

Introduction to Social Science Perspectives on Environmental Issues

Dr. April Karen Baptiste

ENST 101: Social Science Perspectives on Environmental Issues

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Office Hours: TR 11.15 am to 12.05 pm or by appointment
Class Location and Time: Wynn B31, TR 9.55 -11.10 am

Course Overview

This is an introductory course to the frameworks used by social scientists when analyzing environmental issues. All environmental issues have social as well as physical aspects: humans affect the environment through their individual and group actions, and the environment affects humans as individuals and as members of various groups. The goal of this course is to allow students to think analytically about environmental issues using a variety of perspectives. This semester we will use global climate change as a focal issue, but other environmental issues will also be discussed briefly.

The course seeks to address a number of broad questions:

1. Why are environmental issues important?
2. How do social scientists address environmental issues?
3. What are the different disciplines that are considered “social science” and how do they differ in comparison to each other?
4. What are the main methods used to address environmental issues in the social sciences?

Required Readings

In this course we will be taking an interdisciplinary approach to environmental issues as such there will be no one text book that provides such a holistic perspective. As such we will be using a number of peer-reviewed articles and book chapters which *will be posted on Moodle*.

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to develop in students an interdisciplinary approach to environmental problems by:

1. Providing a clear understanding of what is a social science
2. Understanding the various disciplines within the social science and how they relate to each other
3. Develop a critical analysis of how environmental issues are addressed by each of the various social science frames
4. Understand the methodological principles used within social science research of environmental issues
5. Present clearly your ideas about environmental issues from a social science perspective to an audience

Course Assignments

ALL assignments must be completed on or before the due date. NO LATE assignments will be accepted unless in dire circumstances in which case it is the student's responsibility to speak with the instructor prior to the due date to work out whether extensions will be given.

List of Assignments

Individual Work

Class Participation

Blue Book quizzes (voluntary for extra credit)

Online Discussions

In class exams (2)

Take home writing assignments (3) – One ungraded

Final Exam

Group Work

Poster Proposal

Poster Draft

Peer Review of posters

Final Poster

Poster Presentation

Academic Policies

Students with disabilities: Students who will need special arrangements or consideration due to documented disabilities should speak with me early in the semester. They should also consult with Lynn Waldman, Director of Academic Program Support and Disability Services, 315-228-7375 in the Center for Learning, Teaching, and Research concerning disability concerns and appropriate accommodations.

Religious Holidays: This syllabus tries to comply with Colgate Holiday Policy. If there are any conflicts please discuss with me very early in the semester so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Academic Honor Code: Colgate has a very strong Academic Honor Code to which all students are subjected and will apply to all assignments both graded and ungraded. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will be reported to the fullest extent.

Writing Center: The Writing Center is a great resource and while some students may have acceptable writing skills there is always room for improvement particularly within the academic setting. Please use this resource as often as possible particularly for your take home assignments in order to improve the quality of assignments that are turned in. This will greatly improve your work and help to improve your writing skills.

Library: This course has a research component to it to allow students to develop and refine their research skills. Particularly with your poster assignments you will need to perform and report a sophisticated level of findings that goes beyond a simple internet search. Please use the library and its staff to help in this regard. There is a large number of electronic and print media that will help in developing quality research throughout the semester.

Course Expectations

Attendance policy: Attendance is not mandatory but absences will reduce the number of opportunities for quality contributions to class participation, as such students are advised that missing more than three (3) sessions will result in a reduction of your class participation grade.

Class Participation:

- a. Your class participation grade will be determined by the extent to which you are present and engaged in the class. Be prepared, on-time and take an active and critical role in the class discussions.
- b. There are several dimensions to the participation grade: presence, preparation and participation

Presence: Learning is a cumulative process and as such your presence is key to all the class sessions. It is also strongly recommended that students attend ENST Brown Bag Luncheons as this aids with critical thinking development. As courtesy to all students please:

- Arrive on time
- Turn off cell phones and store them
- Avoid laptops
- No texting, twittering, facebooking or the like
- No noisy food ☺
- Be prepared to spend entire class period in the classroom

Excused Absences: I will consider these on a case by case basis once documentation in a written form is provided by an Academic Dean, Coach or appropriate administrative source. Student athletes in season must provide a list of schedule and absences signed by your coach in the 1st week of the semester. It is the student's responsibility to meet with me to discuss implications of class absences.

Preparation: You are expected to read all text prior to each session. This will allow you to be able to contribute to class discussions. In cases where necessary I will give guidance questions (these will not be for every reading, nor very frequent). These are not provided as a means for you to skim the reading and look for answers to these questions but rather to guide you to examine the text more carefully. When preparing for class, avoid last minute readings. One method that has worked for me in the past has been to read and discuss the material in groups prior to the class session. This has proven to be very helpful. Make notes of key points and concepts while reading. Also make note of questions of things that may not be clear for class discussions. Try to make connections between what you are reading and your class project as well as personal experiences. These are also welcomed during class discussion as it brings theory into practice.

Participation: We are all learners and we can learn from each other. To facilitate this, we would respectfully listen to each person's point of view and if the need arises challenge respectfully each other's view. If a person feels he/she will have difficulty speaking in class for any reason, please see me within the first 2 weeks of classes.

Critical Thinking: This is the ability to consider multiple perspectives on environmental issues/problems and think about them in ways that make connections to life experiences, theory and larger current events. It is a process of developing questions that challenge our assumptions and beliefs and avoid simplistic answers. These are important to help develop critical thinking.

