

**Environment and Society**  
**Sociology/Anthropology 4173/6173**  
Tues./Thurs. 9:30-10:45AM, McCool 225

**Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Schewe**

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**Office hours: Tues./Thurs. 11:00-12:00**

**Course Description**

Our lives and society are closely tied to the environment and natural resources, and through our daily actions we can both cause environmental degradation and support environmental solutions. In this course we will examine the ways in which our contemporary society depends on natural resources from around the world and the ways that social institutions create environmental problems and attempt to solve them.

**Course Objective**

When this course is completed you will have a deeper understanding of the relationship between society and the natural environment and be able to describe the major theoretical concepts in environmental sociology. You will be able to describe several major environmental concerns facing society and the strengths and shortcomings of proposed solutions. You will be able to critically evaluate others' writing and research and be more confident in your own writing.

**Course Overview**

**Our course can be divided into four major sections: Introduction, Causes, Consequences, and Responses.** I will lecture occasionally, but the class is primarily built around discussion.

We will begin the course with an introduction to some key concepts and theories that will be important throughout the course. This prologue will begin to answer the question: what is environmental sociology? We will introduce some of the major questions that are important to environmental sociology.

In **Causes** we will introduce the treadmills of production and consumption, examining the environmental reality of our high consumption society. We will also introduce key issues of population and the environment and talk about the role of government and market in the environment. We will investigate how social institutions shape the environment.

In **Consequences** we will explore how people understand the environment and natural resources and the social consequences of environmental problems. We will answer questions such as: what is nature? Why are environmental problems not evenly distributed? We will investigate how the environment shapes society.

In **Responses**, we will explore solutions to environmental problems and ways in which our society can become more ecologically balanced. We will introduce a variety of different proposed solutions such as sustainable development and evaluate them based on our new knowledge.

## Required Readings

The following books are required and can be purchased at the university bookstore:

Fruedenberg, William R., Robert Grambling, Shirley Laska, and Kai Erikson. 2009. *Catastrophe in the Making: The Engineering of Katrina and the Disasters of Tomorrow*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Gould, Kenneth A., and Tammy L. Lewis. 2009. *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Freudenberg, William R., and Robert Grambling. 2011. *Blowout in the Gulf: the BP Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Energy in America*. Boston: MIT Press.

*(There is also a less expensive Kindle version of this book available through Amazon.com. You do not need to have a Kindle (e-reader) to read the book, there are many free applications that will allow you to read it on a computer.)*

Additional readings will be posted on the course website (MyCourses) and can be downloaded for reading and printing.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Careful reading and participation are mandatory for this course. Classroom time will primarily focus on discussion of the readings supplemented by lectures and presentations. Because the course is discussion-based, it is absolutely necessary for you to complete the readings each week and be prepared to discuss them. Paper assignments, quizzes, and presentations will complement the readings and discussion.

### Grades will be assessed as follows:

#### Undergraduate students:

- Participation (10%)
- Class Discussion Leader (10%)
- Reading Discussion Papers (20%; 5% each)
- “My Footprint Diary” Activity (20%)
- Quiz (10%)
- Final paper (30%)
  - Rough draft and Peer Review (5%)
  - Final draft (25%)

#### Graduate students:

- Participation (5%)
- Class Discussion Leader (10%; 5% each)
- Reading Discussion Papers (25%; 5% each)
- “My Footprint Diary” Activity (20%)
- Quiz (5%)
- Final paper (35%)
  - Rough draft and Peer Review (5%)
  - Final draft (30%)

## Additional Details About Assignments

**Participation:** Attendance and participation in class is mandatory. Each student will be given one excused absence that will not affect his/her grade. After one absence, each additional absence will begin to reduce the participation portion of your grade by one letter grade. Classroom participation will be based on your active participation in discussion through answering “reading checks” at the start of class, asking questions, offering insights from the readings, or other discussion of course content. If you are shy or nervous in the classroom, you can supplement your participation through the MyCourses discussion board.

