

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY  
Fall 2016

**Sociology 270**  
**Introduction to Community, Environment & Development**

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**Office Hours:** As needed (I live in EST)  
**Office:** Glasgow 200  
**Meeting Times:** Online; no face-to-face

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## Course Description

At a time in which the economy is in crisis and the social fabric of America is unwinding, WKU students may wonder: What is happening to the people and places I care about? How did we get here? And if we pull together, can we repair the situation?

This course engages with contemporary debates about the scope, meaning, and promise of development in a globalizing world. As such, students gain crucial knowledge about how power structures our communities and about the possibilities for organizing everyday life differently. The course does not aim to convert students into activists, but does directly challenge you to consider the local and global ramifications of your individual and collective choices.

This course fulfills the *Connections* ("Local to Global" sub-category) general education requirement under the Collonade Plan. It is also a required course for the Sociology concentration in Community, Environment, and Development.

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## Course Objectives

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

- Recognize the interconnectedness of events and processes unfolding in different localities around the world.
- Analyze the tensions between the projects of local communities and economic globalization.
- Identify the consequences of decision-making for specific places and developments at the global scale.
- Consider and evaluate various alternatives for how everyday life might be organized.

## Texts

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1. McKibbin, Bill. 2007. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. New York: Henry Holt. Available at the WKU Bookstore.
2. All other materials are provided online through Blackboard.

## Course Organization and Approach

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This lower level course is designed to introduce students to fundamental concepts and issues in this sub-discipline of sociology. During the semester we will explore terms such as: community, place, development, growth, environment, sustainability, globalization, and neoliberalism. We discuss how these concepts are involved in contemporary debates about what is fair, just, and desirable for the places where we live and the world as a whole. You will also learn how to identify important actors in processes affecting community and environment, including government, corporations, transnational institutions and social movements. By the end of the class, you should be able to critically evaluate arguments about the impacts of global change on local places and processes.

In order to accomplish these goals, the course is divided into two units. In the first unit, we will define our terms, explore the debates surrounding them, and develop a conceptual framework for moving forward. In the second unit, we will examine a series of issues marked by tension between the projects of communities and economic globalization, including: local food movements, food sovereignty and security, environmental injustice, and resource control.

Sociology 270 uses a participatory, learner-centered, adult education approach. This approach recognizes that YOU are responsible for your own learning. As such, I can only provide opportunities to learn, but I cannot force you to learn. Therefore, you are expected to take responsibility for the success of the courses, that is you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all participants. Factors such as interest, motivation, creativity, and initiative are important elements in evaluating your performance in the course and assigning a grade.

Class meetings will be a place for sharing ideas and voicing opinions. Intelligent argument and polite disagreement is welcome. It is important that each student is respectful of others point of view. I will not tolerate personal attacks on discussion boards. Because Americans are often uncomfortable discussing power and politics, I ask that you use your Sociological imagination to guide you in having a constructive and fruitful conversation.

Students who find this subject matter stimulating may consider majoring in Sociology with a concentration in "Community, Environment, & Development." The following courses that build upon this material will be offered in the next calendar year (some will be offered at WKU-G, while others are available online and through IVS):

Socl 240 Global Social Problems  
 Socl 312 Collective Behavior  
 Socl 350 Systems of Social Inequality  
 Socl 360 Community, Rural and Urban Society  
 Socl 363 Population, Society and Development  
 Socl 376 Sociology of Globalization  
 Socl 452 Social Change  
 Socl 455 Theory and Practice of Community Development  
 Socl 470 Environmental Sociology  
 Socl 480 Sociology of Agri-Food Systems

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## Course Assignments and Grading

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There are **two midterm exams** (which must be completed by Oct 2 and Nov 6) and a **final, non-cumulative exam** (which must be completed by Dec 11th). These exams are based on material from the assigned readings, class lectures, and film clips. All three exams consist of a combination of multiple choice questions and short essays. Study guide questions, terms, and topics will be provided with each lesson. Exams must be completed online by Sunday at midnight (EST) during the scheduled week. Each exam is worth 100 points. Extensions are only granted in the case of documented illness or emergencies.

