

Course Syllabus:
Sociology of the Environment¹
Section: 0177248²

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Course meeting time: Wed. 1-1:50, Fri. 12-1:50 Course location: A105

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course examines how our culture, social institutions and day-to-day interaction affect the environment—in short, how society creates and defines environmental problems. It also examines how environmental problems, in turn, affect society. Although these issues will be studied from a number of perspectives (anthropological, historical, demographic and biological), the perspectives and methods of sociologists will predominate.

Objectives including the following:

1. Student understanding of the sociological outlook on environmental problems and its major terms and concepts.
2. Student familiarity with the major theoretical perspectives and methodologies employed in the sociological study of environmental problems.
3. Student awareness of a range of environmental problems and knowledge of how to access information about these and related concerns.
4. Student cooperation in learning course content and skills.
5. Development of students' critical reasoning skills to evaluate information regarding environmental issues.
6. Student ability to articulate sociological awareness and understanding of facts, both verbally and in writing, and to do so in a cooperative, respectful and socially responsible way
7. Student commitment to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the course to be active participants in the classroom and outside world.

TEXTS:

Main texts: *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*, Michael Mayerfield Bell. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press

Supplementary readings: *Environmental Justice: A Reference Handbook*, David E. Newton. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CILO (online)

Other supplementary readings: TBA

¹ See also *Master Syllabus* on KCC website.

² Synonym number

GRADING:

Grade cut-offs:

A+ 97	B+ 87	C+ 77	D+ 67	F >60
A 93	B 83	C 73	D 63	
A- 90	B- 80	C- 70	D- 60	

Semester grade:

Students' grades on all course work will be calculated into a percentage with attendance points subtracted (if applicable—see attendance policy), and participation-intangibles points added or subtracted for the final course percentage.³ Semester grades will then be given according to the cutoffs listed above.

Exception: Scores above 97 will, for the semester grade, confer an A. Kirkwood does not give or recognize the A+.

Components:

Quizzes:	~35%	Exams:	~35%
Assignments Portfolio, Research Report:			~20%
Service Project & Write-up:			~10%
Participation-Intangibles: ⁴			0-4 points
Other/Miscellaneous:			Up to 5%

Quizzes and exams: Quizzes are generally “objective” (multiple choice, true/false, matching, etc.); exams are usually a mixture of objective, short answer and essay.

Make-up policy:

Quizzes: A student usually forfeits a missed quiz but I will allow you to take *one* quiz late during the semester if the reason for missing is legitimate. Students must also arrive on time on quiz days. Failure to do so may disqualify you from taking the quiz during that class period.

The ability to “make up” a quiz (i.e., take it late) in cases of lateness or absence must be negotiated with the instructor. It is the student’s responsibility to approach the instructor about his or her desire to take a quiz late and to do so promptly (see note below). If the reason for lateness or absence is not legitimate and/or if a student has already taken a quiz outside of the designated time, he or she will have to forfeit the quiz in question (and take a zero on that quiz). Students may not make up low quiz grades.

Exams: A mid-term exam grade of less than C can be made up within one week after a student receives the grade.⁵

The process for lateness and absence on an exam day is similar to that for quizzes. After a certain point in the class period on an exam day, a late student will not be allowed to take

³ Participation and other less "objective" factors are converted into negative or positive points (or no points) and then factored in. See below.

⁴ Not a formal grade but takes the form of points added to semester total in cases of exceptional effort. See below.

⁵ Typically the make-up score is averaged with the original score to determine the total mid-term exam grade.

the exam with the rest of the class and must negotiate with the instructor about whether and when he or she can do so. As with quizzes, it is the student's responsibility to approach the instructor about his or her desire to make up an exam and to do so promptly (see note below). The reason for lateness or absence must be legitimate in order for the student to take the exam outside the designated time.

Note: Prompt notification of the need for an absence from a quiz or exam is one piece of evidence as to its legitimacy. Prompt notification of an absence and the desire to take a quiz or exam late is, therefore, required of anyone wishing to do so. Ideally, students should notify me of the need for absence before or on the day of the missed exam or quiz. Students must arrange to take a quiz or exam late within the week of its designated time. In the case of a make-up to compensate for a low mid-term exam grade, students must notify me of the desire to do the make-up within the week of receiving the original grade.

