

Community, Environment, and Society

(SOC 304, CRN: 36139)

Spring 2020

Tuesday & Thursday, 4:00–5:20 pm

145 STB

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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 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 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.

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

III. Assessment

Assignment / Requirement	Due date and time	Points worth
1. Reading journal, part 1	April 23 by 4:00 pm (Week 4)	20
2. First Essay	April 30 by 4:00 pm (Week 5)	20
3. Reading journal, part 2	May 28 by 4:00 pm (Week 9)	20
4. Final Essay	June 4 by 4:00 pm (Week 10)	20
5. Final Quiz	June 10 by 11:59 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 4 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.

Grading Equivalents:

A+ 97.1– 100 points	C+ 77.5 – 79.9 points
A 93 – 97 points	C 73 – 77.4 points
A- 90 – 92.9 points	C- 70 – 72.9 points
B+ 87.5 – 89.9 points	D+ 67.5 – 69.9 points
B 83 – 87.4 points	D 63 – 67.4 points
B- 80 – 82.9 points	D- 60 – 62.9 points
	F 59.9 points or less

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

*All readings are available on Canvas in the Files section, 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.

Tuesday, March 31st.

Introduction. Overview of the class.

Thursday, April 2nd.

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.

Tuesday, April 7th.

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**).

Thursday, April 9th.

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.

Tuesday, April 14th.

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

Thursday, April 16th.

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.

Tuesday, April 21st.

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.

Thursday, April 23rd.

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

Film: No film this week.

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

Tuesday, April 28th.

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.

Thursday, April 30th.

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>.

Week Six: Cars and Cities.

Tuesday, May 5th.

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.”

Thursday, May 7th.

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.

Tuesday, May 12th.

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

Thursday, May 14th.

1. Dawson, M. (2005). *The Consumer Trap: Big Business Marketing in American Life*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 203 pp. Pages: 1-15.
2. Dawson, *Ibid.*: 132-54; 169-174.

Films: (1) The Lightbulb Conspiracy: available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdh7_PA8GZU, or <https://uoregon.kanopy.com/video/light-bulb-conspiracy>.
(2) Advertising in the age of the apocalypse: <https://uoregon.kanopy.com/video/advertising-edge-apocalypse>.

Week Eight: Environmental Justice.

Tuesday, May 19th.

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

Thursday, May 21st.

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=XP1KrZ4HFYU>.

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

Tuesday, May 26th.

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?"

Thursday, May 28th.

1. Altieri, M.A. & V.M. Toledo, (2011). The agroecological revolution in Latin America: rescuing nature, ensuring food sovereignty and empowering peasants. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(3): 587-612.

Films: (1) Greta Thunberg's Interview: "I'm a realist. I see facts": <https://daserste.ndr.de/annewill/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?

Tuesday, June 2nd.

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

Thursday, June 4th.

No readings.

Film: Carl Sagan's *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, Episode 13, "Who Speaks for the Earth?":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGds93obhpM>.

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 uoacc@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.