

# Environmental Sociology Syllabus

## SOCI 375 – Fall 2026

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“The challenge of modernity is to live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned.”

- Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison* (1994)

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**Instructor:** Dr. Erick Axxe (he/they)  
**Office:** Mills 220  
**Class time:** TR 9:45-11:00 AM

**Email:** axxe@hendrix.edu  
**Office phone:** 501.450.1445  
**Class location:** Mills 101

**Student hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00–3:00 p.m. Feel free to stop by anytime during these hours. [Appointments](#) are encouraged and will receive priority.

## Course Description

Environmental problems are also social problems. How societies organize economies, political institutions, communities, technologies, and everyday life shapes both environmental conditions and how people experience and respond to them. This course introduces environmental sociology as a way of examining these relationships between society and the environment. We will consider topics including environmental inequality and justice, population and demographic change, corporate and state power, environmental health, energy, climate change, labor, food systems, and environmental social movements. Throughout the course, particular attention will be given to how social structures and inequalities shape the production, distribution, interpretation, and response to environmental problems.

The course centers on a semester-long Community Environmental Profile (CEP). You will select a community and investigate its socioenvironmental conditions through field observation, demographic and historical research, interviews, and other forms of evidence. As the semester progresses, you will use concepts and theories from environmental sociology to move from observing environmental conditions to developing a sociological explanation of how and why those conditions have emerged. The course concludes with a symposium in which you will present your research through a conference-style poster.

This course meets in-person twice a week (see above for more information). Class meetings will combine discussion of course readings with applied activities and research workshops. Rather than completing a traditional final paper, you will build the CEP through a series of milestones, practice applying environmental sociology through an in-class midterm exercise, prepare reading note cards, and participate in workshops that support your research.

## Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain how social structures, institutions, and cultural practices shape relationships between societies and the environment.
- Apply and compare major theories and concepts from environmental sociology to analyze socioenvironmental problems.
- Analyze how power and inequality shape exposure to environmental harms, access to environmental benefits, participation in decision-making, and capacity to respond to environmental change.
- Investigate a community's socioenvironmental conditions using multiple forms of evidence, including observation, demographic and historical information, environmental data, interviews, and documentary sources.
- Develop evidence-based sociological explanations that connect environmental patterns to the social processes that produce and sustain them.
- Evaluate responses to environmental problems by examining their relationship to underlying causes, their tradeoffs and limitations, and their consequences for different groups.
- Communicate environmental sociological research clearly through written, visual, and oral forms.

## Required Materials and/or Technologies

- [\*20 Lessons in Environmental Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition\*](#) by Kenneth A. Gould and Tammy L. Lewis
- On select days, I will ask that you please bring a laptop or tablet to class. If you lack access to a device, please let me know so I can plan accordingly.
- All other materials (readings, videos, podcasts, etc.) will be posted on Teams in the “General” channel under “Files”.

## Grading and assignments

This course uses specifications grading. Rather than accumulating points across assignments, your work will be evaluated according to clearly defined expectations.

Major assignments are evaluated using the following categories:

- Complete: The work meets all specifications identified for the assignment.
- Developing: The work represents a substantive attempt but does not meet one or more required specifications. Eligible assignments may be revised using a revision token.
- Incomplete: The work is missing, substantially incomplete, or does not represent a substantive attempt to meet the assignment requirements.

Your final course grade is determined by the combination of work you successfully complete during the semester. To earn a particular course grade, you must meet **all** specifications listed for that grade.

**Community Environmental Profile:** The Community Environmental Profile (CEP) is the central project of the course. You will investigate a community throughout the semester through seven milestones:

1. M1: Observing the Environment
2. M2: Understanding the Community
3. M3: Identifying the Environmental Puzzle
4. M4: Investigating Lived Experience
5. M5: Explaining the Environmental Puzzle
6. M6: Evaluating Responses and Alternatives
7. Final CEP Poster, Symposium, and Reflection

The CEP milestones are stages of one developing research project rather than separate projects. As you gather new evidence and encounter new sociological ideas, you will revisit and refine your earlier thinking. A conclusion you reach in one milestone may change as your research develops. This revision of your thinking is an expected part of sociological research. Each CEP assignment will be evaluated as Complete, Developing, or Incomplete according to the specifications provided with the assignment.

**Midterm Application Exercise:** The midterm is an individual, in-class exercise in which you will apply environmental sociology to an unfamiliar environmental case. You will identify an environmental puzzle, apply sociological concepts and theories, analyze evidence, and develop an evidence-based explanation. The midterm will be evaluated as Complete, Developing, or Incomplete. You may use your *handwritten* reading note cards during the exercise.

