



EXTENDED CAMPUS

COLLEGE of PROFESSIONAL
and CONTINUING STUDIES

SOC 5970-490: Special Topics/Seminar: Overview of Environmental Issues from a Global/Strategic Perspective

Course Description:

The class explores the human interface with the natural environment through the sociological perspective, particularly in the late industrial era. We consider issues of social development and inequality, technology, demography, carrying capacity, and then consider how 'diseases of civilization' have become increasingly prevalent in modern society. As a central theme of the course, we consider the crucial role of culture in the relationship with the environment. The course concludes with looking at possible ways to think about the complex array of environmental issues as society moves into the Third Millennium.

The course will follow a lecture and discussion format. Discussion and questions are strongly encouraged. Students are expected to have read the text material prior to coming to class. During the course, we will cover a wide array of reading, research and ideas about the interface between humankind and the natural environment.

Course Dates:

November 2 – 17, 2019

Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: October 4, 2019

Site Director:

This is a three-credit hour online course. Please see your local Site Director or email our online site coordinator at aponline@ou.edu

Professor Contact Information:

Course Professor: Thomas J. Burns, Ph.D.

Mailing Address: OU Dept. of Sociology
331 KH
Norman, OK 73019

Telephone Number: (405) 325-1751

E-mail Address: tburns@ou.edu

Professor availability: The professor will be available via email to students and other methods by arrangement.

Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:

Student materials are available at the OU Bookstore Website at <https://ou.textbookx.com/institutional/index.php>. There is no longer a physical bookstore, the store will remain, but textbooks will not be stocked. The website has book selling, renting, buying, returning, and order tracking capabilities. If you need help with an order, or if you have any questions contact the toll-free phone at 1-(855)-790-6637, agents are available from 9a – 5p (EST) Monday – Friday. For more information or questions about textbooks, feel free to contact apsyllabi@ou.edu. Text prices are available online

1. Burns, T. J., & Caniglia, B.S. (2017). *Environmental sociology: The ecology of late modernity* (2nd ed.). Norman, OK: Mercury Academic. ISBN 9781626670396. Make sure to get the second (2017) edition. There is a set of PowerPoint slides for the book, which are freely available on Canvas, and also on the publisher's website at: http://mercuryacademic.com/environmental-sociology#.WV_fV4jyuUk.
2. Materials posted on the OU Canvas learning management system: Access Canvas at <https://canvas.ou.edu>, enter your OU NetID and password, and select course to access material. If you require assistance with Canvas, please click on the Help icon. You can search the Canvas guides, chat with Canvas support, or contact OU IT.

OU Email:

All official correspondence from instructors will be sent only to students' ou.edu address.

Online Orientation:

The College of Arts and Sciences offers an online orientation for students who are enrolled in online or blended courses. The purpose of the orientation is to ensure that students are well prepared both technically and practically to take online courses. The orientation can be found on their website at: <http://www.ou.edu/content/cas/online/student-online-orientation.html>

The College of Arts and Sciences Online and Academic Technology Services office is here to assist you with any questions, problems, or concerns you may have. For assistance visit their website at <http://www.ou.edu/content/cas/online/student-information.html> or contact them by telephone at: (405) 325-5854 or email: casonline@ou.edu

Course Outline:

In addition to the course text, there are a number of articles uploaded on the course website that are freely available for you to read and to download. I expect you to read the material ahead of time and to come prepared with questions and ready to discuss it. This will enhance your own and your classmates' experience.

Many times, students find themselves wishing to dig deeper into a topic. For virtually all of the topics, there are additional recommended readings uploaded on the class website as well. These are not listed on the syllabus (which has only the required readings) but they are there for your edification and studying pleasure, so dig in when you get a chance! These are great when you start working on your class paper in particular. Also, students preparing for comprehensive exams find this class website most useful.

Course Process:

In the brief time of the course, we will cover the same amount of material and do the same amount of reading as a course that is, during a full semester, spread out over 16 weeks. There are tradeoffs to this intense format. On the positive side, you cover the material quickly, but it is important to keep a good pace throughout, as there is not the "down time" many people find during the longer full semester. Students who tend to do best, make the course a priority during these few weeks.