Blue Book Quiz: This gives students an opportunity for extra credit. It is voluntary and will be given at the beginning of class. I will be in class 5-10 minutes with the quiz. The earlier you arrive the more time you have to complete the quiz. They are generally 10-15 minutes long and will be based on readings explicitly. They will address important concepts which may not be covered in class discussions. These will be kept in a folder and will be used by my discretion at the end of the semester.

Online Discussions

Online discussions are **mandatory** for all students. This form of participation helps to also capture those students who may not always be vocal during class discussions. The media is to be used to get a sense of the thoughts of your peers and to have a conversation about the topic outside of the classroom setting. Each student will be required to post a response to the question of the day.

Questions

The question will be generated by one of your peers (**discussion leaders**) who will meet with me to discuss the question’s content before posting. The question will focus not only on the readings but can also incorporate class discussions. These questions must be submitted **by 9:00 PM of the day**. Questions will be graded on the following rubric:

Grading Criteria	A	B	C
Question clear and concise	X	X	X
Provokes students to pry into to assigned readings	X	X	
Provokes connections to personal experiences and class discussions where relevant	X		
Be error free	X	X	X

Responses

Responses are then due within **27 hours i.e. 11.59 pm the next day**. Each student is required to respond to one of the question(s) posted. There is a limit of relatively 8 responses per question The response can either be directly to the question or it can be in relation to a comment(s) that were made earlier in the thread. Students should remember that even though this is a discussion there should be an avoidance of making unsubstantiated statements by linking to some of the literature where possible to support their opinions. Students should also try to tie in their responses to either personal experiences or real world examples where possible. Students are asked to put some thought into their responses, as these would also be graded based on the following rubric:

Grading Criteria	A	B	C
Answer question clearly and concisely	X	X	X
Make explicit connections to assigned readings	X	X	
Make explicit connections to personal experiences and class discussions where relevant	X	X	
Quote selectively and judiciously	X		
Be error free	X	X	X

Group Poster Projects: Students would form teams (2-3) and each group would work on a placed-based analysis, using frameworks from the course to present an environmental problem/issue facing a vulnerable or at-risk community. Each group would be required to prepare a proposal on the desired topic to be graded and approved by the instructor. Each group is then required to present their project in the form of a poster in the last week of classes.

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There are several layers to this poster project and students are expected to work on these throughout the semester in order to produce a high quality of work. The following is a break down of the timeline and assignments involved for this poster project.

Important Poster Project Deadlines

Date	Major Milestone
Sept 9 th :	Groups are to be submitted
Sept 14 th :	Project topic submissions and Social Science Frameworks will be assigned to groups
Sept 16 st :	In class library session on doing research for peer reviewed articles, APA citation style and annotated bibliography
Oct 14 th :	Project proposal including research question or hypothesis and annotated bibliography with 5 peer reviewed sources
Oct 21 st :	In class library session on creating a poster
Oct 28 th :	1 st Draft of poster – to be reviewed by library staff and instructor
Nov 2 nd :	Feedback provided on 1 st draft
Nov 23 rd :	In class session of peer reviews of 2 nd draft of posters
Nov 30 th	Submit final draft of poster (submit electronically through dropbox)
Dec 7, 9:	In class presentations of poster

Written Assignments: These should be type written, 12 pt, Times or Times New Roman font, 1inch margins, double-spaced. American Psychological Association (APA) style should be used when referencing. All written assignments that are take home must use proper referencing. All assignments will be collected at the beginning of class – any assignment that is given after this will be considered late. **It is the student’s responsibility to give in assignments at the beginning of class.**

In class exams: These exams will test a students understanding of materials from readings and from class discussions. Questions will test students’ regurgitation abilities but it will also test lower level critical thinking given the time limits involved.

Final Exam Policy: This will be an in class exam.

Grading

Final exam	20%
Writing Assignments (2)	25%
In class exams (2)	25%
Vulnerable/At Risk Poster Project	
Proposal	5%
Final Poster	5%
Poster Presentation	5%
Online Discussion questions and responses	10%
Class Participation	5%
Blue Book Quizzes (extra credit)	

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Introduction

Syllabus Review

Introductory class – Getting to know each other

Endangered Earth Update: Is the Planet on the Back Burner?

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,972019-1,00.html>

Please read all 4 pages of this article

How Important are environmental Issues?

<http://www.publicagenda.org/red-flags/how-important-are-environmental-issues>

Please read all the tabs on the left associated with this article.

Gallup Poll – Jeffrey Jones: Oil Spill alters view on environmental protection

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/137882/Oil-Spill-Alters-Views-Environmental-Protection.aspx>

Recommended Readings

Oil Drilling, Disaster and Denial

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/03/opinion/03krugman.html?scp=5&sq=environmental+problems&st=nyt>

Week 2

Social Science Frames

What is the environment?

Charles Harper. Environmental and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues, Fourth Edition. Prentice Hall: New Jersey pg. 1-22

Week 3

Social Science Frames

How do we study environmental problems?

Perry and Perry Chapter 1

Charles Harper. Environmental and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues, Fourth Edition. Prentice Hall: New Jersey pg. 22-41

Week 4

Climate Change Introduction

TED Talk – 2009: Update on the Climate Crisis

Gore. (2007) <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/01/opinion/01gore.html>

Kristoff. (2007) http://select.nytimes.com/2007/08/16/opinion/16kristof.html?_r=1

Carter. (2007). *The Myth of Dangerous Human Induced Climate Change*.
<http://members.iinet.net.au/~glrmc/2007%2005-03%20AusIMM%20corrected.pdf>

IPCC. (2007). Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M.Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.

IPCC. (2007). Impacts, Assessment and Vulnerability: Summary Individual regions. In: *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M.Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.