

Public Sociology: Ecological Justice and Community Action
Sociology 7660
Spring 2016

Professor: Peggy Petrzelka
Office: 216E Old Main
Office Hours: Mondays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:30
& by appt.

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"We human beings have the ability to dream better futures than we have yet succeeded in dreaming. We have the ability to create a much better society than we have yet succeeded in creating."

—Fred Polak, *The Image of the Future*

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."—Albert Einstein

Course Description

Public Sociology is the science of using sociology to inform real-life social issues and taking sociological knowledge and skills beyond the "ivory tower"¹ into communities. Public sociology stresses engaging in public discourse to raise awareness of social issues, and the importance of civic engagement and community action to a functional democratic society. The class highlights application of Public Sociology to ecological justice and community action.

Course Objectives:

- Learn to recognize, analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and methods on a range of Public Sociology issues.
- Gain factual knowledge and demonstrate an understanding of what Public Sociology is, the value of Public Sociology and what it involves.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how Public Sociology can be used to further ecological justice and community action.
- Learn how to apply course materials to improve problem solving regarding an environmental justice issue through designing and implementing a research project that reflects the core ideas of Public Sociology.

Course Format and Expectations

This course is split into two sections. The first half introduces us to Public Sociology and ways it has been conducted with a focus on readings on ecological justice and community action. The second part of the semester we will immerse ourselves in *doing* public sociology. Thus, over the course of the semester we will spend time discussing what the overall aim(s) of our project should be, how we will go about conducting Public Sociology as it relates to the issue, and then conduct our research.

I believe both participation and writing are critical to the learning process. I view this class as a seminar where **we all participate equally and learn from one another**. While there will be some lecture content, my goal is not to repeat what's in the readings but rather to clarify them (if need be) and use them as a beginning point from which to expand our discussion. Therefore, it is imperative that you read the material **at least once** prior to the scheduled lecture/discussion.

In-class Participation (30% of your grade)

You need to show that you have not only read the material but thought about it, and be ready to discuss it, in a critical manner. By participation I mean **regular class attendance and active engagement in class discussion**.

¹ From Wikipedia: "From the 19th century ivory tower has been used to designate a world or atmosphere where intellectuals engage in pursuits that are disconnected from the practical concerns of everyday life. As such, it usually carries pejorative connotations of a wilful disconnect from the everyday world; esoteric, over-specialized, or even useless research; and academic elitism, if not outright condescension."

Attendance is required in order to participate in the course. Missing more than one class will result in a grade reduction. Please keep in mind that you will be working as a research team, therefore your colleagues depend on you being present and being an active member of the team by sharing observations and questions from the readings and our discussion.

The following questions may be helpful in organizing your reading and thoughts on it:

- What is the conversation among the author's of today's readings? What parts intrigued you? Why?
- What did you think were the most important points made in the day's reading? Why are these important to you? Why should they be important to us?
- Do you agree or disagree with what the author had to say. Be able to explain why you agree or disagree. Give examples from other sources that support or challenge the author(s) position(s). Integrate your own research into this discussion if relevant.
- How are today's readings interrelated with our previous readings in the semester? Do they support what we have read previously, do they challenge what we have previously read?

To assist you with both reading the material and our discussions, we will have an on-line discussion forum.

Online Discussion Forum (20% of your grade)

Each week throughout the semester students will be asked to provide feedback via an online-course discussion system available through Canvas. Please post 3 discussion critical comments for the week's reading by 10:00 a.m. the day of class. Your comments will be accessible to the rest of the class and will reflect on the week's readings.

Public Sociology Project (50% of your grade)

Student Evaluation

The grading distribution is as follows:

94 and up	=	A
90 to 93	=	A-
87 to 89	=	B+
84 to 86	=	B
80 to 83	=	B-
77 to 79	=	C+
74 to 76	=	C
70 to 73	=	C-
67 to 69	=	D+
60 to 66	=	D
59 and below	=	F

Required Readings:

- Joe R. Feagin, Hernán Vera, and Kimberley Ducey. 2015. *Liberation Sociology*. Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, CO.

In addition, various readings are assigned and are on Canvas and/or a link to the readings is provided in your syllabus.

Classroom, Cell Phone and Laptop Use Policy

USU promotes the free expression of ideas and endeavors to maintain a classroom environment that promotes learning. Please treat each other with courtesy and be considerate of others in the class. Respect for differing viewpoints and opinions is both expected and required.

