# **SSM1120 –Social Dimensions of Sustainability**

Winter 2023

Course Syllabus

Class Meetings: Thursdays, 3pm-6pm

Location: Classroom KN L1230

Instructor: Professor Ellen Berrey

Email: ellen.berrey@utoronto.ca

Office Hours (Zoom): Fridays 10-12am and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Brody Trottier

E-mail: brody.trottier@mail.utoronto.ca

Office Hours: By appointment

## **Course Technology**

* The course content will be hosted on Quercus
* The class meetings will take place in person
* One class session will take place on Zoom (Feb. 16, possibly also Mar. 9).

## **Zoom Information**

<https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/87831513232>

Meeting ID: 878 3151 3232

Passcode: 994650

## **Course Description**

This course is focused on studying and understanding human-nature interactions, and the social processes that shape and threaten the natural world. The course will focus on the following question: how is sustainability a profoundly social challenge? Students will be challenged to gain a better understanding of the interrelationship between social problems and environmental problems, as well as the ways that humans themselves are part of nature. Students will be asked to consider how social scientific insights can inform and improve sustainability efforts. The course will cover topics such as the social construction of nature, the political economy of environmental destruction, environmental inequalities and injustices (including Global North-Global South relations), corporate projects to address social sustainability (as well as critiques of greenwashing), public engagements with environmental science, consumer politics and green identities, the politics of climate change and environmental knowledge production, as well as environmental activism and varied initiatives to address sustainability, such as green jobs programs.

## **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a general knowledge and understanding of the social dimensions of sustainability.
2. Identify and critically evaluate social causes and consequences of environmental problems; with particular emphasis on recognizing the appropriate solution(s) that can be applied in various settings
3. Assess the efficacy with which various actors (e.g., states, citizens, social movements, corporations) seek to address environmental problems, and evaluate the strengths of various approaches (e.g., market approaches, state efforts, civil society) to promote sustainability.

## **Class Structure**

Most classes will be structured around lecture content, interspersed with classroom discussion and in-class exercises. You are expected to regularly attend class and engage in class discussion. In class discussions, you should listen to the instructor as well as your classmates. Each week, the class will include student-led introduction to the readings, followed by a group discussion of the topic. In general, the emphasis of this class on learning through careful reading, reflection, writing and classroom dialogue.

## **Required Texts**

There are two required texts for this course, in addition to research articles (which you are responsible for locating through the U of T library system). Hard copies of the books are not in stock at the UTM bookstore but are available through some bookstores and online retailers.

1. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*, by Michael Bell, Loka Ahswood, Isaac Sohn Leslie and Laura Hanson Schlachter. Sixth Edition. 2020. SAGE. Ebook available (for purchase) through [Vitalsource](https://www.vitalsource.com/products/an-invitation-to-environmental-sociology-michael-mayerfeld-bell-loka-v9781506366005?term=9781506366012) (and other e-reader services).
2. MacKendrick, Norah. 2018. *Better Safe than Sorry: How Consumers Navigate Exposure to Everyday Toxics.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ebook available (free) through [the UofT library](https://books-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks5/degruyter5/2019-07-04/1/9780520969070#page=47).

Recommended for further reading, but not required: Caniglia et al 2021. [*Handbook of Environmental Sociology*](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77712-8),*.* Springer International Publishing. UofT library [ebook](https://books-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks7/springer7/2021-11-06/1/9783030777128#page=471).

## **Evaluation Components**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Component** | **%** | **Due date** |
| Topic Introduction | 10 | One per semester |
| Participation | 15 | Weekly |
| Quercus comprehension quiz | 15 | Thurs. Feb. 16 |
| Reflection Paper, Phase 1 (RP1) | 5 | Fri., Feb. 3 |
| Reflection Paper, Phase 2 (RP2) | 5 | Fri., March 3 |
| Reflection Paper, Phase 3 (RP3) | 25 | Mon., March 27 |
| “Convince Me” Pitch | 15 | Thurs., April 6 |
| Integrated case competition | 10 | Fri., Mar. 10 |

\*Evaluation elements are described below.