Given that the course is less than three weeks, and a total of 10 postings are graded, in order to stay on pace, you should plan on writing a posting several times per week during the course. The good news: If you stay up with the lectures and the ancillary materials provided and do your reading of the news in a timely and focused fashion, you should be in good shape in the course.

You will be taking the exams at home (or wherever you choose that works for you – one of the beauties of taking it online!) but you will need to prepare before taking them. Take this as fair warning—trying to "wing it" will not lead to a good result. The exams are long enough to parallel a "take home" exam from a physical classroom sort of format. The exams are both designed for you to be able to finish well within the timeframe, assuming you have prepared and maintain a reasonable and steady pace.

Course Overview and Introduction of Some Key Ideas

- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chapters 1 & 2 (introduction and the unique view of environmental sociology) from *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*
- Cobb, John, article on Economism or Planetism: The Coming Choice
- Dunlap, Riley, & William Catton, article on Human Exemptionalism and Environmental Sociology
- Norgaard, Kari, article on Climate Change Is a Sociological Problem

History of Societies from an Ecological Perspective

- Diamond, Jared. 1997. Selections (Chapters 1, 6 & Epilogue) from *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: Norton.
- Lenski, Gerhard E., Jean Lenski, and Patrick Nolan. 1991. "Types of Human Societies." In Lenski, Gerhard, Jean Lenski, and Patrick Nolan, *Human Societies*, 6e. N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.
- Rostow, W.W. 1964. "Introduction," and "The Five Stages of Growth--A Summary." In Rostow, W.W., *The Stages of Economic Growth*, pp. 1-16. London: Cambridge University Press.
- McNeill, J.R. *From Something New Under the Sun*

Individual and Cultural Priorities and Their Implications for the Environment

- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*, 162(13 Dec.):1243-1248.
- Schnaiberg, Allen, and Kenneth Alan Gould. 1994. Selections from *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict*. Caldwell, NJ: Blackburn Press.
- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chapter 3 (on the natural environment and the culture of late modernity) from *Environmental Sociology*
- Ridley, Matt, and Bobbi S. Low. 1994. "Can Selfishness Save the Environment?" *Human Ecology Review*, 1(Winter/Spring):1-13.

Public Health Outcomes of Environmental Problems

- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chapter 7 (on health, illness, and the natural environment) from *Environmental Sociology*
- Carson, Rachel. 1962. Selection from *Silent Spring*
- Steingraber, Sandra. 2010. Selected chapters from *Living Downstream: A Scientist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*.
- Colborn, Theo, Dianne Dumanoski, and John Peterson Myers. 1997. "To the Ends of the Earth"
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas F. 1999. Selected chapters from *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*.
- McCormick, Sabrina. *Sociology of Environmental Health*

Social Movements, Political Discourse and the Natural Environment

- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia. Chapter 8 on Environmental Social Movements from *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*.
- Burns, Thomas J., and Terri LeMoyne. 2001. "How Environmental Movements Can Be More Effective: Prioritizing Environmental Themes in Political Discourse." *Human Ecology Review*, 8(1):26-38.
- Dunlap, Riley E., and Aaron McCright. 2015. *Challenging Climate Change: The Denial Countermovement*.
- Harlan, Sharon et al. 2015. *Climate Justice and Inequality*.
- Caniglia, Beth Schaefer, Robert J. Brulle, and Andrew Szasz. 2015. *Civil Society, Social Movements, and Climate Change*.

Midterm Exam

Science and Technology in Late Modernity

- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chapter 4 on Science & Technology from *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*
- Schnaiberg and Gould, *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict*, Chapter 4
- Burns and Boyd, *Flaws in the Scientific Method and Their Relevance for Energy Research: A Cautionary Tale*
- Marquart-Pyatt, Sandra, Andrew K. Jorgenson, and Lawrence C. Hamilton. 2015. *Methodological Approaches for Sociological Research on Climate Change*.