All cell phones and laptops must be turned off during class. It is unacceptable for anyone to make or receive cell phone calls and/or text messages during class time. **Absent a documented accommodation, laptops are not allowed in the classroom.** Laptop use impedes the seminar type discussion which will occur in this class. Additionally, research indicates that students with laptops do not perform as well as students without them and that laptops are disruptive to those students who do not have them.

COURSE SCHEDULE² Introduction to Public Sociology

January 13th) Introduction to the course.

January 20th) *Liberation Sociology*, Preface and Acknowledgements- Chs. 4

January 27th) *Liberation Sociology*, Chs. 5-6

Guest Speaker: Layne Coppock, Professor of Ecology, Dept. of Environment and Society, USU

Layne's readings will be distributed to you via zip file in email.

Selected articles on hydraulic fracturing in Vernal, Utah from *High Country News*:

<http://www.hcn.org/wotr/utah-faces-an-unconventional-future>

<http://www.hcn.org/issues/47.1/where-can-we-say-yes-to-oil-and-gas>

<http://www.hcn.org/blogs/goat/fracking-fuels-the-post-recession-economy-and-growth>

February 3rd) Readings on hydraulic fracturing submitted by classmates

Paul Solotaroff, 2015. What's Killing the Babies of Vernal, Utah? *Rolling Stone*.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/fracking-whats-killing-the-babies-of-vernal-utah-20150622>

February 10th) *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago*, Chs. 1, 4, 7

Stephanie Malin and Peggy Petrzalka. 2010. "Left in the Dust: Uranium's Legacy and Victims of Mill Tailings Exposure in Monticello, Utah." *Society and Natural Resources*. Vol. 23:1187–1200.

Guest Speaker: Stephanie Malin, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Colorado State University

February 17th) Guest Speaker: Melissa Haeffner, Post-doctoral Researcher (RF2: People, Places and Pipes)

Please note: revisions of the syllabus may occur during the course of the semester and will be announced in class. You will be held responsible for all changes announced in class.

Peggy Petrzela and Sandra Marquart-Pyatt. 2012. "With the Stroke of a Pen": Designation of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and the Impact on Trust." *Human Ecology*. Vol. 41:285-297.

February 24th) No Formal Class Meeting. Work on research project!

March 2nd) Kai Erikson. 1994. *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters*. Prologue, Chs. 1, 3, 4, & Epilogue.

Spring Break: March 6th-13th!!!!

March 16th) Bonacich, Edna. 2007. "Working with the Labor Movement: A Personal Journey in Organic Public Sociology." Pgs. 73- 94 in *Public Sociology: The Contemporary Debate*. Lawrence T. Nichols, ed.

Bailey, Conner, Kelly Alley, Charles E. Faupel, and Cathy Solheim. 1995. "Environmental Justice and the Professional," pgs. 35-44 in *Environmental Justice: Issues, Policies and Solutions*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Scott J. Peters. 2012. "Foreword," pgs. vii-xiii in *Confronting Ecological Crisis in Appalachia and the South*. Edited by Stephanie McSpirit, Lynne Faltraco, and Conner Bailey. University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

Lynne Faltraco and Conner Bailey. 2012. "Building partnerships to challenge chip meals", pgs. 109-130 in *Confronting Ecological Crisis in Appalachia and the South*. Edited by Stephanie McSpirit, Lynne Faltraco, and Conner Bailey. University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

March 23rd) *Liberation Sociology*, Ch. 8

Additional Readings to be determined based on class research needs.
On-going Data collection and analysis discussion. Research reports.

March 30th) No Formal Class Meeting. Work on research project!

April 6th) Readings to be determined based on class research needs.
On-going Data collection and analysis discussion. Research reports.

April 13th) Readings to be determined based on class research needs.
On-going Data collection and analysis discussion. Research reports

April 20th) Readings to be determined based on class research needs.
On-going Data collection and analysis discussion. Research Team reports.

April 27th) Research Team Presentations held in SSWA Conference Room, 224 Old Main.

May 3rd) Research Paper Due at noon in my mailbox in 225 Old Main!!

GOOD LUCK WITH FINALS AND HAVE A HAPPY SUMMER!!!!

Students with ADA-documented physical, sensory, emotional or medical impairments may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Veterans may also be eligible for services. All accommodations are coordinated through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Room 101 of the University Inn, (435)797-2444 voice, (435)797-0740 TTY, or toll free at 1-800-259-2966. Please contact the DRC as early in the semester as possible. Alternate format materials (Braille, large print or digital) are available with advance notice.