**Reading Note Cards:** You will prepare 12 handwritten reading note cards during the semester. Note cards will help you identify important ideas from the readings, prepare for class, and build a collection of concepts and evidence that you can use throughout the course. Note cards are evaluated as Engaged, Developing, or Not Submitted. The grade specifications allow you to miss or receive Developing on some note cards without lowering your course grade. Bring your note card to class and keep all returned cards. Note cards will be collected at the end of the class for which the reading is assigned and returned at the next class meeting. You may use your accumulated note cards during the Midterm Application Exercise.

**Workshops and Class Engagement:** There are 12 counted workshop activities during the semester. These activities allow you to practice research and analytical skills while making progress on your CEP. A workshop counts as completed when you are present for the activity and complete the required individual or collaborative work. Workshop activities generally cannot be made up.

Attendance is also a course requirement. Attendance and workshop completion are separate specifications: attendance reflects your presence in the course as a whole, while workshop

completion reflects your participation in designated research and application activities. Excused absences, as defined in the Class Attendance policy below, do not count toward these thresholds.

**Revision tokens:** You begin the semester with two revision tokens. A revision token allows you to revise a CEP milestone or Midterm Application Exercise that received a Developing evaluation. To use a token, you must revise the assignment in response to the feedback you received and resubmit it within one week of receiving feedback. One revision uses one token; you must have an available revision token at the time you resubmit the assignment. If the revision meets the assignment specifications, its evaluation changes to Complete. If it does not, the assignment remains Developing. Revision tokens cannot be used for work that was not submitted or did not represent a substantive attempt.

**Late work:** Unless otherwise indicated, submitted assignments include a 48-hour grace period after the posted deadline. You do not need to request permission or provide an explanation to use this grace period. After the 48-hour grace period, late assignments will not be accepted unless you received permission from me before the grace period ended. If circumstances will prevent you from submitting your work within the grace period, contact me beforehand to discuss an alternative deadline. The grace period does not extend the one-week deadline for work being resubmitted with a revision token.

## *Specifications Grading*

The requirements below are minimum requirements. To earn a particular grade, you must satisfy every requirement listed for that grade.

- A
  - Complete at least 6 of the 7 CEP assignments, including:
    - M3: Environmental Puzzle
    - M4: Lived Experience
    - M5: Sociological Explanation
    - Final CEP Poster, Symposium, and Reflection
  - Earn Complete on the Midterm Application Exercise.
  - Earn Engaged on at least 10 of 12 Reading Note Cards.
  - Complete at least 11 of 12 counted workshop activities.
  - Have fewer than 3 unexcused absences.
- B
  - Complete at least 5 of the 7 CEP assignments, including:
    - M3: Environmental Puzzle
    - M5: Sociological Explanation
    - Final CEP Poster, Symposium, and Reflection
  - Earn Complete on the Midterm Application Exercise.
  - Earn Engaged on at least 9 of 12 Reading Note Cards.
  - Complete at least 10 of 12 counted workshop activities.
  - Have fewer than 5 unexcused absences.
- C
  - Complete at least 4 of the 7 CEP assignments, including:
    - M5: Sociological Explanation

- Final CEP Poster, Symposium, and Reflection
- Earn at least Developing on the Midterm Application Exercise.
- Earn Engaged on at least 8 of 12 Reading Note Cards.
- Complete at least 9 of 12 counted workshop activities.
- Have fewer than 7 unexcused absences.
- D
  - Complete at least 3 of the 7 CEP assignments, including:
    - Final CEP Poster, Symposium, and Reflection
  - Earn at least Developing on the Midterm Application Exercise.
  - Earn Engaged on at least 7 of 12 Reading Note Cards.
  - Complete at least 8 of 12 counted workshop activities.
  - Have fewer than 9 unexcused absences.
- F: A grade of F is earned if you do not meet all of the specifications for a D.

### **Instructor Feedback and Response Time**

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course.

- **Preferred contact method:** If you have a question relevant to the entire class, please contact me first through our course's [discussion board Q & A on Teams](#). If your question is specific to you, please email my Hendrix email address (axxe@hendrix.edu). I will reply to emails within **48 hours on days when class is in session at the college**.
- **Class announcements:** I will send all important class-wide messages through the [General](#) channel on Teams.
- **Grading and feedback:** For assignments submitted before the due date, I will try to provide feedback and grades within **seven days**. Assignments submitted after the due date may have reduced feedback, and grades may take longer to be posted.

[Course Schedule, Subject to Change](#) [click link to see]

## Hendrix Resources

**Academic integrity:** Our academic integrity policy may be found in the Catalog in section [D.6.c.Academic Integrity](#). Assignments must reflect your original work. Properly cite any sources used.