Population and Carrying Capacity and the Ability of Technology to Alter It

- Cohen, Joel E. Selection from *How Many People Can the Earth Support? (Chapter on Uniqueness of the Present)*. New York: Norton.
- Dietz, Thomas, and Eugene A. Rosa. 1994. "Rethinking the Environmental Impacts of Population, Affluence and Technology." *Human Ecology Review*, 1(Summer/Autumn):277-300.
- Bates, Diane C. *Population, Demography, and the Environment*.
- Dimick, Dennis. *As the World Population Booms, Will Its Resources Be Enough for Us?*

Ecological Paradoxes of Modernity and Capitalism

- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chapter 5 on Economics and the Environment from *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*
- Burns, Thomas J., and Thomas K. Rudel. 2015. *Metatheorizing Structural Human Ecology at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*. *Human Ecology Review*, 22(1):13-33.
- Heinberg vs. Bailey. *Is Sustainable Development Compatible with Human Welfare?*
- Brown vs. Lomborg. *Is Humankind Dangerously Harming the Environment?*

International Development, Inequality and the Environment

- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chapter 9 (environmental issues in emerging economies) from *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*
- Gore, Al. 1993. "Ships in the Desert." In Gore, Al, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, pp. 19-35. N.Y.: Plume/Penguin.
- Sirinskiene vs. Cussen. *Should the Precautionary Principle become Part of National and International Law?*

As the Earth and Its Inhabitants Move into the Future

- Gore, Al. 1993. "A Global Marshall Plan." In Gore, Al, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. N.Y.: Plume/Penguin.
- Burns, Thomas J., and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Chap 10 on Catalysts for Change; & Chap 11 on Bringing It Together and Moving Ahead, from *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*

Final Exam

Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates:

There are three grading components to the course: Exams (50%); Mini- Essay Discussion Posts (20%); and a Post-Seminar Final Paper (30%). A more detailed discussion of each follows, but in a nutshell here in bold, is the structure. Please read this carefully and understand the following schedule. It is designed so that you can succeed, as long as you adhere closely to it and follow the reading and lecture scheduled as outlined.

Relevant Course Milestones & Deadlines for the Course:

- First Half Assignments: Discussion Posts 1-5 and the Midterm Exam should be completed by **Nov. 9 (11:59 p.m. U.S. Central Time)**.
- Second Half Assignments: Discussion Posts 6-10 and the Final Exam should be completed by **Nov 17 (11:59 p.m. U.S. Central Time)**
- Paper (Post-Seminar): **Due by Dec. 10 (11:59 p.m. U.S. Central Time)**

Exams (50%):

We will have two exams—a Midterm (25%) and a Final (25%). The window for the Midterm Exam is 2 full days—Nov 8-9; the window for the Final Exam is also open for a full two days—it opens 12:01 am on Nov 16 and goes until the end of the course (11:59 pm on Nov 17). You will take each of the two exams only once. You can take as much time as you need during the open window. If you feel you need the entire two days you may have them, as long as you make absolutely sure to turn in the exam by the deadline (11:59 pm of the last day of the respective window). Once the window opens, you can go in and get access to the exam. It would be a good idea for you to download the questions, so you have them available for the entire time you take the exam. Once you do turn in the exam during the window open time, that will be considered finished, in the sense that you will not be able to go back in after the fact and change anything.

The **Midterm Exam** will cover the material for Parts 1-5. On the exam, you will choose which question you answer from several possible choices. The essays tend to be “big picture” sorts of questions, in which you will give some detail, but have a sense of how it ties together.

While the **Final Exam** will build on what we learned in the first half of the course, it focuses on the material from the second half of the course (Parts 6-10). Its format will also be essay, structured precisely as was the midterm.

In the past, students who have done the reading and thought it through, and who pay close attention to lectures, and thought them through, tend to get a great deal out of the class, and to do high quality work on the exams in the process!

In addition, there are study guides for what we cover in the course. In doing your studying and preparation, students typically find those to be good guides in helping you organize the material going into the exam.

Mini-Essay Discussion Posts (20%):

The other 20% of the grade is a function of online participation; for that, you will make at least 10 posts, each worth 2% of the grade, for a total of 20%. The online posts and discussions are a key component of the course, and therefore of your grade.

For each section, you will find either an article to read, or watch a video clip of something from the news, that touches in some significant way on the topic we are covering in that part of class. you can find an article or video clip (and there are literally thousands of examples out there—it is pretty hard to miss on this aspect of the course!).

You will write a post about it, describing it and attaching a clip (preferable) or URL web link (if attaching it does not work). Your post should also tie it to some aspect of what we talked about in lecture or the readings.

