

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
Spring 2019

Sociology 270
Introduction to Community, Environment & Development

Professor: Dr. Nicole Breazeale
Phone: 859-967-6983
Email: Nicole.Breazeale@wku.edu

Office Hours: As needed (I live in EST)
Office: Grise Hall 123
Meeting Times: Online; no face-to-face



Course Description

At a time in which the the social fabric of America is unwinding and the economy still feels uncertain, 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.

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.

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.
- Think critically about evidence and what is required to draw valid conclusions about the social world.

Texts

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.
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Course Organization and Approach

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.

Discussion board is 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—and there is absolutely NO room for hate in this class. 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 in-person at WKU, while others are available online and through IVS):

Soc1 240 Global Social Problems
 Soc1 312 Collective Behavior
 Soc1 350 Systems of Social Inequality
 Soc1 360 Community, Rural and Urban Society
 Soc1 363 Population, Society and Development
 Soc1 376 Sociology of Globalization
 Soc1 452 Social Change
 Soc1 455 Theory and Practice of Community Development
 Soc1 470 Environmental Sociology
 Soc1 480 Sociology of Agri-Food Systems

Course Assignments and Grading

There is a **midterm exam** covering the first unit of material (the week of Feb 25th) and a **final** that covers the material from unit 2 (the week of May 6th). These exams are based on material from the assigned readings, class lectures and discussions, and film clips. Both exams consist of a combination of multiple choice questions and short essays. Study guide questions, terms, and topics will be provided each week. I *highly* recommend you complete these after class each week, when the material is fresh in your head. The two exams are worth 150 and 200 points, respectively. Exams must be completed by Sunday at midnight (CST). Extensions are only granted in the case of documented illness or emergencies.

Besides these exams, students will write **THREE response papers**. The first two response papers are worth 100 points and must not exceed one, single-spaced page. The last paper may be longer (up to two, single-spaced pages), and is worth 150 points. Response papers must be uploaded to Blackboard by Sunday at midnight (CST) on the assigned week. Response paper topics/questions are included in the course schedule, but further instructions will be provided 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.

You will also receive a **discussion board participation grade**, which is worth 125 points. There are 14 weeks of DB prompts. You are expected to post each week (and may earn up to 10 points, per week), but your lowest two scores will be dropped. Everyone who completes the class gets 5 automatic bonus points. Each week you must read the assigned articles, watch the lecture, and THEN respond thoughtfully to the DB prompt, drawing on careful evidence and reasoning in line with what you have just learned. Entries should be checked for spelling and grammar. Please see the attached rubric for how I plan to grade these. You should also respond to at least one other student's original entry. If you consistently post at the last possible second every week, I will begin to dock points. This does not allow other students time to comment on your thoughts—nor involve you in any meaningful dialogue.

Component	Points
Midterm	150 points
Final	200 points
Paper 1	100 points
Paper 2	100 points
Paper 3	150 points
Discussion Board Participation	125 points (10 points possible for each week; lowest 2 scores are dropped; everyone gets 5 automatic bonus points)
TOTAL	825 points

Your final letter grade is based on the following:

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

Course Calendar & Readings

Week	Topic	Readings & Reading Questions	Activities
-1- Jan 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 Discussion Board and respond to the prompts (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, Jan 27)
Unit 1: Defining Key Terms and Debates			
-2- Jan 28	Community/ Place	<p>McKibben, Ch. 1 & half of Ch. 3</p> <p>de Tocqueville, “How the Americans Combat Individualism by the Principle of Self-Interest Rightly Understood.”</p> <p>What kinds of communities are there? How are communities changing? Does it make sense to talk about community in the context of globalization and mass culture?</p> <p>What is social capital? How have the values of individualism shaped US culture? What is the tension, in our culture, between individualism and community? What kinds of activities do we still organize “communally?”</p>	<p>Complete readings</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p> <p>Watch film clip</p> <p>Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student)</p> <p>(complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, Feb 3rd)</p>