Besides these exams, students will write **FOUR one-page response papers**. Each paper is worth 50 points, for a total of 200 points. Response papers must be uploaded to Blackboard by Sunday at midnight (EST) on the assigned week. Response paper topics/questions are included in the course schedule, but further instructions will be provided on Blackboard (if needed) along with writing tips, and so forth. Feel free to get started early as the questions are tied to the previous week's readings and material. I do accept late papers, but will deduct 5% of your grade for each day past the due date.

Finally, you will receive a **blogging participation grade**, which is worth a total of 150 points. The course is broken into three units (each of which includes 3-4 weeks of material). For each unit, you must write one blog entry (which is worth 25 points) and comment on another two blog posts written by your fellow students (together worth 25 points). Please see the detailed instructions on what constitutes a good blog entry and comment, along with the rubric for how your posts will be graded.

Component	Points
Midterm 1	100 points
Midterm 2	100 points
Final	100 points
Response Papers	200 points (4; 50 pts each)
Blog Posts	150 points
TOTAL	650 points

Your final letter grade is the total number of points:

A = 90-100%      B = 80-89%      C = 70-79%  
 D = 60-69%      F = below 59%

**Extra Credit:** This semester I have decided to offer students the opportunity to earn up to 15 extra credit points. I may periodically offer opportunities to attend campus events. But the easiest way to earn extra credit is by posting links to contemporary articles, songs, photos, or film clips that are connected to course material. In addition to the link, you must write two paragraphs explaining exactly how the item relates to what you are learning. Each post can earn you up to 5 extra credit points. Note that I will not accept extra credit submissions after Nov 20th, however. Links and descriptions should be posted in the Discussion Board forum titled "Extra Credit."

## Advice, Cautions, etc.

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Note that this online course is not a go-at-your-own pace class, meaning that course content comes available only at the beginning of each week of class (Monday morning) and due dates are scheduled for the end of that week (Sunday night). As noted above, the course also includes an opportunity for interacting with your fellow classmates (and me!) through the blogging assignment, which I am hoping will help create a sense of community in this online class. This is my first semester to experiment with the blogging feature of Blackboard, and I hope it will serve as a great learning tool.

In closing, I want to leave you with some statements from previous semester's students about what to expect from this online course. While I consider these responses quite positive, please heed their warnings. This is not an easy A class. If you are looking for something else, please consider enrolling in a different online course before we start the semester.

"I learned a lot in this class and was very pleased with the challenge of Dr. B's one-page response papers. The readings that she required each week were thorough and informative. She presents different perspectives very well. Her class feels like a college course. Her tests were challenging with carefully worded questions and no "obviously" wrong answers. A lot of online classes, especially exams, are incredibly easy. You really had to know the course work. When I earned an A in her class I felt rewarded for hard work."

"I felt like I actually learned from the lectures like I would have in a classroom setting. If there were any questions I needed answered the professor got back to me ASAP via Blackboard, email, or even text. She was very accommodating, she is very knowledgeable about the subject she teaches and her experience in the real world was completely applicable to the class material. It was a good experience and opened my eyes to a whole new side of sociology."

"I really enjoyed this class being a challenge. A lot of people expect online courses to be easier than in class. Dr. B made it seem equivalent if not more difficult. The class made me think about where our society is headed and also what is happening behind the curtain....I really learned a lot and felt like I was part of this little community."

"Overall, I was very happy with the entire structure of this class. My previous experience with online classes at another university was not a positive experience in any way. I was pleasantly surprised with this first semester of online classes at WKU. The lectures and other resources that were made available, such as articles and videos, greatly influenced my success in this class. In fact, my other online class this semester through WKU did not have lectures and I could tell a huge difference in my ability to comprehend what was being taught."

"All of Dr. B's classes are laid out very clearly. You know what you're headed into each week with no surprises. She's very fair in how she treats her students and I love how she gives us the chance to interact with each other even though this is an online class."

