Points	Notations	Grade	Points	Notations
A+	97.1– 100	(outstanding)	C+	77.5 – 79.9	(satisfactory)
A	93 – 97	(excellent)	C	73 – 77.4	(below satisfactory)
A-	90 – 92.9	(very good)	C-	70 – 72.9	(below satisfactory)
B+	87.5 – 89.9	(above good)	D+	67.5 – 69.9	(inferior)
B	83 – 87.4	(good)	D	63 – 67.4	(inferior)
B-	80 – 82.9	(approaching good)	D-	60 – 62.9	(inferior)
			F	59.9 or less	(unsatisfactory)

Description of the standards for each level of work:

A+ to A-: Students who earn a grade in the A range likely completed all assigned readings prior to lectures and all course assessments, and scored at least 90 percent on each.

B+ to B-: Students who earn a grade in the B range likely completed most of the assigned readings prior to lectures and all course assessments, and scored at least 80% on each.

C+ to C-: Students who earn a grade in the C range likely did not complete most of the assigned readings prior to lectures, failed to complete up to 25% of the assessments, and scored at least 70% on each.

D+ to F: Students who earn a grade in the D+ to F range likely did not complete any of the assigned readings prior to lectures, failed to complete most or all assessments, and/or scored at most 69.9% on each.

III. Required Readings: All articles, book chapters, and videos listed below will be provided online on the Canvas course site or through syllabus links.

IV. Course Schedule (subject to changes if necessary):

*All readings are available on Canvas in the Modules and Files sections, under the corresponding week and day.
Links to the videos are available both on Canvas and below in this Syllabus.

Week 1: The Neolithic Revolution: Anthropocentrism, Private Property, and Agriculture.

Monday, March 28.

Introduction. Overview of the class.

Wednesday, March 30.

1. Engels, F. (1950 [1876]). *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man*. International Publishers, New York. pp: 7; 16-22.
2. Cole, S. (1961). *The Neolithic Revolution*. British Museum of Natural History, Great Britain. Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-4.

Week Two: Capitalism and the Environment.

Monday, April 4.

1. Magdoff, F. & J. B. Foster. (2010). What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism. *Monthly Review*, 61(10): 1-30. (Read pages **1-14**).

Wednesday, April 6.

1. Magdoff, F. & J. B. Foster. (2010). What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism. *Monthly Review*, 61(10): 1-30. (Read pages **14-30**).

Film: Six Degrees Could Change the World: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EU5tUY3W3WI>.

Week Three: The Ecological Rift and Ecological Paradoxes.

Monday, April 11.

1. Foster, J.B. (2013). Marx and the Rift in the Universal Metabolism of Nature. *Monthly Review*, 65(7): 1–19.

Wednesday, April 13.

1. Foster, J.B., B. Clark, & R. York. (2010). “The Paradox of Wealth.” In *The Ecological Rift*, Monthly Review Press, New York, (pp. **53-72**).
2. Foster, J.B., B. Clark, & R. York. (2010). “The Return of the Jevons Paradox.” In *The Ecological Rift*, Monthly Review Press, New York, (pp. **169-181**).

Film: No film this week.

Week Four: Facing the Anthropocene.

Monday, April 18.

1. Steffen, W., J. Grinevald, P. Crutzen & J. McNeill. (2011). The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 369(1938): 842-867.

Wednesday, April 20.

1. Angus, I. (2016). *Facing the Anthropocene. Fossil Capitalism and the crisis of the Earth System*. Monthly Review Press, New York, (pp. **25-47**).

Film: No film this week. **(REMINDER: READING JOURNAL, PART I DUE THIS WEEK).**

Week Five: “Biocides,” the fertilizer treadmill, and multi-resistant bacteria.

Monday, April 25.

1. Rachel, C. (1952). Remarks at the Acceptance of the National Book Award for Nonfiction. In *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson*, edited by Linda Lear, pp. 90-92. Boston: Beacon Press.
2. Rachel, C. (1962). *Silent Spring*, **chapter 1**, “A Fable for Tomorrow,” **chapter 2**, “The Obligation to Endure,” **chapter 8**, “And No Birds Sing,” and **chapter 17**, “The Other Road.”
3. Rachel, C. (1963). The Pollution of Our Environment. In *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson*, edited by Linda Lear, pp. 227-245. Boston: Beacon Press.

Wednesday, April 27.

1. Angus, I. (2019). Superbugs in the Anthropocene: A Profit-Driven Plague. *Monthly Review*, 71(2): 1-28.

Film: “A Sense of Wonder”, a portrait of Rachel Carson’s life:

<http://docuseek2.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/cart/product/137>.

(REMINDER: FIRST ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK).

Week Six: Cars and Cities.

Monday, May 2.

1. Mugenyi, B. & Y. Engler. (2011). *Stop signs: cars and capitalism on the road to economic, social and ecological decay*. Fernwood, Black Point, N.S., 259 pp. “**Preface**,” **chapter 12**: “Behind the wheel it’s me, myself and I – Portland,” **chapter 18**: “An industry’s power,” **chapter 21**: “Creating a market,” **chapter 26**: “Honk if you hate cars.”

