Sustainability and Social Action
SOCIOLOGY 473
UNIVERSITY of SAN DIEGO
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Office Hours: In Person: Monday: 12-2, Wednesday: 10:15-12:15
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Course Time and Location

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9:05-10:00am; Camino Hall 111. **Note: Due to the heavy fieldwork component of this class, we will not be meeting every Friday. Please keep track of meeting dates on the syllabus.**

Land Acknowledgement

I want to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. I want to pay respect to the citizens of the Kumeyaay Nation, both past and present, and their continuing relationship to their ancestral lands.

Names and Pronouns

If you go by a name that is different from what is on the official course roster, please let me know. I prefer to go by Dr. Cantzler or Professor Cantzler. Also, please don't hesitate to help me know your pronouns. Mine are she, her, hers.

Course Description

This course delves into the multifaceted and often debated concept of sustainability, which means different things to different groups, from the World Bank and environmentalists to corporations and Indigenous communities. With so many interpretations and a vast body of academic work on the subject, understanding sustainability can be difficult. The first part of this course will be used to explore the foundations of Environmental Sociology and its contribution to understanding the concept of sustainability. Specifically, we will also examine how environmental problems are deeply connected to social issues and the political, cultural, and economic ideologies that shape how we think about nature and sustainability. A key focus will be the roles of economic and racial/ethnic inequality, particularly how wealth distribution and systems of racial and ethnic stratification affect access to resources and the experiences of environmental harm both globally and within nations. Throughout the course, we'll emphasize the need to draw on multiple disciplines to tackle urgent climate challenges. While sociology plays a key role, we'll also incorporate insights from natural sciences, philosophy, history, business, engineering, and the arts.

For most of this course, students will put this interdisciplinary knowledge into practice by developing and implementing an environmental action campaign that articulates a demand, develops a plan, and takes steps to make a change here on campus, in San Diego, or anywhere in the world. Drawing upon the Sunrise Movement, we define a campaign in the context of the course as "**a set of coherent tactics and activities that aggregate to a strategy with goals, demands, and targets that build power (capacity, resources, actions) to shift policies and public opinion on an issue."** The nature of the issue is open – its choice is up to you and your classmates. It can be on the left or the right, for sustainability or against: It's your choice. While this course was developed as an elective in the Sociology and Environmental Studies programs here at USD, with the purpose of fulfilling the Advanced Integration core requirement, the social action component of this class is new and part of a larger national initiative on social action across US university campuses. There are dozens of classrooms in the nation also engaged in this innovative work that aligns seamlessly with USD's mission and values as a Changemaker campus promoting academic excellence, compassionate service, human dignity, and the care for our common home. Through the process of developing and implementing a real-world, climate action campaign, students will actively engage in the democratic process, develop actionable skills relevant in pretty much any career setting, and demonstrate their power as effective Changemakers addressing one of humanity's urgent challenges.

Learning Outcomes of the Course

After completing this course, students will be able to:

I. Critically analyze, compare and critique key theoretical perspectives on issues of sustainability and demonstrate this through individual writing assignments and participation in, as well as leadership of, class discussions.
II. Demonstrate critical thinking skills in evaluating assigned readings through classroom expression and in writing assignments. This will be demonstrated through reading responses, participation in class discussions, and contribution to group work.
III. Apply sociological perspectives to an empirical case study, which will be demonstrated through reflective writings that will become part of the student's climate action portfolio.
IV. Recognize broad connections between multiple disciplinary perspectives for understanding the topic of sustainability.
V. Synthesize knowledge and/or skills from multiple disciplines or perspectives into a core project on sustainability.
VI. Apply knowledge and/or skills from multiple disciplines or perspectives to a case study on sustainability.
VII. Articulate the benefit of using an integrative approach to understand and address issues of sustainability.
VIII. Demonstrate ability to present work orally to peers in a well-organized format, using appropriate supporting material from their projects.

IX. Analyze and apply social action strategies by researching historical and contemporary tactics, mapping power structures, developing an actionable demand, and understanding how to build power in a campaign.
X. Design, implement, and advance a social action campaign through strategic planning, execution, and ongoing refinement of tactics to achieve the campaign's objectives.

Learning Outcomes of Sociology Major

- Knowledge of Sociological Theories: Students should be able to critically compare and contrast key theoretical perspectives and critically apply basic theories/perspectives in relationship to empirical data.
- Knowledge of cornerstone sociological themes including:
    - Ability to analyze how any particular social issue is influenced by forces on the micro, meso, and macro levels.
    - Ability to comprehend how dynamics of power are relevant to understanding stratifications.
    - Ability to recognize the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality.