## **Course Schedule**

*Select “Show Comments” on Word for guidance on what to focus on and what to skim in each reading*

### Week 1. Introduction to Class

Thurs., Jan. 12

Reading (read before class):

* Syllabus
* Myers, Justin Sean. 2021. “Theories in Environmental Sociology.” Pp. 28-30 only. In *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. Eds. Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis. Oxford University Press. [on Quercus]
* Dunlap, Riley E. 2016. “[Sociology of the Environment](https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/book/10.1002/9781405165518).” Pp. 1-7 in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology,* ed. George Ritzer.
* Liévanos, Raoul S., et al. 2021. “[Challenging the White Spaces of Environmental Sociology](https://journals-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/details/23251042/v07i0002/103_ctwsoes.xml).” *Environmental Sociology* 7(2):103-109.

In class: Introductions. Review syllabus and course logistics. Decide on schedule for upcoming topic introductions. Discuss introductory readings.

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

### Week 2. Sociological perspectives on environmental problems. The social construction of nature.

Thurs., Jan. 19

Readings:

* Bell et al., Chapter 1 (on environmental problems), Chapter 9 (on construction of nature)
* Pellow, David N. and Holly Nyseth Brehm. 2013. “[An Environmental Sociology for the Twenty-First Century](https://www-annualreviews-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/pdf/10.1146%2Fannurev-soc-071312-145558).” *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 229-239 only.
* Spears, Ellen Griffith. 2022. “The ‘Tar Wars’ and Climate Justice Activism in North America.” Pp. 45-62 in [*The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*](https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9780367855680/routledge-handbook-environmental-movements-maria-grasso-marco-giugni), eds. Maria Grasso and Marco Guigni. London: Routledge

In class: Brief introduction to Jonathan Vroom, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Center

### Week 3. The material dimension of environmental problems: Consumption, markets, capitalism

Thurs., Jan. 26

Readings:

* Bell et al., Chapters 3 and 4.
* York, Richard. 2017. “[Why Petroleum Did Not Save the Whales](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/2378023117739217).” *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 3: 237802311773921.
* White, Katherine, Rishad Habib, and David J. Hardisty. 2019. “[How to SHIFT Consumer Behaviors to Be More Sustainable](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649): A Literature Review and Guiding Framework.” *Journal of Marketing* 83 (3): 22–49.

### Week 4. Cultural dimensions of environmental problems: Ideology, subjectivities, public opinion

Thurs., Feb. 2

Readings:

* Bell et al., Chapters 7 and 8
* Ford, Allison and Kari Marie Norgaard. 2019. “[Whose Everyday Climate Cultures?](https://link-springer-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/content/pdf/10.1007/s10584-019-02632-1.pdf) Environmental Subjectivities and Invisibility in Climate Change Discourse.” *Climate Change* 163:43-62.
* Huxster, Joanna K. 2022. “Influence of Environmental Movements on Public Opinions and Attitudes.” Pp. 472-487 in [*The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*](https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9780367855680/routledge-handbook-environmental-movements-maria-grasso-marco-giugni), eds. Maria Grasso and Marco Guigni. London: Routledge.

Recommended:

* Podcast (35 minutes): [Media Indigena](https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/media-indigena-indigenous-current-affairs/id1092220986?i=1000503441650), with Rick Harp, interviewing David Suzuki:

Fri., Feb. 3, 11:59pm:

* Due: Reflection Paper, Phase 1

### Week 5. Environmental Injustices: Health and the “invironment”

Thurs., Feb. 9

Readings:

* + Bell et al., Chapter 2
  + Richter, Lauren. 2018. “[Constructing Insignificance](https://www-tandfonline-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/23251042.2017.1410988?needAccess=true): Critical Race Perspectives on Institutional Failure in Environmental Justice Communities.” *Env Sociology* 4(1):107-121
  + Davidson, Debra J. 2018. “[Evaluating the Effects of Living with Contamination](https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2017.1349638) from the Lens of Trauma: Fracking Development in Alberta, Canada.” *Env Sociology*, 4:2, 196-209.
  + Auyero, Javiero and Swistun, Debra. 2007. “[Amidst Garbage and Poison](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/ctx.2007.6.2.46): An Essay on Polluted Peoples and Places.” *Contexts*, 6(2): 46-51.