Assignments and in-class work: More information will be provided about the following but, briefly, there are several major types of assignments and in-class work that may be required in this course. These are portfolio entries, in-class worksheets and spot-writing assignments. Students will receive written descriptions of and guidelines for the portfolio assignments. In-class worksheets will be accompanied by verbal or written instructions each time they are distributed. Generally speaking, these are not graded but may be assigned credit as an attendance aid if I deem this to be necessary. Unannounced, in-class spot-writing assignments may be given periodically throughout the term. These may be graded or assigned credit (factored into some component of the semester grade) and cannot be made up.

Participation-intangibles does not assume the form of a letter grade but is factored in terms of negative or positive points added to the semester grade. It may include intangible factors such as effort and attitude. In most cases, credit for participation-intangibles affects one's grade by only a few percentage points but this can represent a substantial effect on your overall semester grade.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY:

In part because of the discussion-oriented format of this course, I consider student attendance vitally important to its success—and yours.⁶ Excessive absences *will* affect grades. Missing class time means missing a major component of the course rendering the reason for the absence relatively unimportant. Generally, **after five absences (three of which may be unexcused) a student's semester grade will be docked (2% for each absence)**. After a certain point this can drag an otherwise passing student into failing range. When truly emergency circumstances lead a student to go beyond the limit the student should have a doctor's excuse or other written documentation⁷ to account for the absences.

Unless indicated otherwise, any extra-credit assignment options—should they become available—are open only to those with good attendance records (fewer than five absences) and will be accepted only after all outstanding (late) work is submitted.

⁶ While it may be possible to do quite well on quizzes, tests and assignments in the class without attending, one who pursues this avenue is missing out on the in-class activities that help one become fully rounded sociologically.

⁷ Documentation for absences must be submitted by the student, in *hard copy*, for the instructor to keep. Email, phone or verbal notification will *not* suffice.

It is the student's responsibility to do whatever is necessary to get caught up in the wake of an absence. This may involve one or more of the following: discussing material that was missed with the instructor, getting notes from classmates, finding out from classmates and/or the instructor what assignments were given during the absence.

I consider leaving class early to be in the same vein as absences since students miss vital material when this is done. Each instance of leaving early will, therefore, be treated as a partial absence.

Lateness detracts from the optimum learning of all and should be avoided. Consistent lateness will be factored negatively into the student's participation grade. As noted above, lateness on a quiz/exam day may disqualify a student from taking the quiz/exam.

PREPARATION:

Students are expected to have done assigned readings the day each is discussed in class (i.e., the day it is listed on the syllabus). Preparation is obviously reflected in quiz and exam performance but will also factor into one's participation grade.

Students are expected to have a slender paper or plastic binder for the portfolio (not a three-ring binder which is too bulky) which will be handed in at the end of the term.

Quizzes and exams will require a #2 pencil. *Always* keep one handy. Students should bring readings relevant to a day's lesson with them to class.

OTHER BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS:

Students should be actively but respectfully involved in course activities and discussions. Verbal participation is an expectation of the course. Listening to others and aiding discussion, rather than dominating it, are equally important.

I will generally return student written work once and only once. If a student is absent on the day work is returned, it is his or her responsibility to retrieve the work outside of class time. Generally, students who have missed the distribution of their work should retrieve it from me during my office hours.

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY AND CONTACT:

Office hours and meetings with students: though I aspire to the ideal of complete availability to students, in practice I cannot guarantee an audience with students outside of my office hours. I am obligated to drop what I'm doing during my office hours to meet with you but cannot make the same promise outside that time. The best way of ensuring a meeting outside of office hours is to arrange such a meeting ahead of time. I will try to accommodate such meetings as best I can but I ask that students attempt such meetings only if truly necessary.

Phone contact: Much can be accomplished through a telephone call that cannot be done through other means of contact (I feel more comfortable discuss specific grade issues by phone than by email for example). Most often, though, I prefer to communicate with you about course issues via email rather than by phone (albeit in a way that does not disclose grade information). If you have an urgent issue to discuss with me by phone, I consider it primarily your responsibility to contact me rather than vice-versa. I am generally not reachable by any phone other than the one in my office (887-3631).

E-mail: I encourage contact by email and will try to respond to your email messages promptly. I check my email at least daily during the week. I am less likely to respond to emails on weekends and holidays. As a courtesy to me as your instructor, I ask that, when you wish to have me contact you by email, *you* initiate that contact by writing to me first and allow me to respond. This is faster and easier than giving me your email address and expecting me to type it out and initiate the contact.⁸

Note: Always indicate your class and section when contacting me by phone or email. I generally discourage submitting homework by email because of the inconvenience and time-consumption involved in opening and printing it. I consider this to be the student's responsibility.