Not to worry--there are literally hundreds, if not thousands of examples to be found readily on the internet or your local library or newsstand, of articles or news items about any of the religious traditions covered in the course. Part of this exercise is to get you used to being an educated news reader. Part of that process is to be able to connect what you are reading to what you are learning in your formal education, to do it readily and in a depth that goes beyond a mere surface reading. There is more detail given later in the syllabus.

You will make a post a mini-essay to our class’s CANVAS discussion board for each of the articles you read. In those posts, you should give the members of the class a sense of something you learned in the article, and your thoughts about how it is relevant to the reading in the books or in lecture. The mini-

essay should give a sense of something you learned from the article and the related text material. It is also good (not required, but a good idea) to sometimes include in your writing a response to something written by your classmates on the board. You may, for example, find that you read an article that relates to something posted by another student, or you may find you got something different out of the reading. Either is fine, as long as you articulate your position and support it with something from the article itself and from the text material and do so in a mutually uplifting and respectful way.

Assuming your mini-essay post is of the requisite length and complexity (which in this case means about the length of 2-3 paragraphs, 6-8 sentences each), shares something from the reading with your classmates, and has been reasonably thought out, you will receive full credit. If it does not say something that is relevant to what we are covering, appears to be “tossed off,” or is gratuitously offensive, it will receive a zero. For something basically in the ballpark but falling short, you may receive partial credit. You should be able to get full credit in this section of the course, assuming you take it seriously and make the postings in a reasonable fashion.

You might, for example, find a *National Geographic* article about how rising tides from melting polar ice caps are affecting people some other place on the planet. Or you might find a short Youtube clip about Vertical Farming in an urban setting. The opportunities are virtually endless. You can pick pretty much anything, providing you do a reasonable job of tying it into what we are covering in the readings.

The posts on our class’s CANVAS discussion board will, I hope, allow us to use the medium of our computers to full advantage, giving us an online parallel to class participation. While only ten posts are absolutely required, I do hope that people will interact above and beyond that via the postings, so that it becomes an interesting discussion board rather than a dry place to simply dump assignments.

Post Seminar Assignment (Final Paper):

A brief paper (approximately 12 pages) that is related to one of the topics covered in a part of the course, is required. Due date is **December 10, 2019**.

The class paper accounts for 30% of the grade. You will write a paper (in standard American Sociological Association format, a handbook for which is posted on our class site) discussing one of the major world’s religions covered in the *Canonical Texts* Reader. The target length is 12 pages, typed, double-spaced.

While there is some flexibility here, you should tie your paper into one of the sections of the course.

For formatting, use one of the standard formats available. ASA or APA are most straightforward, and I have provided ASA format here on Canvas. These guidelines are also quite useful in terms of organizing your thinking for when you write your paper. There are numerous references generally available for virtually all of the major world’s religions. As a target, you should plan on having about 8-10 references for your paper’s bibliography. While it is OK to get a few of those from the internet, most should be from books or scholarly papers. Each reference should be properly cited. You can write your course paper on any of the topics covered during the course.

Grading:

This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

Assignment:	Percent of Course Grade
Posts to the Discussion Board (10 Total; turned in as two groups of 5)	20%
Exams (there are 2 exams @ 25% each)	50%
Post Seminar Assignment (Final Paper)	30%

The following course grades and their associated course averages are:

- A: 90% and over B: 80 – 89.9% C: 70 – 79.9%
- D: 60 – 69.9% F: 59.9% and below

There is plenty of time to complete the material and take the exams and make the postings, but only if you are prepared; if the time seems “rushed” to you, take it as a sign that more preparation time might be

called for on future the Final Exam. So, do yourself a favor – plan to be prepared, take a deep breath, and enjoy demonstrating a command of your newly acquired knowledge!

Notice: Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.

Policy for Late Work:

Please contact the professor regarding his/her policy for late work

Attendance Policy:

In addition to interaction via Canvas and email contact, students are required to contact the instructor via email or telephone **before** the beginning of the course term for an initial briefing. Although physical class meetings are not part of this course, participation in all interactive, learning activities is required.

Student assignments and student/instructor communications will be conducted via Canvas, although students may contact the instructor via telephone, postal mail, email, or fax as needed

Incomplete Grade Policy:

A grade of “I” is not automatically assigned, but rather must be requested by the student by submitting to the instructor a “Petition for and Work to Remove an Incompleted Grade” form. An “I” can never be used in lieu of an “F” nor can an “I” be assigned because of excessive failure to participate in class activities.