## **Course Policies & Expectations**

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What I expect of you:

- (1) Read all the assigned readings, watch all the lectures and film clips, and give yourself adequate time to digest and consider the material.
- (2) Complete your assignments with creativity and care. I urge you to do excellent work, because there are too many average students trying to get jobs for you to bother with anything less than excellence.
- (3) Seek out campus resources to improve your writing. For individualized help, please schedule an in-person or online appointment with the WKU Writing Center. This is a FREE service and an invaluable resource for students who need to improve their writing. Call (270) 745-5719 or visit their website ([www.wku.edu/writingcenter](http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter)) for assistance.
- (4) Seek out campus IT support if you have a problem with Blackboard or your computer. Contact the Help Desk at: 270-745-7000. This is also a FREE service for WKU students.
- (5) Provide me with your assignments on time and in the format I ask.
- (6) Do your own work. Cheating of any kind is grounds for failure. Copying of phrases, sentences, or paragraphs without proper and appropriate citations, or copying of the overall presentation structure from textbooks, journal articles, newspaper articles, other students' papers, or the World Wide Web will

be considered plagiarism and is grounds for removal from the class and/or University. You should note that all written work is checked by plagiarism detection software.

- (7) Practice good email and Blackboard etiquette. You should check your email and the course website (Sociology 270 on Blackboard) several times a week since these are the vehicles through which I communicate with the class. I often send out reminders about assignments and due dates, and you are responsible for knowing everything communicated through email. There is always a record of the class emails in the “announcements” section of our Blackboard site.
- (8) The best way to reach me is through **email** or **text message**, but remember to check the course website and handouts first to make sure that you cannot answer the question yourself. Also, please follow some basic etiquette in contacting me (this is crucial for all professional correspondences, so it is best to get in the habit now). Start ALL correspondences with “Dr. B” or “Dr. Breazeale” and end by typing your full name. Use complete sentences, proper grammar, and do not shorten words (even in a text). Finally, please do not text before 8 am or after 8 pm, as I have a small child at home. I will get back to you as soon as possible, but if 24 hours has passed, feel free to gently remind me with a second text or email (sometimes correspondences get lost in the virtual world.).
- (9) Come see me! I am happy to help in any way that I can, but I can’t be of assistance if I’m out of the loop. I welcome you to come by my office or schedule an appointment to “see” me on Skype or Facetime. Just to reiterate: it is absolutely crucial that you contact me at the very first sign of any problem.

What you can expect from me:

- (1) Accommodate persons with documented disabilities. According to University policy, “students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in Downing University Center A-200. The phone number is 270-745-5004; TTY is 270-745-3030. Per university policy, please **DO NOT** request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the OFSDS.”
- (2) Make accommodations for make-up exams or provide additional assignment extensions in cases of severe (documented) illness, jury duty, or serious family emergencies. Please note that students who are not excused from a missed exam will receive an F on that assignment. If you have an emergency, you must contact me as soon as possible.
- (3) Provide constructive feedback on all your work, including regularly updating the online gradebook so that you can monitor your own progress.
- (4) Be fair and transparent in my grading procedures.
- (5) Be responsive to your questions and concerns.
- (6) Adopt an approach to teaching that is flexible, adaptable, and student-led. As such, I reserve the right to change the course around a bit as we proceed.
- (7) Be respectful of all opinions. My goal is to teach you *how* to think about sociology, not *what* to think.
- (8) Share my passion and enthusiasm for the discipline of sociology.