**Reading Checks:** We will begin each class with a brief written activity to verify that you have completed the assigned readings and to spur discussion. These reading checks will constitute 50% of your participation grade.

**Class Discussion Leader:** One time during the semester (*two times for graduate students*) you will be responsible for leading class discussion. You should prepare a short response to the readings and a series of discussion questions. You can also bring in additional materials, an activity, or multimedia materials that are appropriate. Please discuss these with me prior to the class. You can use the reading response papers from other students for inspiration.

**Reading Response Papers:** Four times (*five times for graduate students*) during the semester you must write a short (1-2 page single spaced) response to the day’s assigned readings. You must complete one reading response paper during each section of the course (i.e. introduction, causes, consequences, and the responses) to make sure that you are engaging with the readings throughout the entire course. The response paper should summarize the reading and key points, offer a critical response and comment on the reading, and two or three points to stimulate discussion. This must be posted to MyCourses by noon the day before the class discussion of the reading.

**Tree Survey Service Learning Activity:** For this extra credit activity, we will be working with the Student Forestry Association and the Tree Campus USA committee to help conduct a tree survey on the MSU campus. Surveying the campus trees will provide vital data for management, protection, and planning. The date for these activities is TBD, based on weather and availability.

**“My Footprint Diary” Activity:** For this short paper (3-4 pages double spaced) you can choose one of two options. For the first, you can go “car free” for three days and write a reflection on your experience and the impact of your fossil fuel use. For the second, you can choose a favorite possession/belonging and write a reflection on the item, its production, and its environmental impacts. For each of the activities, remember to relate it to the course readings and material.

**Quiz:** There will be one short quiz administered during the semester to test knowledge of basic course concepts. The quiz will be a combination of short answer and essay questions, to be completed during class.

**Research Paper:** You will develop a 6-8 page (*12-15 pages for graduate students*) (double spaced) research paper on a topic related to course material. The paper should be formatted in American Sociological Association style. Your evaluation will include a rough draft and peer review. You will also be graded on a final paper draft.

## Late Policy

The reading response papers must be submitted via MyCourses by **noon the day prior to class discussion of the readings**. Late reading response assignments will not be accepted and you will be required to submit another reading response for a future class date. All portions of the paper assignment must be completed by their due dates. For each day that a paper assignment is late I will subtract 10 points from the assignment's grade.

## Academic Misconduct and Honor Code

**Academic misconduct will not be tolerated.** Plagiarism is never the right choice. Please read the University policies dealing with plagiarism and understand that plagiarism includes both copying the exact wording from someone else and also using an author's ideas without giving a citation. You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. If you have questions about how to cite a source, understanding what plagiarism is, or how to avoid plagiarism, please ask me for help. Learning how to build up your own ideas and to combine them with good citations is an important skill, and I want to help you develop that skill.

All students enrolled in this course must review, understand, and sign the Mississippi State University Honor Code. The Honor Code declares:

*"On my honor, as a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do."*

I will report any academic misconduct, cheating, or plagiarism as an Honor Code violation and pursue charges according to University policy.

## TurnItIn.com

All assignments will be evaluated using TurnItIn.com to check for instances of plagiarism or other cheating. I encourage you to "pre-check" your work yourself using TurnItIn so that you can be sure you have not inaccurately cited or used existing work.

## Accommodations

Please let me know if you have a disability or special needs that I should be aware of. Mississippi State University adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this act due to a disability, contact the Student Support Services division within Student Affairs.

## Conduct Ground Rules

This class will involve many debates and discussions. We will not always all agree, and that is fine, but it is important for each of us to be respectful and appropriate. If you ever feel uncomfortable with comments from another student or from me, please let me know as soon as possible and we will find a solution. **I absolutely do not tolerate bullying or bigotry of any kind in my classroom.** Racial, ethnic, gender, religious, sexual orientation, or other slurs or derogatory language will result in you being asked to leave class immediately and will be resolved according to the University

guidelines for resolution of discrimination and harassment.