Technical Support Information:

If you experience technical problems, contact Information Technology by visiting their website at: <http://webapps.ou.edu/it/> or contacting them by telephone at: (405) 325-HELP (4357).

POLICIES AND NOTICES

Attendance/Grade Policy

Note: Attendance/absences do not apply to online courses. However, participation in all course activities is extremely important to student success in online courses.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution's policy regarding "I" (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy. Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any "I" (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on "financial aid probation." If the "I" grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student's Financial Aid may be suspended making the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort.

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. Academic misconduct includes: cheating and using unauthorized materials on examinations and other assignments; improper collaboration, submitting the same assignment for different classes (self-plagiarism); fabrication, forgery, alteration of documents, lying, etc...in order to obtain an academic advantage; assisting others in academic misconduct; attempting to commit academic misconduct; destruction of property, hacking, etc...; intimidation and interference with integrity process; and plagiarism. All students should review the Student's Guide to Academic Integrity at http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. All students should review policies regarding student conduct at <http://studentconduct.ou.edu/>

Accommodation Statement

The University of Oklahoma is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your local OU Site Director.

Adjustment for Pregnancy/Childbirth-Related Issues

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability. Please see <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html>.

Title IX Resources

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24/7, counseling services, mutual no-contact orders, scheduling adjustments, and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at smo@ou.edu or (405) 325-2215 (8-5), or the Sexual Assault Response Team at (405) 615 -0013 (24/7) to report an incident. To learn more about Title IX, please visit the Institutional Equity Office's website at <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo.html>

Course Policies

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course.

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: <http://www.goou.ou.edu/>

INSTRUCTOR VITA

Thomas J. Burns, Ph.D.

Education

1990 Ph.D., University of Maryland

Current Positions

Professor of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma, and active in the Religious Studies and Environmental Studies programs.

Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses

- SOC 5970 Religion and Society
- SOC 5790 Environment and Society

Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest

Dr. Burns's research focuses on the outcomes, evolution and emergence of social institutions from a comparative and historical perspective, particularly as they pertain to issues of religion and the environment.

Representative Publications and Presentations

- Burns, T.J., and B.S. Caniglia. 2017. *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*, 2e. Norman, OK: Mercury Academic.
- Burns, T.J., and T.K. Rudel. 2015. Metatheorizing Structural Human Ecology at the Dawn of the Third Millennium. *Human Ecology Review*, 22(1):13-33.
- Burns, T.J. (ed.). 2012. *Canonical Texts: Selections from Religious Wisdom Traditions*. San Diego: Cognella;
- Burns, T.J. 2012. What Is Old and What Is New? Considering World-Systems in the 21st Century and Beyond. In C. Chase-Dunn and S. Babones (eds.), *Handbook of World-Systems Analysis*. London: Routledge;
- Burns, T.J. 2012. Marine Pollution. In G. Ritzer (ed.), *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*. London: Blackwell;
- Burns, T.J. 2009. Culture and the Natural Environment. In A. Begossi and P.F. Lopes (eds.), *Current Trends in Human Ecology*, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars;
- Burns, T.J., E.L. Kick, and B.L. Davis. 2006. A Quantitative, Cross-National Study of Deforestation in the Late 20th Century: A Case of Recursive Exploitation. In A.K. Jorgenson and E.L. Kick (eds.), *Globalization and the Environment*, Leiden: Brill;
- Burns, T.J., and T. LeMoyne. 2001. How Environmental Movements Can Be More Effective: Prioritizing Environmental Themes in Political Discourse. *Human Ecology Review*, 8(1):26-38.

Representative Honors and Awards Received

- University of Utah, College of Behavioral and Social Science Superior Teaching Award
- University of Oklahoma, Good Teaching Award
- Society for Human Ecology, Gerald L. Young Book Award
- Society for Human Ecology, Distinguished Leadership Award
- Book Review Editor, *Human Ecology Review*
- Editorial Board, *Journal of World-Systems Research*
- Representative Professional Affiliations: Society for Human Ecology, American Sociological Association, Society for the Study of Social Problems