<p>-3- Feb 4</p>	<p>Development / Growth</p>	<p>McKibben, second half of Ch. 3 & Ch. 4</p> <p>Why does McKibben see growth as a problem? What advantages does he see in locally-integrated economies?</p> <p>Is development the same as growth? How is development conventionally measured? Do our conventional measurements account for resource depletion and environmental harm? What other valuable resources do they fail to measure? Are there other ways to measure development or assess our progress?</p> <p>Film Clip: Amartya Sen</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) Upload response paper #1 (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, Feb 10th)</p> <p>Response Paper #1 due: What is “self-interest rightly understood?” Describe the concept and then choose a contemporary example, explaining 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? In only some subsectors of society? Why or why not (and what explains this outcome)? As a working hypothesis, think about what sources of evidence you are relying on for your argument; then consider alternative viewpoints and evidence as much as possible). Remember that specific examples and counter-examples can provide clarity to your argument. If SIRU is no longer prevalent, how would its revival change how people operate in your community and in society more broadly? What are the pros and cons of SIRU as an organizing principle? This paper is your first opportunity to practice correct citing of course material, while also developing your own ideas and argument.</p>
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-4- Feb 11	Environment / Sustainability	<p>McKibben, Ch. 5 & afterward</p> <p>What are some of the main environmental problems we are facing? How are environment and sustainability related? What is the history of both terms? What kinds of questions do sociologists study about the environment?</p> <p>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? What possibilities for change are there?</p> <p>Film clip: The Story of Stuff</p>	<p>Complete readings</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p> <p>Watch film clip</p> <p>Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student)</p> <p>(complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, Feb 17th)</p>
-5- Feb 18	Globalization / Neoliberalism	<p>Dollars & Sense Collective, “The ABC’s of the Global Economy”</p> <p>Smith, “A Brief Examination of Neoliberalism and Its Consequences”</p> <p>Is globalization new? What is the Washington Consensus? The WTO, IMF and World Bank? What is the difference between neoliberalism and classical economic liberalism? How is neoliberalism expressed at the societal and individual levels? What are some of the consequences of neoliberal globalizations?</p> <p>Film clip: Dr. Carol Anderson’s research on the World Bank and South Africa</p>	<p>Complete readings</p> <p>Listen to lecture</p> <p>Watch film clip</p> <p>Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student)</p> <p>(complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, Feb 24th)</p>
-6- Feb 25			<p>Midterm Exam</p> <p>(complete by midnight CST on Sunday, March 3rd)</p>
Mar 4		SPRING BREAK	No assignments

Unit 2: Case Studies and Issues at the Intersection of Community, Environment, & Development			
-7- Mar 11	Community & Food: Eating Locally?	<p>McKibben, Ch. 2 Kloppenburg 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? How transparent is our current food system? What are some of the costs of corporate control and long-distance procurement of food? According to McKibben and Kloppenburg et al, what are some benefits of sourcing food locally? Are there any downsides?</p> <p>Film clip: King Corn</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, March 17th)</p>
-8- Mar 18	Community & Food: Food Sovereignty / Security	<p>Food and Water Watch, “What’s Behind the Global Food Crisis.” Lappe, “The City That Ended Hunger” White, “D-Town Farm” Roman-Alcalá, “From Food Security to Food Sovereignty”</p> <p>Why is there so much hunger? How are hunger and food insecurity related? What are the most important factors undermining food security today?</p> <p>What are the differences between food security and food sovereignty? How are these goals pursued through D-Town Farm? What about Bello Horizonte? Are similar things happening in Kentucky?</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, March 24th)</p>