## Course Calendar & Readings

Week	Topic	Readings & Reading Questions	Activities
-1- Aug 22	Introduction to the course	What is the Sociology of Community, Environment, & Development? Course goals. How to do well in this course.	Listen to welcome lecture Please introduce yourself on the course blog (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Aug 28 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>Unit 1: Defining Key Terms and Debates</b>			
-2- Aug 29	Community/ Place	McKibben, Ch. 1 & half of Ch. 3 de Tocqueville, "How the Americans Combat Individualism by the Principle of Self-Interest Rightly Understood."  How is the meaning of community changing? What kinds of community are there? Does it make sense to talk about community in the context of globalization and mass culture? What is the difference between space and place? How are the local and global connected?  How have values of individualism shaped US culture? What is the tension, in our culture, between individualism and community? What kinds of activities do we organize communally? Are those activities threatened or thriving?	Complete readings Listen to lecture Post to course blog, if inspired (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Sept 4 <sup>th</sup> )
-3- Sept 5	Development / Growth	McKibben, second half of Ch. 3 & Ch. 4  What are the advantages that McKibben sees in locally-integrated economies? What forces work against local integration? How can we achieve fairness and transparency when goods are traded over long distances?  How is development conventionally measured? What are other ways to measure development? Is development the same thing as economic growth?  Possible film clip: Angela Briggs (former WKU undergraduate)	Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to course blog, if inspired Upload response paper #1 (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Sept 11 <sup>th</sup> )  <b>Response Paper #1 due:</b> Choose an example of what de Tocqueville called "self-interest rightly understood." Explain how it arguably works to serve the individual's interest and the greater good at the same time. Do you see evidence that this value/principle is still alive and well in current society?
-4- Sept 12	Environment / Sustainability	McKibben, Ch. 5 & afterward Waring, "A Woman's Reckoning"  How is the trade-off between growth and environmental sustainability different for poor countries than for rich ones? What kinds of conflict does this create? Are there ways to reduce poverty and improve the standard of living without adopting a "western" pattern of growth? How has the global	Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to course blog, if inspired (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Sept 18 <sup>th</sup> )

		<p>recession affected the environment?</p> <p>How do our conventional economic measurements account for depletion of resources and environmental harm? What valuable resources do they fail to measure?</p> <p>Film clip: The Story of Stuff</p>	
-5- Sept 19	Globalization / Neoliberalism	<p>Giddens, "Globalization"</p> <p>Dollars &amp; Sense Collective, "The ABC's of the Global Economy"</p> <p>Pollin, "What's Wrong with Neoliberalism?"</p> <p>Is globalization new? What does Giddens identify as the "skeptical" vs. "radical" positions on globalization? What does he see as the major risks associated with it? What is the Washington Consensus? What is the difference between neoliberalism and classical economic liberalism? What does Pollin mean by the "Keynes problem?" and the "Polanyi problem?"</p> <p>Film clip: TBA</p>	<p>Complete readings</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p> <p>Watch film clip</p> <p>Last chance to post to course blog for Unit 1 (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Sept 25<sup>th</sup>)</p>
-6- Sept 26			<p><b>Exam #1</b></p> <p>(complete by midnight EST on Sunday, Oct 2nd)</p>
<b>Unit 2: Case Studies and Issues at the Intersection of Community, Environment, &amp; Development</b>			
-7- Oct 3	Community & Economy: The Case of Walmart	<p>Collins, "The Age of Wal-Mart"</p> <p>Berstein &amp; Bivens, "The Walmart Debate: A False Choice between Prices and Wages"</p> <p>How does Wal-Mart differ, as a template for business, from the model provided by General Motors at mid-20<sup>th</sup> century? What key innovations have given Wal-Mart its market power? Does Wal-Mart affect communities and workers of the global North and South in the same way? How is Wal-Mart's growth strategy linked to poverty? How do state and local governments subsidize Wal-Mart and other low-wage employers? Why do some communities oppose the building of Wal-Mart stores in their community?</p> <p>Film: Is Walmart Good for America?</p>	<p>Complete readings</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p> <p>Watch film</p> <p>Post to course blog, if inspired (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Oct 9th)</p>
-8- Oct 10	Communities and Their Environments: Resource Debates	<p>Finnegan, "Leasing the Rain"</p> <p>Barlow, "Our Commons Future is Already Here"</p> <p>Why are struggles over access to water especially contentious? What are the major forces behind the privatization of water resources? Is water a human right? How have social movements resisted water privatization?</p> <p>Film: Flow</p>	<p>Complete readings</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p> <p>Watch film</p> <p>Post to course blog, if inspired</p> <p>Upload response paper #2 (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Oct 16th)</p> <p><b>Response Paper #2 due:</b> Write a short essay in which you describe all the</p>