DROPPING:

The last day to drop the course is 75% through the term. Consult the Course Schedule (to be distributed) for the exact date of the drop deadline. Students dropping the course during the first two weeks of the term will receive a partial or full tuition refund. For detailed discussion of drop dates and policies see the student handbook.

DISABILITY:

Students who require accommodation for a disability must file an accommodation application with the Learning Services office and should do so well *before* the accommodation is needed. A written plan of accommodation will be constructed by the office and presented to the instructor. This plan is required for any accommodation sought by the affected student. Please provide me with a copy of your accommodation to keep on file.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

According to Webster, to plagiarize is "to steal or pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own ...to use created productions without crediting the source ...to commit literary theft ...to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source."

From the section of the Kirkwood Student Handbook on plagiarism:

Kirkwood Community College believes in the value of independent, honest work on the part of its students. Students are expected to conduct themselves with scholarly integrity. Cheating and plagiarism are serious acts of misconduct and shall be subject to disciplinary action, including possible expulsion from the college. Each confirmed incident of cheating or plagiarism will be reported by the instructor to the Associate Dean or Director who will report it to the Dean, Student Development.

The handbook goes on to say that in cases of plagiarism the instructor can assign a failing grade to the assignment in which plagiarism occurs. A second case of plagiarism can result in the student failing the course as a whole. A third case may result in expulsion from the college. Students should consult the handbook for more information.

⁸ I generally do not communicate specific grade information by email. Such communication is insecure and would become too time-consuming if done regularly.

To avoid a charge of plagiarism the college suggests the following:

Kirkwood students are responsible for authenticating any assignment submitted to an instructor. If asked, you must be able to produce proof that the assignment you submit is actually your own work. Therefore, Kirkwood recommends that you engage in a verifiable working process on assignments.

The college suggests that you keep copies of all drafts of your work, make photocopies of research materials, write summaries of research materials, hang onto writing center receipts, keep logs or journals of your work on assignments and papers, learn to save drafts or versions of assignments under individual file names on computer or diskette, etc. The inability to authenticate your work, should an instructor request it, is a sufficient ground for failing the assignment.

In addition to requiring a student to authenticate his/her work, Kirkwood Community College instructors may employ various other means of ascertaining authenticity—such as engaging in internet searches, creating quizzes based on student work, requiring students to explain their work and/or process orally, etc.

In this course, other kinds of academic dishonesty, such as cheating, will be treated in a way that is analogous to the plagiarism policy including consequences ranging from failing grades for individual assignments to, potentially, failing the course as a whole. As is the case with plagiarism, each instance of any other type of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean.

STUDENT HANDLING OF CONCERNS/CRITICISMS OF COURSE POLICY AND METHODS

As an instructor I attempt to remain open to student input concerning my courses. I try to create a collaborative atmosphere in my classes—to a point—though I also insist that the instructor is the leader of the learning process. The extent of my openness to student input is, therefore, not absolute. It depends, in part, on the way in which students share concerns and criticisms. I do not feel compelled to consider concerns shared in a negative, confrontational way or shared in an inappropriate setting (see below).

In addition, it should be noted that openness to student input doesn't necessarily mean that changes sought by the student will always occur. I retain the right to disagree with your ideas even if expressed positively. There is a good deal of teacher discretion in setting course policy and practice; we can't always agree on everything. In some cases disagreements cannot be rectified and, unless there is some gross violation of student rights, the student will have to accept the course as is or drop. To demonstrate good faith students should attempt to rectify concerns by addressing them to me in an appropriate way and setting before taking them to a higher level. Should the need arise for this last resort, students may consult the handbook for information about this process.

The process of sharing concerns or criticisms should follow the guidelines listed below. Concerns, criticisms should be:

1. Constructive.

The ideal here is a spirit of partnership informed by an assumption that I really do want to do a good job as a teacher and to do so in an ethical way. We should both be open to the possibility of changing our minds about an issue. The student should be open to altering his or her thinking about an aspect of the course based on a clearer understanding of it. If a student

remains critical after discussion of his or her concern it would be helpful if the criticism were accompanied by positive suggestions for change. It is more constructive to propose a positive suggestion for what you would like than merely complaining about what you don't.

2. Nonconfrontational, shared in an appropriate setting.

Generally speaking, expressing concerns during class time is a bad idea for at least two reasons. First, the concerns may not be shared by enough others to warrant using up the time of the whole class. Second, like most people, I find criticism in front of group of people—especially when done in a confrontational, chip-on-shoulder fashion—very uncomfortable. I try to avoid criticism of students in an all-class setting and I expect students to grant me the same respect. The point is to avoid putting each other “on the spot” and forcing rapid decisions based on pressure tactics.