*Generative AI:* Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot may be used to support your learning unless an assignment specifically prohibits their use. You might use AI to clarify a difficult concept, generate study questions, understand feedback, or receive feedback on grammar. The guiding principle is simple: AI may support your learning, but it may not do the thinking an assignment is designed to assess. The ideas, analysis, interpretations, arguments, and writing you submit must reflect your own thinking. You are also responsible for evaluating AI-generated information, which may be inaccurate or misleading.

If you use generative AI for an assignment, include an AI use disclosure at the end of your submission with your complete prompt(s), the AI-generated response(s), and a brief explanation of how you used the output. These materials do not count toward the assignment's word limit. Disclosure does not make

prohibited AI use acceptable. Using AI in a prohibited way or failing to disclose its use may constitute academic dishonesty under the Hendrix College Academic Integrity Policy. If you are unsure whether a use is appropriate, ask before submitting the assignment.

**Statement on diversity:** Hendrix College values a diverse learning environment as outlined in the College's Statement on Diversity. All members of this community are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the community. If you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, please contact the Dean of Students Office (JB Banks, [banksa@hendrix.edu](mailto:banksa@hendrix.edu) or the submit a [Title IX report](#). If you have ideas for improving the inclusivity of the classroom experience please feel free to contact Dr. Axxe. For more information on Hendrix non-discrimination policies visit [Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination](http://Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination).

**Title IX Reports of Discrimination Based on Sex, including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Dating Violence, or Gender-Based Harassment.** (Follow link to see details.)

**Health and wellbeing:** Hendrix recognizes that many students face mental and/or physical health challenges. If your health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as soon as possible. Students should contact the Office of Advising & Academic Success ([AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu](mailto:AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu)) to begin the accommodation process. To maintain optimal health, please utilize campus resources like Hendrix Medical Clinic or Counseling Services (501.450.1448). Your health and wellbeing are important.

**Class attendance:** Our attendance policy may be found in the Catalog in section [D.6.e. Class Attendance](#). **If students must be absent from class, they are expected to email Dr. Axxe before class.** Without prior notification, absences are unexcused (barring true emergencies). Students will be excused for absences resulting from observance of religious holidays, cases of illness, and athletic competition, as well as any additional reasons as determined by the classroom teacher (e.g., conference travel, Model UN). Students do not need to present third-party documentation for absences related to physical or mental illness. Misrepresenting reasons for an absence to a classroom teacher is a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

**The Writing Center:** The Writing Center is a community of peers ready to assist you with your writing and communication projects, in all genres and fields, and at any stage of development. We work with you in one-on-one meetings that you can book in advance, or you can just drop in at our office in Bailey Library. Virtual appointments are available by special arrangement. To book appointments and for more information, visit [www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/), follow us on Instagram [@hdxwritingcenter](#), or contact [pruneda@hendrix.edu](mailto:pruneda@hendrix.edu). We look forward to working with you!

**Hendrix Bailey Library:** Bailey Library's mission is to collaborate and empower all members of our community so that they become their best selves, cherish the scope of human knowledge, and positively contribute to the world. Whether face-to-face or remote, librarians are happy to help locate quality resources supporting research and classroom work and to assist with the critical evaluation of academic information. Librarians provide individual research assistance by appointment. The library building is open seven days a week, and access to the library's online resources is available 24/7. You can visit the library's website at <https://www.hendrix.edu/baileylibrary/> for more information, to book an appointment, and to access the library's Discovery search, Class Guides, and full-text article databases.

**ADA accommodations:** As your instructor, it is my legal obligation to ensure that all students have equal access to course materials and equal opportunity to perform well in the course. In addition, "It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact the Office of Advising & Academic Success ([AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu](mailto:AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu)) to

begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course.”

**Technology:** Much of the technology we interact with is made to be addictive. I suggest you find and use resources that will help you resist distractions. [Here's](#) a website with a list of website blockers. Similar software exists for apps on phones and tablets. During class, technology (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) should be used only for purposes directly related to our course and the work we are doing that day.

## Additional Resources

*Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.*

- **Local housing shelters and women's shelters:** [Research](#) indicates that a number of low-income college students face homelessness or transient/insecure housing accommodations. [Affordable Colleges Online's website](#) provides statistics about college homelessness as well a way to locate local services.
- **Food Pantries:** [Here's](#) a list of local food pantries.
- **Zotero:** [Zotero](#) is a free citation management software.
- **Grammarly:** [Grammarly](#) is a free software that checks and suggests fixes to grammatical errors.
- An [inclusive data resource hub](#).