Required Texts

1. Myers-Lipton, S. (2023). ***CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*****,** 2nd edition, Routledge.
2. Primary literature readings on Canvas and online (links in syllabus).

Additional Resources

I will post additional, optional resources (articles, podcasts, etc.) on our Canva site. You can also explore tons of articles on many issues related to this course on my Environmental Sociology Pinterest page.

Course Requirements

Grade Breakdown

Your grade will be determined based on a combination of several small written assignments and two formal papers, one take-home exam, a group poster, presentation and final paper. These activities will be weighted as follows:
Social Action Campaign: 65% (Time Log: 10%, Organizational Rap: 5%, Campaign Portfolio: 40%, Group Presentation: 10%)
End of Campaign Reflection: 10%
Quizzes: 10%
Class Participation/Attendance: 15%

Grading Scale

A: 93-100 A-: 90-92.99 B+: 87-89.99 B: 83-86.99 B-: 80-82.99 C+: 77-79.99

C: 73-76.99 C-: 70-72.99 D+: 67-69.99 D: 63-66.99 D-: 60-62.99 F: < 59.99

Course Assignments

Students will be assessed based on the following assignments and activities:

- **Attendance and Participation (individual) (15%).** Attendance and participation are essential, most especially for engendering interesting, quality discussions and providing meaningful feedback to your peers. Consistent individual attendance, coupled with active and valuable participation in class discussions, will be rewarded and used in the final calculation of your grade. ***You will be allowed three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Additional unexcused absences will result in the reduction of your participation grade.*** *Absences will only be excused for documented emergencies.*

Arriving late to class, leaving class during discussions, and receiving cell phone calls during class, is potentially disruptive and may impact your grade. Your class participation and attendance grade will be lowered if you consistently come to class late (without talking to me first) or if you receive calls during class.
The general guidelines for participation grades are illustrated below:
"A" range: Excellent. I participate regularly, contributing to the discussion in nearly every class. I always come to class with one to two discussion questions to raise with the class. I make major, substantive contributions, sometimes with a unique insight. I am ready to begin when class begins. I always prepare the material required for every class in an insightful manner. I am never reading outside material, texting, or am on my laptop. I have two or fewer unexcused absences.
"B" range: Good. I participate in discussion once every few classes. I almost always prepare the required material for class. I almost always come to class with one to two discussion questions to raise with the class. Most of my contributions have been fairly brief responses to straightforward questions. I have three or fewer unexcused absences. I am generally ready to begin when class begins and am paying full attention to the class.
"C" range: Average. I speak infrequently, but I have spoken at least once. I do not raise my hand often, and when I have spoken, usually I have been called on by the professor. When called on, I may not have been well prepared. I sometimes come to class with one to two discussion questions to raise with the class. I sometimes or halfheartedly prepare the material for class. I may often arrive late to class and/or have missed four or more classes. I am sometimes distracted by my laptop or phone.
"D" range: Poor. I Have missed more than six classes, and/or do not pay attention in class (i.e., reads other material, surfs the web, texts), distract the class, and rarely

speak. I poorly prepare material for class discussion. I rarely come to class with one to two discussion questions to raise with the class.
"F" range: Unsatisfactory: I have problems with attendance, do not pay attention in class (i.e., reads other material, surfs the web, texts) and/or distract the class, and rarely speak. I rarely and/or poorly prepare the material for class discussion. I never come to class with one to two discussion questions to raise with the class.

- **Quizzes (Individual) (10%).** Throughout the semester, students will be given ten short quizzes to collect their thoughts and understanding of the reading(s) for the class in which the quiz is given. Students are expected to read the assigned readings before each class to contribute to class discussions, progress throughout their campaigns, and better understand the course content. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, and the lowest score will be dropped.

- **Social Action Campaign (65%)** What is unique about SOCI 473 is that **students do social action rather than just learn about it.** In this experiential social action model, students choose and lead campaigns and are transformed through a direct experience of democracy, all with the professor being a "guide on the side" where they are de-centered and co-creators of knowledge. A key part of the social action model is that students have the opportunity to enact a policy (i.e., a rule, regulation, norm, or practice of an institution) on campus or in the community, with the students choosing and developing the campaigns on their own rather than assigned by the instructor.