### Week 6. Quercus Comprehension Quiz / Writing Workshop with Jonathan Vroom

Thurs., Feb. 16: ONLINE

3:10 – 3:50pm Quiz (Quercus)

4:15 – 5:00 Jonathan Vroom writing workshop (Zoom, link on p.1)

#### Feb 20 - 24 No class. Reading week at UTM.

### LIVING IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

### Week 7. Disaster, risk, and technology

Thurs., Mar. 2

Readings:

* Reread [Pellow & Nyseth Brehm](https://www-annualreviews-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/pdf/10.1146%2Fannurev-soc-071312-145558) (Week 2) on Risks, Disasters, & Hazards, pp. 235-239
* Entries from [*Handbook of Environmental Sociology*](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77712-8), eds. Caniglia, Beth Schaefer et al.:
  + Corderner, Alissa. “Risk.” Pp. 167-187
  + Peek, Lori et al., “Sociology of Disasters.” Pp. 219-241
* Haney, Timothy J. 2022. “‘[Scientists Don’t Care about Truth Anymore’](https://journals-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/pdf/23251042/v08i0001/7_dcatatosicoc.xml): The Climate Crisis and Rejection of Science in Canada’s Oil Country.” *Env Sociology* 8(1): 7-24.
* MacKendrick Chapter 1 (Introduction, pp. 1-25)

Fri., Mar. 3, 11:59pm:

* Due: Reflection Paper, Phase 2

### Week 8. Gender and protecting bodies in a risky society

Thurs., Mar. 9

Readings:

* MacKendrick: Chapter 3 (pp. 56-83) and Chapter 5 (pp. 103-124)
* Cairns, Kate. 2021. “[Caring about Water in Camden, New Jersey:](https://libkey.io/libraries/278/articles/512666263/full-text-file?utm_source=api_1212) Social Reproduction against Slow Violence.” *Gender, Place & Culture* 0 (0): 1–23.

#### March 10th – Integrated Case Competition

* Due: Case Competition

### FINDING SOLUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

### Week 9. Solutions: Democracy and the State

Thurs. Mar., 16

Readings:

* Bell et al., Chapter 11
* MacKendrick: Chapter 2 (pp. 26-55)
* Scott, Dayna Nadine. 2009. “Testing Toxicity: Proof and Precaution in Canada’s Chemicals Management Plan.” *RECIEL: Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law* 18(1): 59-76.
* Duit, Andreas. 2016. “[The Four Faces of the Environmental State](https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1077619): Environmental Governance Regimes in 28 Countries.” *Environmental Politics* 25 (1): 69–91.

### Week 10. Market Solutions: Green Consumerism

Thurs., Mar. 23

Readings:

* MacKendrick: Chap. 4 (pp. 83-102), Chap. 6 (pp. 125-142), and Chap. 7 (pp. 143-158)
* Kennedy, Emily Huddart and Darcy Hauslik. 2018. “The Practice of Green Consumption.” Pp. 187-206 in [*Environment and Society*](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76415-3)*,* eds. M. Boström and D. J. Davidson.
* Lorenzini, Jasmine. 2022. “Political Consumerism and Food Activism.” Pp. 215-228 in from [*The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*](https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9780367855680/routledge-handbook-environmental-movements-maria-grasso-marco-giugni), eds. Maria Grasso and Marco Guigni. 2022. London: Routledge.

Mon., Mar. 27, 9am

* Due: Reflection Paper, Phase 3

### Week 11. Solidarity and Collective Solutions

Thurs., Mar. 30

Readings:

* Bell et al., Chapters 10 (pp. 320-352) & Chapter 12 (pp. 378-402)
* Chapters from [*The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*](https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9780367855680/routledge-handbook-environmental-movements-maria-grasso-marco-giugni), eds. Maria Grasso and Marco Guigni. 2022. London: Routledge:
  + Maria Grasso and Marco Guigni. “Environmental Movements Worldwide.” Pp. 1-15
  + Reread/skim Spears chapter (Week 2)
  + Erik W. Johnson and Jon Agnone. “Policy and Legislative Outcomes of Environmental Movements.” Pp. 453-471.
  + Carl Cassegård.“The Future of Environmental Movements.” Pp. 577-589.

### Week 12. Convince Me Pitch Presentations

Thurs., April 6

* Due: Convince Me Pitch, by 3pm

## **Course Components**

### 1. Topic Introduction

On one occasion, you will give a short presentation (5-10 minutes) to introduce the readings to your peers.

You should connect with other students presenting on the same day so you can organize divide up the readings and decide how to organize and divide up the content.

