

Sociology 4517 WA: Society, Culture, and Nature

Instructor: Dr. T. Puddephatt
Office: Ryan Building 2034
Class Time: Tuesday 2:30-5:30pm
3-0; or 3-0

Class Location: ATAC 1010 (or zoom)
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Sociology web-page address: <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca>

Logic of the Course

This course should be fun and engaging, but it is challenging with a lot of reading, and theory-heavy at times. The idea is to get you acquainted with some of the ways that social theorists have tried to incorporate the nonhuman (e.g., nature, environment, technology) into their concepts and theories of the social. There is an emphasis on reading, synthesizing, and writing/presenting the material you encounter and work with throughout the term. This particular iteration of the course has more emphasis on sociologists grappling with conceptualizing the environment, and environmental issues, such as (un)sustainability and climate change.

Evaluation Scheme:

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|----------------------------|----------------|
| (1) Weekly Participation | (10%) |
| (2) Group Work Assignments | (20%) |
| (2) Assignment 1 | (20%) |
| (4) Assignment 2 | (20%) |
| (4) Final Assignment | (30%) |
| | Final = (100%) |

Required readings:

1. Anthony Giddens. 2012. *The Politics of Climate Change, 2nd Edition*. Polity Press.
2. Todd Dufresne. 2019. *The Democracy of Suffering: Life on the Edge of Catastrophe, Philosophy in the Anthropocene*. McGill-Queens Press.
3. Bruno Latour. 2018. *Down to Earth: Politics in the Climatic Regime*. Polity.
4. Bruno Latour 2022. *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis*. (Translated by Julie Rose). Polity.

Explanation of Evaluation:

1. Participation (10%): This grade is intended to reflect the quality, more than the quantity, of student participation in class. Come prepared, and try to demonstrate your knowledge of the readings, and do your part to help with a vibrant, energetic seminar discussion, fostered in a friendly, mutually supportive atmosphere. There will also be times when I provide an “active learning” exercise in class, so your performance in these will also be reflected in this grade.
2. Group Work Assignments (20%): In some classes, I will assign break-out rooms for small groups (2-3 people) to answer questions posed about the readings. These might refer only to the reading of that week, or it might refer back to past readings for comparison/contrast. Your top 4 grades will count, for 5% each. This is a good reason to attend class regularly, to be sure you do not miss a group work assignment.
3. Assignment 1 (20%): This will be a written response to the first 2 weeks of readings. What was Catton and Dunlap’s charge against sociology? Having read the classical contributions and based on your knowledge of the wider field, how fair is this critique? What are some of

the contributions to ecological theorizing made by the various classical sociological thinkers reviewed? Where might Catton and Dunlap argue there are room for improvements? (max 5 pages, double-spaced, times new roman). **This is due on February 18.**

4. **Assignment 2 (20%):** This will be a review of the selected chapters we read from Anthony Giddens's *The Politics of Climate Change*. You are to highlight the key ideas covered over the two weeks, critically commenting on their usefulness and/or limitations (max 5 pages, double spaced, times new roman). **This is due on February 25.**
5. **Final Assignment (30%):** Consider the core arguments about the politics of climate change from Anthony Giddens, Todd Dufresne, and Bruno Latour. Whose approach do you find the most promising as a way toward a more sustainable future for our planet, and why? Maximum 10 pages, double-spaced, times new roman. This should be well written and well organized, in an effort to make a convincing case. **This is due on April 15.**

COURSE SCHEDULE:

January 11 – **Welcome! Introduction to the Course**

January 18 – **Sociology as though Nature does not Matter?**

1. Catton, William and Riley Dunlap. 1980. "A New 'Ecological Paradigm' for a Post-Exuberant Sociology," *American Behavioural Scientist*, 24(1): 15-47.
2. Foster, John Bellamy. 1999. "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(2): 366-405.

January 25 – **Microsociology and the Material Environment**

1. Gross, Matthias. 2000. "Classical Sociology and the Restoration of Nature: The Relevance of Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel," *Organization and Environment*, 13(3): 277-291.
2. Brewster, Bradley and Antony Puddephatt. 2017. "G.H. Mead as a Socio-Environmental Thinker," in D. Hubner and H. Joas (eds.) *The Timeliness of George Herbert Mead*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago press. D2L

February 1 – **The Politics of Climate Change I**

Anthony Giddens. 2012. *The Politics of Climate Change, 2nd edition*. UK: Polity Press. (introduction → chapter 3)

February 8 – **The Politics of Climate Change II**

Anthony Giddens. 2012. *The Politics of Climate Change, 2nd edition*. UK: Polity Press. (chapters 5, 6, 8)

February 15 – **Independent Study Time**

February 22 – **Study Break!**

March 1 – **Crisis of the Anthropocene I**

Todd Dufresne. 2019. *The Democracy of Suffering* (Preface, part II)

March 8 – Crisis of the Anthropocene II

Todd Dufresne. 2019. *The Democracy of Suffering*
(part III, conclusion)

March 15 – Bruno Latour I

Bruno Latour, 2018. *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*

March 22 – Bruno Latour II

Bruno Latour, 2022. *After Lockdown, part I*
(selected chapters)

March 29 – Bruno Latour III

Bruno Latour, 2022. *After Lockdown, part II*
(selected chapters)