



Department of Sociology St. Francis Xavier University

SOCI 247
Environmental Social Sciences I: Problems and Paradigms
Fall 2021

Instructor

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Office hours: Tuesday 12:45 – 2:00pm
Wednesday 11:15am – 12:30pm
Thursday 11:15am – 12:00pm

Class

Z7-Z8 Blocks
SCHW 252

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to the major environmental challenges of the 21st century from a social science perspective. Modern societies that have sought to conquer natural limits have now conjured up unanticipated “environmental” consequences. Students will explore how human understandings of environmental “problems” as well as action towards environmental solutions are shaped by ways of thinking, social contexts and institutional power relations.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All course materials will be made available through Moodle.
In addition, you will be required to subscribe to three of the following environmental news sources:

The Guardian (Environment): <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/environment>
The Energy Mix: <http://theenergymix.com/>
Inside Climate News: <https://insideclimatenews.org/>
The Daily Climate: <http://www.dailyclimate.org/>

COURSE WORK and EVALUATION:

Participation – 5%
Nature Observation Assignment (Due October 5) – 15%
Reading Questions
 Questions on the week’s reading (12) – 30%
News Story – 6%
Essay or Debate – 20%
 Essay (Due November 16)
Final Exam (December, 2020) – 24%



OUTLINE

- 1 - How Do We Know Nature - September 7
Choose your day to present an environmental news story Sept 9
- 2 - Indigenous Relationships to Nature - September 14
- 3 - The Beginning and End of Nature - September 21
- 4 - Scarcity Paradigm: Population and Food - September 28
- 5 - Social-Structural Thinking: Risks of Modern Systems - October 5
Nature Observation assignment due Oct 5
- 6 - Extinction - October 12
- 7 - Risk Response: Fossil Fuels - October 19
- 8 - Risk Response: Fossil Fuels - October 26
- 9 - Social-Structural Thinking: Technological Solutions - November 2
Last day to drop courses without penalty
- BREAK -
- 10 - State Action: the Green New Deal - November 16
Essay due November 16
- 11 - Capitalism and Consumption - November 23
- 12 - Capitalism and Overproduction - November 30