  All students will be involved in social action. **This will require a minimum of 2 hours per week of campaign work (16 hours minimum over 8 weeks, with 5 hours or more DOING something.** To facilitate the time outside the classroom that you are expected to work on your campaigns, we will not meet formally on Fridays from October onward. That is, doing campaign activities (e.g., tabling, postering, giving organization raps) or campaign actions (marches, rallies, street theater, etc.). The requirements for the campaign are: (i) that you have a minimum of three (3) students on your team, (ii) you have passion for the issue, and (iii) your campaign tries to change some type of policy related to sustainability or climate change. The campaign you choose to work on may come from a liberal, conservative, social democrat, or libertarian perspective…or it may have no ideology at all. The Social Action component of the class will be assessed based on the **following elements**:

  - **Time Log (Individual) (10%):** You cannot receive higher than a C on your overall hour log grade if you do not complete at least 16 hours of social action work (about 2 hours a week) throughout the eight weeks we are working on campaigns. At least 50% of these minimum hours must be toward your work of doing something in the community your social issue resides in. Meeting hours can only account for up to 50% of your total hours. Work writing your campaign portfolios does not count as hours for your hours log. (Due Nov. 6th and Dec. 11th).

- **Organizational Rap (Group) (5%):** Each team will present these 1-2 minutes statements in class on Nov 4th.
- **Campaign Portfolio Binder (Group) (40%):** We will go over the expectations of this binder in greater detail in class. There will also be specific guidelines for the contents of each section. Please Note: The guidelines will often be derived in part, but not entirely, from the *Change!* Here are the general parameters of each section (the Table of Contents of your binder). All pages should be **double-spaced**, Times New Roman (12 pt):
- **Issue Identification** (Due Oct. 23)
- **Leadership Statement** (1 paragraph) (Due Oct. 23)
- **Change Theory** (Due Nov. 11)
- **Building Power/Recruitment Strategies** (Due Nov. 11)
- **Research** (Due Nov. 20)
    1. **Historical analysis**
    2. **Target analysis**
    3. **Power mapping**
- **Interdisciplinary Contributions** (Due Nov. 20)
- **Campaign Activities** (Due Dec. 11)
- **Campaign Actions and Kickoff** (Due Dec. 11)
- **Lessons Learned and Transferable Skills** (Due Dec. 11)

    - **Notes:**
        1. Individual sections of the campaign binder will be due throughout the semester. The entire (revised) binder will be due at the end of the semester.
        2. Feel free to include photos and images where appropriate.
- **Final Presentation of Campaign (Group) (10%)**: These are 10 minute in-person presentations of how your campaign evolved throughout the semester, and your group evaluation of the process. Basically, this is the oral version of the campaign binder. (Due Dec. 9)

- **End of campaign reflection (individual) (10%):** In this short (4-5 page) reflective paper, you will evaluate your campaign and situate the experience into the broader body of literature we read and discussed in class. (Due Dec 16).

- **Extra Credit: Environmental(Justice) Spotify Playlist-** Check out my Spotify playlist of songs inspired by nature, climate change, and/or social justice. Students who suggest two songs to add to the playlist will receive one point of extra credit toward this class.

Canvas

The course syllabus, assignments, and any other readings that may be assigned will be available on the course Canvas website.

Course Communication

Important information will be communicated through email. It is your responsibility to have a functioning USD email account and check it regularly.

Classroom Decorum

Please arrive in the classroom and be prepared to begin on time. Please stay for the entire class period unless you have a conflict that you've already informed me about, either before class or through email. Turn off or silence your cell phones. Please refrain from engaging in disruptive behavior, such as checking social media, doing homework for other classes, playing games on your computers or phones, texting, sleeping or carrying on side conversations during class.

Make-Up Work

Make-up work and exemptions from late penalties will be allowed in exceptional circumstances and **ONLY** for documented and approved emergencies. This does not include absences for travel for personal reasons. However, COVID related issues regarding illness and quarantining do fall into this category. Please bring evidence when attempting to schedule make-up work.

AI Transparency Policy

Students using ChatGPT and similar programs must be transparent about their use and disclose any generated content as being produced by an AI program. This includes, but is not limited to, written assignments, research papers, and other forms of communication through citations and documentation.

- Responsibility: Students are responsible for critically evaluating the accuracy, reliability, and quality of any information generated by ChatGPT and similar programs and verifying it through additional sources if necessary.
- Critical Thinking: Students are encouraged to use ChatGPT and similar programs as a tool to support their own learning and critical thinking, but they may not use it as a replacement for independent research and analysis. The use of ChatGPT and similar programs must be accompanied by the development of students' critical thinking skills and an understanding of their limitations.

Note: ChatGPT helped create this guidance.

Academic Misconduct

It is each student's responsibility to read and understand USD's academic integrity policy, guard against plagiarism and ensure that all scholastic work is conducted in a way that complies with definitions of "Academic Honesty" as set forth in that policy: https://www.sandiego.edu/conduct/documents/Honor-Code.pdf.