Note: Students should be assured that sharing of concerns, done in a positive spirit and according to announced guidelines, will not result in any kind of retribution from the instructor. Indeed, it is better to share concerns openly than harbor them privately where they may simply “fester” and affect the amount and nature of your class participation. It is also better to deal with concerns promptly and not “spring” your concerns on me at such a time or in such a manner that it is difficult for me to do anything about them.⁹ On the other hand, inappropriate handling of concerns is considered a legitimate component of your grade—it's not wrong to be critical of the course or instructor's methods or policies; it *is* wrong to express criticism in negative, inappropriate ways. My assessment of a student's positivity/negativity—admittedly arrived at rather subjectively—is factored into his or her participation-intangibles grade.

⁹ Rule of thumb: if I first learn of your concerns in end-of-term evaluations, that's too late!

Course Calendar: Sociology of the Environment, 0177248¹⁰

This schedule is intended as a broad overview of what we will be doing in the course week by week. As such, *it is subject to change*. On a related note, the reading required for this course is not necessarily limited to that listed below; additions may be added periodically throughout the term.

Main text: *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*, Michael Mayerfield Bell. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press

Supplementary readings: *Environmental Justice: A Reference Handbook*, David E. Newton. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CILO (online)

Other supplementary readings: TBA

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic, Activities</u>	<u>Reading, Assignments</u>
Week:	1 Course Introduction; Sociology and the Environment	
1/18	Course introduction, personal introductions	
1/20	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapter 1
Week:	2 Sociology and the Environment; Environmental Problems	
1/25	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapter 1
1/27	Lecture, discussion	
Week:	3 Environmental Problems; Consumption, Production and Environment	
2/1	Lecture, discussion Quiz 1	Bell, Chapters 1-2; Supplementary reading, written assignment TBA
2/3	Lecture, discussion	
Week:	4 Consumption, Production and Environment	
2/7	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapters 2-3; Supplementary reading TBA
2/9	Lecture, discussion	

¹⁰ Synonym number

Week:	5	Consumption, Production and Environment; Environmental Movements and History	
	2/15	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapters 2-3
	2/17	Lecture, discussion Quiz 2	Supplementary reading, written assignment TBA
Week:	6	Environmental Movements and History	
	2/22	Lecture, discussion	Supplementary reading
	2/24	Lecture, discussion	
Week:	7	Environmental Movements and History	
	2/29	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapters 6-7; Supplementary reading, written assignment TBA
	3/2	Lecture, discussion Quiz 3	
Week:	8	Midterm Exam Week	
	3/7	Catch-up, review activities	Bell, Chapters 1-3, 6-7; Supplementary readings to date
	3/9	Exam 1 (Midterm)	
Week:	9	Spring Break	
	3/12- 16	No classes	
Week:	10	Environmental Movements and History	
	3/21	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapters 6-7; Supplementary reading, written assignment TBA
	3/23	Lecture, discussion	
Week:	11	Environmental Movements and History	
	3/28	Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapters 6-7; Supplementary reading TBA
	3/30	Lecture, discussion	

	12	Grassroots Environmentalism	
Week:			
4/4		Lecture, discussion Quiz 4	Bell, Chapter 6-7; Supplementary reading, written assignment TBA ¹¹
4/6		Lecture, discussion	
	13	Grassroots Environmentalism	
Week:			
4/11		Lecture, discussion	Bell Chapter 7; Supplementary reading TBA
4/13		Lecture, discussion	
	14	Grassroots Environmentalism; Organizing an Ecological Society	
Week:			
4/18		Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapters 7&10; Supplementary reading TBA
4/20		Lecture, discussion	Reflective Essay/Complete Portfolio due ¹²
	15	Organizing an Ecological Society	
Week:			
4/25		Lecture, discussion	Bell, Chapter 10-11; Supplementary reading TBA
4/27		Lecture, discussion	
	16	Organizing an Ecological Society; Catch-Up/Review	
Week:			
5/2		Lecture, discussion Quiz 5	Bell, Chapter 10-11; Supplementary reading TBA
5/4		Catch-up, review activities	

¹¹ **Deadline for all late work and resubmissions** including this assignment; it will not be accepted late.

¹² More info will be given about this assignment as the due date nears.

17 Final Exam Week

Week:

5/7¹³

Exam 2 (Final)

Bell, Chapters 6-7, 10-11;
Supplementary readings to date

5/9
& 11

No class

¹³ Monday, 1-2:50pm; **note that this is outside our normal class meeting time and make arrangements accordingly**