Sexual harassment is against university policy. If you feel you have been sexually harassed, you may contact the Office of Diversity and Equity Programs to understand your rights: 325-2493.

## Technology

Laptops, cell phones, recording devices, and/or tablets will not be allowed during class unless they are needed for a documented learning disability. If you are using an electronic version of a reading, you must discuss this with me in advance.

## MyCourses

This class will rely heavily on the MyCourses system for readings and assignments. Students are expected to be familiar with the MyCourses system and any questions should be directed to the ITS Help Desk: (662) 325-0631. You are responsible for meeting all deadlines for assignments through MyCourses and you should allow adequate time for trouble-shooting software or system issues. **I will not accept technology-related problems as an excuse for late or incomplete work.** If you have trouble accessing MyCourses through the MyState system, use the direct MyCourses link: [mycourses.msstate.edu](http://mycourses.msstate.edu)

## Email Policy

Email to instructors should be polite and appropriate. Please include a clear topic in the subject line, a proper greeting, and sign the message with your complete name. Please take the time to proofread your email and make sure that it is suitable for a professor. You should allow 24 hours for a response to messages, and I will answer email during normal weekday business hours. Email is the most appropriate way to reach me with brief questions, expected absences, and technical questions. For significant substantive questions about course material I encourage you to attend my office hours. If email does not adhere to these standards, I reserve the right not to respond.

All important course correspondence will be delivered via your university email. You are responsible for checking your email regularly for updates. All email to the instructor should come from your official university email.

## Resources

**Class email list:** This email list can be used to contact other students from your class to ask questions, set up study groups, share information, etc. Be advised that I also get all of these emails also, so please keep them appropriate.

**The Writing Center:** The writing center offers great classes and one-on-one meetings to help you with any kind of writing. Call 325-1045 or go to <http://www.writingcenter.msstate.edu/> for more information.

**Student Support Services:** If you have, or think you might have, a special need that requires accommodations, Student Support Services can offer great help. Call 325-3335 or go to <http://www.sss.msstate.edu/> for more information. Please also let me know.

**Counseling Services:** Sometimes we all need a little extra help. If you ever want to talk to someone about your health, stress, depression, or problems, the University offers great counseling services. Please call 325-209 or go to <http://www.health.msstate.edu/scs/> for more information.

**Sexual Assault Services:** If you have been sexually assaulted or if you have questions concerning sexual assault or abuse, Sexual Assault Services offers information and support. Please call 325-3333 or go to <http://www.health.msstate.edu/sas/> for more information.

**Technology Help Desk:** The ITS Help Desk can help you solve many computing problems, including help with the MyCourses system. Please call 325-0631 or email [helpdesk@msstate.edu](mailto:helpdesk@msstate.edu) for assistance.

### Key Dates:

January 27	Last day for Reading Response Paper 1
February 13	My Footprint Diary Due
February 24	Last day for Reading Response Paper 2
February 27	Optional Movie Night
March 10-14	Spring Break
March 20	Optional Farm Tour
March 27	Quiz
April 2	Last day for Reading Response Paper 3
April 15	Guest Lecture: Dr. Joseph Witt
April 23	Last day for Reading Response Papers 4 & 5
April 29	Rough Draft Due, Peer Review in Class
May 5	by 11AM, Final Paper Due