<p>-9- Mar 25</p>	<p>Community & Environment The Challenge of Climate Change</p>	<p>Smith, “The Wisdom of Crowds” Dunlap, “The Climate Change Denial Campaign: Key Findings” Klein, excerpts from “This Changes Everything”</p> <p>How is climate change a sociological issue? What is the “denial machine?” Who is most worried about climate change and why? How does Klein link climate change with neoliberal globalization? What good could come out of this global crisis?</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) Upload response paper #2 (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, Mar 31st)</p> <p>Response Paper #2 due: Keep a personal food diary for 2 days. Record what you eat, where you eat, cost of what you eat, how much you eat, quality of what you eat, and where it comes from (you will likely want to do some outside research). Write an essay where you summarize your consumption patterns. Then reflect on the implications of your consumption choices for your own body, various “communities” (your home community as well as people involved in the food system and communities far away), and the environment. What do you like about your choices and what would you change? How, if at all, would alternative consumption practices impact others (think through the pros as well as the cons—and any tensions that rise to the surface))? Finally, how is your experience with food affected by broader changes in the food system? What local to global connections do you see? Make sure to carefully think through the evidence you use in making your argument—and double check your citations.</p>
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-10- April 1	Communities & Environment: Environmental Injustice	<p>Wright, “Living and Dying in Louisiana’s Cancer Alley” Excerpts from Morrone’s “Mountains of Injustice in Appalachia”</p> <p>Why is exposure to pollution and other environmental risks unequally distributed by race and class? How do communities organize to protect their homes and workplaces? What strategies do they use? What challenges do they face? Is it possible for groups to overcome the environmental preservation vs. economic development dichotomy?</p> <p>Film clip: Environmental injustice in Chester, PA;</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, April 7th)</p>
-11- April 8	Community & Economy: The Case of Walmart	<p>Collins, “The Age of Wal-Mart” Berstein & Bivens, “The Walmart Debate: A False Choice between Prices and Wages” Jacobs, “Could Walmart Pay a Living Wage?”</p> <p>How does Wal-Mart differ, as a template for business, from the model provided by General Motors at mid-20th 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? What are some solutions? What is a living wage?</p> <p>Film Clip: Walmart in America</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, April 14)</p>

-12- April 15	Community & Economy: Changes in Work	<p>Hacker, “The New Economic Insecurity” Russel Sage, “An Interview with Arne Kalleberg, Author of the RSF book, ‘Good Jobs, Bad Jobs’”</p> <p>Why is economic insecurity on the rise, according to Hacker, and what can be done about it? What is a “good” and “bad” job and how are these defined differently by sociologists and economists? What explains the rise of “bad” jobs in the US? How have other countries dealt with this problem?</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, April 21st)</p>
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<p>-13- April 22</p>	<p>Community & Economy: Migration</p>	<p>Bacon, “How US Policies Fueled Mexico’s Great Migration” Klein, “Everything You Know About Immigration is Wrong” Kingsolver, “Farmers and Farmworkers: Two Centuries of Strategic Alterity in Kentucky’s Tobacco Fields.”</p> <p>How are global migration patterns changing? How did the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) affect migration from Mexico to the US? According to Doug Massey, what other political and economic factors have impacted rates of immigration? How are immigrant workers being incorporated into the Kentucky agricultural sector? What is “strategic alterity?”</p>	<p>Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) Upload response paper #3 (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, April 28th)</p> <p>Response Paper #3 due: This is a 2-page paper. Write your own story of “work” from a sociological perspective, integrating what you have learned about how changes in policy and the economy have impacted your own personal experience of work. How do you feel about it? How are your experiences (struggles, tensions, privileges, etc.) similar or different from those faced by workers of different backgrounds or those working in the same field, but far away? What kind of job market do you desire for yourself and those you love? What, if anything, might be done to improve the chances of this outcome? Alternatively, interview someone about their job experiences and write up their story, integrating insights and trends discussed in class. Make sure to ask: What skills does their job require? What are the working conditions like? What do they like and dislike about their job? What would they like to change about it? You will want to bring in additional sources of quality data to back up your argument.</p>
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-14- April 29th	Community & Resource Debates: The Case of Water	Finnegan, "Leasing the Rain" Lederman, "Flint's Water Crisis Is No Accident. It's the Result of Years of Devastating Free-Market Reforms." Is water a human right or a commodity? What is the "privatization" of water? How is this trend linked to neoliberal globalization? According to Lederman, how are the water crises in Cochabamba and Flint connected? What have communities done to take back control of their water?	Complete readings Listen to lecture Watch film clip Post to Discussion Board (one original comment and one response to another student) (complete all by midnight CST on Sunday, May 5th)
-15- May 6			Final Exam (complete by Sunday, May 12)

Course Policies & Expectations

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) 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.