

McMaster University  
Department of Sociology  
Sociology 2TT3 - Environmental Sociology  
January 2018-April 2018

Thursday 1:30 PM - 4:20 PM  
LR Wilson (LRW) 1056

*Draft - This syllabus provides an overview of the course and assigned texts will not change. However, the course is under development and will be somewhat different than the description provided here. An updated syllabus will be distributed in class and via Avenue to Learn at the beginning of the Winter 2018 term.*

Course Instructor: Dr. Gregory Hooks

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Office Hours: Thursday 4:30 - 5:30 PM (or by appointment)

Office Phone Number: x23614

**Course Description:**

Environmental sociology examines social processes that refine, create, and indeed threaten our natural environment. By discussing issues of science and technology, popular culture, economics, urbanization, racial and gender relations, as well as social movements, this course will reach a broad understanding of environmental issues. More specifically, this course will investigate the relationships between various environmental and social problems, as well as the political ideologies, philosophies, and movements that have continually redefined how we think of nature, human impacts on the environment, and sustainability.

A primary goal for this course is to enable students to develop a better understanding of the environment and society in Canada as well as around the globe. Since our society not only influences us, but is also influenced by us, another objective will be to assist us to explain, understand, anticipate, and suggest solutions to environmental problems.

**Course Objectives:**

Through this course, students will:

- Gain familiarity with sociological theories of “nature” and the boundaries and relationships between human societies and the environment.
- Develop insight into the relationship between the environment and important social processes, including demographic phenomena, scientific/technological development, and social change.
- Understand how societies choose which environmental issues to focus on (and which to ignore).
- Identify and critically evaluate different social causes and consequences of both local and global environmental problems, as well as potential solutions.
- Develop and articulate their own understanding of society and the environment.

### Learning Outcomes for Sociology 2TT3:

This course addresses three University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see, [University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations](#)). The following table summarizes degree level expectations and associated learning outcomes.

Degree level expectation	Learning outcome
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	Develop and Strengthen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• general knowledge and understanding of environmental sociology.</li><li>• critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline.</li></ul>
Communication Skills	Improve the ability to communicate accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.
Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations.
Autonomy and Professional Capacity	Enhance the ability to working effectively with others.

### Course Texts:

- Nathan Young. 2015. *Environmental Sociology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis. 2015. *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional readings and other course materials will be made available through *Avenue to Learn*.

For any course, it is important you keep up with the readings and assignments. Given the central role that students play, it is even more important to do so in this course. To make a meaningful contribution to preparing and delivering mini-lectures, it will be essential for students to complete and be knowledgeable of assigned readings.

### Basis of Course Grade (tentative):

To allow all students to excel, a variety of evaluation formats will be employed.

- Two midterm exams - 50% of course grade in total (each exam is worth 25% of course grade): exams will include multiple choice and short essay questions.
- Participation - 17% of course grade in total, broken down as follows:
  - Weekly discussion postings (5% of course grade) - 5 over the course of the semester (1% for completion of each post;
  - Participation in class discussions (7% of course grade);
  - Presentation of one case study in class (5% of course grade).
- Self-reflection essay - 8% of course grade (details provided in class).
- Final exam - 25% of course grade: Choice of long essay exam or take-home research paper.

## Procedures and Rules

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. Academic dishonesty disrupts the foundation of trust and respect that this is essential for this class to succeed. There will be no tolerance for academic dishonesty. As instructor, I will *not* be lenient. If I discover academic dishonesty, I will assign a "grade of F for academic dishonesty".

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS:** Assignments will be (1) completed and turned in in class, or (2) submitted using Avenue to Learn. Assignments *cannot* be submitted by fax, attached to an email message or hand-delivered to the Sociology Department. The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.

**OPTIONS TO MAKE-UP QUIZZES:** On a weekly basis, the Department of Sociology invigilates make-up exams and quizzes for sociology courses (time and day to be announced). Students who miss a quiz can make up quizzes at the weekly invigilation organized by the Department of Sociology. Please note: (1) the make-up quiz will be short-essay only, and (2) students taking advantage of this make-up opportunity will not have the opportunity to improve grades through a group quiz submission (see above for a discussion of group quiz).

**MISSED CLASSES:** Students actively contribute to lecture preparation and delivery. The importance of student contributions is reflected in the class participation grade. Student who miss class will not have an opportunity to earn class participation points. The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR BEING INFORMED:** Students should check Avenue to Learn, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (e.g., class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA

job postings, etc.).

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

*MCMASTER EMAIL:* It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

*LATE ASSIGNMENTS:* You are expected to complete assignments on time. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class lecture on the due date. Late assignments will be subject to a penalty of 5% per day. The Penalty period *does include* weekends and holidays. Please make every effort to hand assignments in on the due date.

Please come see the instructor if you are experiencing any difficulty with the assignment or the material presented in class. Only hard copies will be graded.

Please note that only McMaster emails will be considered official. Emails from other addresses may disappear into the black hole of spam filters.

- You are expected to keep a back-up, hard copy of your assignment in case it is lost.
- Accommodation provision: Medical Certificate must state that you were ill on the due date of the assignment for a one-day extension. For a longer extension, you must prove that you were sick during a longer period or prove an exceptional, unforeseen circumstance.