**Format**

These topic presentations are not intended to be onerous research projects. Instead, think of it as an opportunity to gain experience introducing complex topics, writing concise oral overviews, generating discussion question, and communicating academic ideas in a clear, accessible way. Student presentations can include a small amount of summary to refresh the collective memory of the class, but in general, presenters should assume that the class members have done the readings. Remember that a key goal of a class presentation is to *energize class discussion*. (For that reason, always try to avoid too much repetition, rambling, and monotone reading from a paper.)

When it comes to organizing the presentation, you have some creative license. Your presentation strategy will depend on your presentation style and skill set. I recommend including the following: brief summary; methodological issues; key substantive points; connections to other course concepts/readings; questions for discussion.

Above all, you should come to class prepared to answer the question, “why does this topic matter?” I encourage you to come class with a cultural artifact (e.g., an advertisement, video-clip, new story, consumer product), if you are inspired to do so. This is not required but can be a useful way to introduce the relevance of the topic.

**Grading Criteria**

Your presentation will be graded on 1) comprehension of the reading(s); 2) sociological imagination; 3) presentation style (e.g., eloquence, timing, clarity).

### 2. Participation

Participation in the seminar is valued at 15%. Students are expected to come to class having done the readings and participate actively in class discussions.

If you find classroom discussions a challenge for some reason, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester. If you must miss a class, please inform my beforehand. Unexcused absences and not engaging in classroom discussions will negatively impact your participation grade.

### 3. Quercus Comprehension Quiz

There will be a short comprehension quiz posted on QUERCUS/Quiz. The quiz will appear between 3:10pm and 3:50pm (40 minutes). It will consist of approximately 30 short questions (e.g., multiple choice, fill in the blank, true-false). It is an open-book quiz. There will not be a lot of time to search for answers in the readings, so I recommend you take notes as you do the readings to prepare for each seminar.

### 4. Reflection Paper (RP) (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

In this course, we will learn sociological concepts that help you to think critically about the environment. Early on in the semester, you will pick a consumption case-study (meat, fashion, or cellphones), and write about this case in three phrases.

**RP1 (Phase 1): Identify PROBLEM** (300-500 words, 1-2 pages).

**RP2 (Phase 2): Focus on SOLUTIONS** (300-500 words, 1-2 pages).

**RP3 (Phase 3): Write the full essay** (4000 words / approx. 15 pages).

Full details of this assignment are posted on QUERCUS.

#### Writing Office Hours for RP 1, 2, and 3

To help you construct the best possible RP, Jonathan Vroom at the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Center will hold specialized writing office hours to help you with your reflection paper. He is familiar with the design and the requirements of this assignment.

Please make note of Jonathan Vroom’s drop-in writing office hours devoted to helping you with this writing assignment:

**Phase 1**

Thurs., Feb 2, 9-11am

Fri., Feb 3, 9-11am

**Phase 2**

Wed., Mar 1, 9-11am

Fri., Mar 3, 12-2pm

**Phase 3**

Thurs., Mar 23, 9-11am

Fri., Mar 24, 9-11am

### 5. “Convince Me” Pitch

A pressing issue for environmental sociology – and environmentalism more generally – is how do we fix the mess that humanity finds itself in. How do we protect our fragile environmental home? Your “convince me” pitch should be focused on 1 particular solution for environmental protection. **You can make your pitch solo, or with a group of your fellow students**. Your presentation can involve props, original video content, music, or a skit. You are encouraged to build on the research that you carried out for the reflection paper, but this is not a requirement. This is an opportunity to be creative.

**Format**

Your “convince me pitch” can take 3 forms:

1. **An infographic**. There are [online sources](https://www.creativebloq.com/infographic/tools-2131971)that help you design a visually creative infographic.
2. **Short video** (less than 5 minutes) that can also be posted on YouTube, TikTok, or U of T’s site [MY MEDIA](https://play.library.utoronto.ca/login).
3. **A live presentation delivered in class on April 6** (less than 5 minutes). You can use whatever props (e.g., slides) help you make a convincing presentation.

**Sharing your pitch with the class**

We will collectively review the “pitches” on the last day of class. Students who take option 1 and 2 will also post them online using Quercus Discussion board.

You must also submit your pitch on Quercus/Assignments for grading. You can submit your pitch at *any* time throughout the term. The last day to submit is on our last class.

You should also submit a **reference list** to accompany your submission so that we know that your pitch is backed up with credible claims and evidence.

### 6. Integrated Case Competition

See separate instructions.