Wellness

Managing stress is essential to academic success and general personal well-being. We all need help managing stress from time to time. USD has many resources that are free to you, including:

- **Student Wellness: https://www.sandiego.edu/wellness/**
- **Counseling Center** 24/7 access to a counselor: (619) 260-4655, press 1 for urgent concerns
- **Disability and Learning Difference Resource Center** **disabilityservices@sandiego.edu**

- **A.R.E. Advocate** 24/7 through Public Safety Dispatch (619) 260-7777
- **Student Health Center** MyWellness Portal **https://mywellness.sandiego.edu/**
    - Non-urgent emai**l usdhealthcenter@sandiego.edu**

Any student who faces challenges securing food or reliable housing, which may affect their academic performance in this course, is urged to contact me and the Student Affairs Office (UC 232, (619) 260-4588, studentaffairs@sandiego.edu). If you find yourself in this situation, please reach out so that you can gain access to the USD Food Pantry, Torero Closet, or other resources on or off campus.

Copley Library

During this class and over the course of your time at USD, you will be asked to use the Copley Library for research and writing projects. You can learn more about Copley's services here.

Course Schedule

Week One

(Tues. Sept. 1st): Welcome to Sustainability: Sociological Perspectives

- Review Course Syllabus
- The Three Pillars of Sustainability Introduced

(Sept. 2): Environmental Sociology

Readings:

- **McCarthy, Deborah and Leslie King.** "Introduction: Environmental Problems Require Social Solutions." Pp. 1-13.

(Sept. 4): Environmental Sociology: Are Humans Unsustainable by Nature?

Readings:

- **Rees, William. E.** "The Human Nature of Unsustainability." Pp. 194-203.

Week Two

(Sept. 7): No Class- Labor Day

(Sept. 9): Environmental Sociology: The Tragedy of the Commons

Readings:

- **Hardin, Garrett.** "The Tragedy of the Commons." Pp. 185-198.
- **Angus, Ian.** "The Myth of the Tragedy of the Commons." *Climate and Capitalism.*

(Sept. 11): The Economy: The Treadmill of Production

Readings:

- **Schnaiberg, Allan and Kenneth Alan Gould.** "Treadmill Predispositions and Social Responses." Pp. 51-60.

In Class:

- **The Breakdown, Season 2, Episode 2** (7 minutes), "Are There Too Many People on the Planet?"

Week Three

(Sept. 14): The Economy: The Problem of "Free Stuff"
Readings:

- **Raymond, Robert.** "Humans Aren't Inherently Destroying the Planet- Capitalism is." *Truthout.*

In Class:

- **The Breakdown, Season 2, Episode 1** (9 minutes), "Can Capitalism Solve the Climate Crisis?"

Tuesday, Sept. 15: Alcala Bazaar: 12:15-2:15 at Paseo de Colachis- Check out student organizations to see if there are ideas or opportunities for collaboration on social action campaign. Come back ready to report.

(Sept. 16): Remapping Our Relationship to Nature
Readings:

- Flora, Gloria. "Remapping Relationships: Humans in Nature." Pp. 184-193.

(Sept. 18): Sustainability and **Environmental Inequality**
Readings:

- **Bullard, Robert D.** "Environmental Justice in the 21st" Pp. 19-42.
- **Principles of Environmental Justice**

Week Four

(Sept. 21): **Environmental Inequality and Climate Justice**
In Class Discussion:

- **Relationship between EJ and Climate Justice**

(Sept. 23): Climate Change Obstacles and Opportunities
Readings:

- **Norgaard, Kari Marie.** "People Want to Protect Themselves a Little Bit: Emotions, Denial, and Social Movement Non-Participation." Pp. 350-367.

(Sept. 25): Climate Change Obstacles and Opportunities

Readings:

- **Maniates, Michael.** "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?" Pp. 371-395.

Video (in class):

- "Climate Solutions: What You Can Do" (Waterbear)

Week Five

(Sept. 28): **Climate Advocacy**
Readings:

- **Drury, Isabel**. "Please Stop Saying My Generation will Save the World."
- **Sunrise Movement. 2025. "We Demand a Green New Deal for All to Stop the Climate Crisis" [Review (1) What is a Green New Deal? (2) Our Demands (3) Our Strategy] https://www.sunrisemovement.org/our-demands/**

Video (in class):

- **'Generation Now.' The Story of How Young Climate Activists Tired of Waiting for Change Took Action." (Time Magazine Documentary, 14 minutes)**

(Sept. 30): Social Action: Change is Possible
Readings:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Katharine Wilkinson, Climate Wayfaring