			consumer purchases you have made in the past week. Where did you purchase these items? Where did the items come from? What kinds of local/global connections are entailed in your consumer practices?
-9- Oct 17	Communities & Their Environments: Environmental Injustice	<p>Wright, “Living and Dying in Louisiana’s Cancer Alley”  Pellow &amp; Park, “The Political Economy of Work &amp; Health in Silicon Valley”  Holzman, “Mountain Removal Mining: Digging Into Community Health Concerns”</p> <p>Why is exposure to pollution and other environmental risks unequally distributed by race and class? How does “growth machine politics” influence environmental risk? How is the struggle for environmental justice at work different from the movement to protect community living spaces?</p> <p>Film clip: Environmental injustice in Chester, PA</p>	<p>Complete readings  Listen to lecture  Watch film clip  Post to course blog, if inspired  (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Oct 23rd)</p>
-10- Oct 24	Communities & Their Environments: Environmental Justice Movement	<p>Grossman, “Unlikely Alliances: Treaty Conflicts and Environmental Cooperation Between Native American and Rural White Communities”  Silver, “Combating the Poisoning of Dayhoit, Harlan County”  Gipe, “Unsuitable: The Fight to Save Black Mountain”</p> <p>How have some local groups overcome a NIMBY [Not In My Back Yard] mentality to form regional cross-race/class alliances against environmental harms? How are some groups working to overcome the environmental preservation vs. economic development dichotomy?</p> <p>Film: The Last Mountain</p>	<p>Complete readings  Listen to lecture  Watch film  Last chance to post to course blog for Unit 2  Upload response paper #3  (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Oct 30th)</p> <p><b>Response Paper #3 due:</b>  Choose a case study we discussed (Wright, Pellow &amp; Park, Holzman) or another case you know about and explain how race, gender, or class/poverty affected the distribution of environmental harms and the prospects for organizing.</p>
-11- Oct 31			<p><b>Exam #2</b>  (complete by midnight EST on Sunday, Nov 6th)</p>
<b>Unit 3: More Case Studies and Issues at the Intersection of Community, Environment, &amp; Development</b>			
-12- Nov 7	Food & Community: Eating Locally?	<p>McKibben, Ch. 2  Kloppenburger et al, “Tasting Food, Tasting Sustainability”</p> <p>What is a food system? How can we characterize the dominant “food system” in the US today? What is a commodity chain? How transparent is our current food system? What are some of the costs of long-distance procurement of food? According to McKibben and</p>	<p>Complete readings  Listen to lecture  Watch film clips  Post to course blog, if inspired  (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Nov 13th)</p>



		<p>Kloppenburger et al, what are some benefits of sourcing food locally?</p> <p>Film clips: King Corn</p>	
-13- Nov 14	Food & Community: Food Sovereignty / Security	<p>Bello, “Manufacturing a Food Crisis”  “Nyeleni Declaration on Food Sovereignty”  Lappe, “The Food Movement: Its Power &amp; Possibilities”</p> <p>Are famines natural or social disasters? What are the most important factors undermining community food security today? What does “food sovereignty” mean?</p> <p>Film: Urban Roots (not confirmed)  Food consumer stories (audio clips)</p>	<p>Complete readings  Listen to lecture  Watch film  Listen to audio clips  Post to course blog, if inspired  (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Nov 20<sup>th</sup>)</p> <p>Last chance to submit Extra Credit</p>
-14- Nov 21		THANKSGIVING BREAK	
-15- Nov 28	Work & Community: Migration	<p>Koser, “Why Migration Matters”  Bacon, “How US Policies Fueled Mexico’s Great Migration”</p> <p>How are global migration patterns changing? How did the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) affect migration from Mexico to the US? How are immigrant workers being incorporated into the Kentucky agricultural sector?</p> <p>Film clips: TBA</p>	<p>Complete readings  Listen to lecture  Last chance to post to course blog for Unit 3  Upload response paper #4  (complete all by midnight EST on Sunday, Dec 4<sup>th</sup>)</p> <p><b>Response Paper #4 due:</b>  Keep a personal food diary for 2 days. Record what you eat, where you eat, how much you eat, cost of what you eat, quality of what you eat. Comment on the healthfulness (for your own body and the environment) of your consumption pattern. What do you like about it, what would you change?</p>
-15- Dec 5			<p><b>Final Exam</b>  (complete by midnight EST on Sunday, Dec 11<sup>th</sup>)</p>