### **Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

*GRADE APPEALS:* I take the marking of assignments very seriously, and will work diligently to be fair, consistent, and accurate. Nonetheless, mistakes and oversights occasionally happen. If you believe that to be the case, you must adhere to the following rules:

- If it is a mathematical error simply alert the instructor of the error;
- In the case of more substantive appeals, you must:
  - Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark.
  - Carefully re-read your assignment, all assignment guidelines and marking schemes and the grader's comments.
  - If you wish to appeal your assignment grade:
    - You must submit to the instructor a written explanation of why you

- think your mark should be altered. Please note statements such as “I need a higher grade to apply to X” are not compelling. P
  - Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up.
  - Attach to your written explanation your original assignment, including all of the original comments. Submit a hardcopy of the package to the instructor during office hours or after the lecture.
- You will receive a response via email or in person about your re-grade.

*ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND ELECTRONIC LEARNING TECHNOLOGY:* Email communication is rapid, convenient, and efficient—and you are encouraged to use it to enhance your learning and experience in the course. With that said, it is essential that you follow a few rules:

- Assignments will not be accepted via email. You must submit hard copies of your assignments or submit using Avenue to Learn.
- All emails must include the course code in the subject line.
- All emails should be signed with the student’s full name and student number.
- Treat emails as you would any other professional communication.
- All general questions about the course that are NOT addressed on the syllabus and course website should be asked in class. If you cannot figure something out, chances are your inquiry will be useful for the entire class.

Emails that do not follow these guidelines will not receive a response.

*CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:* Students are expected to arrive at class on time. Laptops are allowed in class and should be used for taking notes.

*COMING TO CLASS LATE AND LEAVING EARLY IS DISRUPTIVE. PLEASE DO NOT MAKE A HABIT OF DOING SO. AS THIS WILL IMPACT YOUR PARTICIPATION GRADE DIRECTLY, DOING SO WILL HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR COURSE GRADE.*

## Course Schedule (subject to adjustment as needed)

Week 1 (January 4) - Intro to class

- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 15 (Norgaard: Normalizing the Unthinkable: Climate Denial and Everyday Life)

Week 2 (January 11) - Introduction to environmental sociology

- Young - Chapter 1: Thinking about the Human-Nature Relationship
- Gould & Lewis - Introduction (Gould and Lewis: An Introduction to Environmental Sociology)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 2 (Barbosa: Theories in Environmental Sociology)

Week 3 (January 18) - A long view of humans and the environment (History)

- Young - Chapter 2: Learning from the Past: Taking a Long View of the Human-Nature Relationship
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 7 (Gould: Technological Change and the Environment)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 8 (Bates: Population, Demography, and the Environment)

- Week 4 (January 25) - Environmentalism and Social Movements
- Young - Chapter 3: Environmentalism and Its Opponents
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 16 (Brulle: U.S. Environmental Movements)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 17 (Obach: Labor and the Environment)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 18 (Lewis: Environmental Movements in the Global South)

Week 5 (February 1) - Social Constructionism

- Young - Chapter 4: The Great Debate: Social Constructionism vs. Environmental Realism
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 1 (Capek: The Social Construction of Nature: Of Computers, Butterflies, Dogs, and Trucks)

Week 6 (February 8) - Environmental realism

- Young - Chapter 5: Scarcity, Treadmills, and the Age of Peak
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 3 (Pellow: The State and Policy: Imperialism, Exclusion, and Ecological Violence as State Policy)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 4 (Schnaiberg: Labor Productivity and the Environment)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 5 (Campbell: The Role of the Global Media in Shaping What We Know About the Environment)

*Midterm Exam #1 - February 15 start of class*

Week 7 (February 15) - Environmental Risks and Ecological Modernization

- Young - Chapter 6: A Dangerous New World? The Risk Society Thesis
- Young - Chapter 7: Making Capitalism Work? Sustainability, Neoliberalism, and Ecological Modernization

Mid-term Recess (February 22) - class does not meet

Week 8 (March 1) - Globalization

- Young - Chapter 8: Globalization and the Environment
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 12 (Konefal & Hatanaka: Producing and Consuming Food: Justice and Sustainability in a Globalized World?)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 20 (Gould & Lewis: The Paradoxes of Sustainable Development: Focus on Ecotourism)  
- Environmental Inequality

Week 9 (March 8) - Science and technology

- Young - Chapter 9: Science and Knowledge
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 7 (Gould) - review
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 6 (York: The Science of Nature and the Nature of Science)

Week 10 (March 15) - Indigenous knowledge of the environment

- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 18 (Lewis: Environmental Movements in the Global South)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 19 (Tavakolian: Indigenous Cultures: Environmental Knowledge, Practice, and Rights)
- Kyle Whyte. Forthcoming. "Way Beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice," to appear in *Climate Futures: Reimagining Global Climate Justice* (University of California Press), available through Avenue to Learn.

*Self-Reflection Essay due March 22 (details provided in class)*

Week 11 (March 22) - Environmental Inequality

- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 10 (Macarenhas: Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 11 (McCormick: The Sociology of Environmental Health)
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 13 (Driscoll and Edwards: From Farms to Factories: The Environmental Consequences of Swine Industrialization in North Carolina)

*Midterm Exam #2 - March 29 start of class*

Week 12 (March 29) - Environmental Disasters

- Young - Chapter 10: Disaster, Shock, and Resilience
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 14 (Youngman: Understanding Disaster Vulnerability: Floods and Hurricanes)

Week 13 (April 5) - Humans, Nature and Sustainability

- Young - Chapter 11: Putting Humans and Nature Back Together
- Gould & Lewis - Lesson 9 (Bell: Energy, Society, and the Environment)
- Gould & Lewis - Conclusion: Unanswered Questions and the Future of Environmental Sociology

**Final Exam during the Registrar's Exam week.**  
**The exam is cumulative - covering the entire term (Sorry).**

*Good luck on your final exams!*