Video: *(In Class):* "(How to Find Joy in Climate Action)" (10 minutes)
In Class: Johnson's Climate Action Venn Diagram; Begin creating teams.
(Oct. 2): **No Class: Campaign Work**

Week Six

(Oct. 5): Social Action: Issue Development
Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, pp. 1-20, "Social Action: An Overview," in *A Guide to Teaching Social Action.*
- Roth, Michael S. "I'm a College President, and I Hope My Campus is Even More Political This Year." *New York Times Guest Opinion.*

(Oct. 7): Social Action: Issue Development
Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, pp. xi-xvii, Ch. 1 "Issue Development"

Assignments: Portfolio 1 assigned
In class: Finalize Climate Action teams and campaigns
(Oct. 9): No Class- Campaign Work

Week Seven

(Oct. 12): Social Action: Setting the Tone

Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch. 2
- Plato, “Allegory of the Cave”

Video (at Home): “Walk the Walk”
Assignments: Portfolio 2 (Leadership Statement) assigned
(Oct. 14): Social Action: Change Theory, Part 1 (Macro Change)
Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch. 3, pp. 28-30
- Case Study, “’Gamechanger’: Judge rules in favor of young activists in US Climate Trial,” *The Guardian (Aug. 14, 2023).*

(Oct. 16): No Class- Campaign Work

Week Eight

(Oct. 19): Social Action: Change Theory, Part 2 (Community Change and Critical Education Theory)
Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch. 3, pp. 30-40
- Case Study: Pardo, *Grassroots Activism: Mothers of East Los Angeles* (On Canvas).

Assignment: Portfolio 3 assigned
(Oct. 21): Social Action: Building Power
Readings/Video:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch 4, pp. 43-59
- Case Study: Sunrise Movement - *Inside the Climate Movement*, (11 minute video)

In Class: Discuss the *Three Faces of Power*; Work on Organizational Raps and Recruitment Plans
Assignment: Portfolio 4 assigned
(Oct. 23): No Class- Campaign Work
Due: Portfolios 1 and 2 due

Week Nine

(Oct. 26): Social Action: Research
Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch. 5

Assignment: Portfolio 5 assigned
(Oct. 28): Social Action: Research

- No new readings

In class: work on Historical Analyses, Target Analyses, and Power Mapping
(Oct. 30): No Class- Campaign Work

Week Ten

(Nov. 2): Social Action: Interdisciplinary Contributions
Readings:

- No new readings

Due:

- ***Each team member must come in with at least two articles from their discipline that provides contextual support for their issue.***

In-Class: Work on Interdisciplinary Statements.
Assignment: Portfolio 6 assigned
(Nov. 4): Organizational Raps
Readings:

- No new readings

Due: Organizational Raps (Please upload to Canva before class and be prepared to deliver in class).

(Nov. 6): No Class – Campaign Work
Due: Hours Log Weeks 6-9

Week Eleven

(Nov. 9): Social Action: Strategies and Tactics
Reading:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch. 7

(Nov. 11): Social Action: Strategies and Tactics
Reading:

- Case Study: Puentes, Chase and Nicolette Worrell. 2022: "Indigenous Youth Leadership: Resistance in the Age of Pipelines"

Assignment: Portfolio 7 assigned
Due: Portfolios 3 and 4
(Nov. 13): No Class- Campaign Work

Week Twelve

(Nov. 16): Social Action: Campaign Kickoff
Readings:

- Myers-Lipton, Ch. 8

In Class: Work on Campaign Kickoff Planning
(Nov. 18): Social Action:
Readings:

- No New Readings

In Class: Work on Campaign Kickoff Planning
(Nov. 20): Campaign Kickoff Planning (Note: We are meeting in person today in lieu of Monday, Nov. 23)
Readings: No new Readings
Assignments: Portfolios 8 and 9 assigned
Due: Portfolios 5 and 6

Week Thirteen

(Nov. 23): No Class- Campaign Work
(Nov. 25): No Class (Thanksgiving Break)
(Nov. 27): No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week Fourteen

Campaign Kickoff Week!
(Nov. 30): Campaign Kickoff Planning
Readings:

- No New Readings

(Dec. 2): Campaign Kickoff Events
(Dec. 4): Campaign Kickoff Events

Week Fifteen

(Dec. 7): Group Presentations
(Dec. 9): Group Presentations
(Dec. 11): No Class
Due: Entire Portfolio (including Portfolios 7, 8 and 9 and revisions/additions on other sections); Hours Log Weeks 10-15

Week Sixteen

Wed. Dec. 16th:

- **Due at 10:00am on Canvas: End of Campaign Reflection Paper**
- **No Final Exam**