## Course Outline

**Readings must be completed BEFORE the date indicated.**

*\*Readings posted on MyCourses are highlighted with an asterisk*

	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	GRAD READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
1	14-Jan	Course Overview	Twenty Lessons (chapter 1) Twenty Lessons (chapter 3)		
	16-Jan	"Natural" Disaster	Twenty Lessons (chapter 13) Catastrophe (pg. 3-35)	*Freudenburg et al. 2008	
	21-Jan	Growth Machine Theory	Catastrophe (pg. 55-89)	*Molotch 1976	
	23-Jan	Unexpected? Consequences	Catastrophe (pg. 111-134, 147-161)		
	28-Jan	Environmental Sociology Theory	*Carson 1962 *Carolan 2013 *Buttel et al. 2002	*Buttel and Field 2002 (6) *Foster 1999	Final day for Reading Response 1
2	30-Jan	Modern Consumption	*Bell 2012 *Twitchell 2000	*Ritzer 2005	
	4-Feb	The Treadmill of Production	Twenty Lessons (33-35, chapter 5) *Schnaiberg and Gould 1994 (11)	*Gould et al. 2004	
	6-Feb	Population and the Environment	Twenty Lessons (chapter 9) *Hartmann 1995 *Planet Money: A Bet on the Future of Humanity podcast (14)	*Ehrlich 1968	
	11-Feb	Fisheries Management	*Vollan and Ostrom 2010	*Li et al 2010	
	13-Feb	Science, Policy, and the Environment	Twenty Lessons (chapter 7) *Sarewitz 2004		"My Footprint Diary" Due
	18-Feb	Risk and Oil Development	Blowout (pg. 2-25, 33-51)		
	20-Feb	Risk, Oil Development, and Gov't Regulation	Blowout (pg. 51-61, 97-101, 109-112, 178-189)		
	25-Feb	Human-Wildlife Interactions	*From Forest to Food Bank (web link) *Wildlife Professional	*Knezevic 2009	Final Day for Reading Response 2
3	27-Feb	Fracking and Risk	*Davis 2012 *This American Life: Game Changer podcast (24)	*Fisk 2013 (25)	Optional Movie Night
	4-Mar	Environmental Racism	*Pellow 2002 *Bell 2012B *Principles of Environmental Justice 1991		

	6-Mar	Environmental Justice and Health	Twenty Lessons (chapter 10) Twenty Lessons (chapter 11) *Sengupta 2008	*Shriver and Kennedy 2005	
	11-Mar	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	
	13-Mar	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	
	18-Mar	Agriculture and the Environment	Twenty Lessons (chapter 12) *Bell 2004	*Harrison 2008	
	20-Mar	Agriculture and the Environment (part two)	*Jackson 2002 *Carolan 2011	*Kinchy 2012	Optional Farm Tour
	25-Mar	Social Construction of Nature	*Cronon 1995 *Greider and Garkovich 1994	*Stedman 2011	
	27-Mar	Quiz			Quiz
	1-Apr	Land Use Conflicts	*Pfeffer et al. 2001 *Hayes and Clendenning 2005		
	3-Apr	Climate Change and Global Inequality	Twenty Lessons (chapter 14) *Denton 2002 *This American Life: Climate Changes, People Don't podcast (42)	*Stuart et al. 2012	Final Day for Reading Response 3
4	8-Apr	Water and Inequality	*Pearce 2007 (44)	*Liu and Wang 2012	
	10-Apr	American Environmental Movements	Twenty Lessons (chapter 15)	*Gottlieb 1993	
	15-Apr	The Land Ethic	*Leopold 1949	*Nash 1989	Guest Lecture: Dr. Joseph Witt
	17-Apr	Sustainable Development, Environmental Economics and Market Solutions	Twenty Lessons (chapter 19) *Revell 2008 *Planet Money: Will Economic Growth Destroy the Planet? Podcast (50)	*Hopwood et al. 2005 *Mariola 2011	
	22-Apr	Radical Responses	*Lange 1990 *Talk of the Nation: No Impact Man podcast (54)		
	24-Apr	International and Indigenous Responses	Twenty Lessons (chapter 17) *Tar Sands		Final Day for Reading Response 4 & 5 MATT FREEMAN
	29-Apr	Peer Review			Rough Draft Due and Peer Review
	5-May	Final Paper Due	By 11 AM		Final Paper Due