Wednesday, May 4.

1. Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, “High Mileage Moms” (2002).

Film: Taken for a Ride: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-I8GDklsN4>.

Week Seven: The Myth of Consumer Sovereignty and the Global Consumer Trap.

Monday, May 9.

1. Marx, K. (1857). “Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy.” pp. 1-20. Fragment.

Wednesday, May 11.

1. Dawson, M. (2005). *The Consumer Trap: Big Business Marketing in American Life*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, (pp. 1-15).
2. Dawson, *Ibid.*: pp. 132-54; 169-174.

Films: (1) The Lightbulb Conspiracy: available at, <https://uoregon.kanopy.com/video/light-bulb-conspiracy>, or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWJC5ieUAe4>.
(2) Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse: <https://uoregon.kanopy.com/video/advertising-edge-apocalypse>.

Week Eight: Environmental Justice.

Monday, May 16.

1. Park, A. (2009). *Everybody’s Movement: Environmental Justice and Climate Change*. Environmental Support Center, Washington D.C., pp. 3-41.

Wednesday, May 18.

1. Mohai, P., D. Pellow, & J.T. Roberts. (2009). Environmental Justice. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 34: 405-430.

Film: A Fierce Green Fire: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_C8Tx3gdM5M
(can be rented for 3.99 USD)

Week Nine: What is to be Done? Part I.

Monday, May 23.

1. Greta Thunberg and the youth Climate Movement. Selected Speeches: “Almost Everything is Black and White,” “Prove Me Wrong,” “Our House is On Fire,” “I’m Too Young to Do This,” “A Strange World,” “Can You Hear Me?”.

Wednesday, May 25.

1. Betancourt, M. (2020). The effect of Cuban agroecology in mitigating the metabolic rift: A quantitative approach to Latin American food production. *Global Environmental Change*, 63: 1-10.

Films: (1) Greta Thunberg’s Interview: “I’m a realist. I see facts”:

<https://daserste.ndr.de/annwill/videos/Interview-mit-Greta-Thunberg-Ich-bin-Realistin-Ich-sehe-Fakten.interviewthunberg100.html>.

(2) Disruption: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWPj6CxtsGo>.

Week Ten: What is to be Done? Part II. Who speaks for Earth?

Monday, May 30.

1. Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene*, pp. 189-223.
2. Foster, Clark, and York, *The Ecological Rift*, pp. 423-42.

Wednesday, June 1.

No readings.

Film: Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, Episode 13, “Who Speaks for the Earth?”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp9lVYaMRbY>.

V. Accessibility

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

VI. Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct, plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating are not acceptable. All assignments for this course should be done independently without unauthorized resources or help from others. I expect all students to abide by the University Student Conduct Code (available at <https://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct>). If a student is uncertain about what constitutes academic misconduct, it is her/his obligation to ask for clarification. Students will not receive credit for any assignment violating these expectations.

VII. Classroom Behavior

All students will be treated with respect in this course. This course is supposed to spark lively discussions on a diverse set of viewpoints and social and environmental conditions. Everyone in the course is expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class, including in our email and Canvas interaction. If a hurtful or inappropriate comment is made, *the professor will handle it according to relevant course and University policy*. Students will not be allowed to eat in class (drinking plain water is acceptable). Students will not be allowed to look at their cell phones while in class, unless if due to a personal emergency or requested by the Instructor for class purposes. The Instructor strongly encourages the use of pen and paper, as opposed to electronic devices, to take notes while in class, although the use of electronic devices for this purpose is not forbidden.

VIII. Instructor's Reporter Status and other General Safety Concerns on Campus

The Instructor is a designated reporter/student-directed employee. For information about the Instructor's reporting obligations as an employee, please see [Employee Reporting Obligations](#) on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender-based violence, may seek information and resources at safe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, or investigations.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office/Office of Civil Rights Compliance (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help. The Instructor is also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

Regarding other general safety and emergency concerns on campus, please consult the University's Emergency Management and Continuity Office (<http://emc.uoregon.edu/>).

IX. Additional University and Course Policies

COVID-19 Policies: The Instructor is approaching this course with empathy and attentiveness to the challenges facing students during the extraordinary context of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19-related universities' policies that accord with these concerns and the University's broader response to the pandemic can be find here: <https://www.uoregon.edu/coronavirus>. Students should at all times be attentive to and abide by the University's COVID-19 policies. As of the starting date of our class, I highly encourage you all to wear KN95/N95 face coverings while in class, regardless of your vaccination status.

Academic Disruption: Course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change in the event of a COVID-19-related emergency and/or other campus emergency that disrupts anyone's participation in this course or the completion of other academic activities. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email and on Canvas. Especially during an academic disruption, students should immediately log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments. Students are also expected to continue coursework as outlined in this syllabus or other instructions on Canvas.