



Sociology 2220b (670)
Sociology of the Environment I
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: D. Kerr
Email: dkerr@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course examines environmental issues and concerns from a sociological perspective. Topics include environmental values, attitudes and behaviour; environmental movements; the political economy of the environment, and environmental risk and risk assessment. Debates surrounding such concepts as sustainable development will also be emphasized.

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 from Sociology courses at the 1000 level.

Extra Information: 3 lecture hours.

Course Weight: 0.50
Breadth: Category A
Subject Code: SOCIOLOG

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

King's University College
Sociology 2220 670
Sociology of the Environment Winter 2026

Course information:

Course: Sociology of the Environment
Instructor: Don Kerr
Contact Information: dkerr@uwo.ca
Office hours: Fridays 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Course description:

This course examines environmental issues and concerns from a sociological perspective. Topics include environmental values, attitudes and behavior; environmental movements; the political economy of the environment, and environmental risk and risk assessment. Debates surrounding such concepts as sustainable development will also be emphasized.

Course learning outcomes:

This course is a broad survey course outline some of the basic literature associated with the sociology of the environment.

Be familiar with how some of the most common theoretical/ideological lenses/paradigms in modern sociology can be usefully applied to understanding environmental issues.

Gain a more detailed practical understanding of how demographic and societal change impacts the environment.

Be familiar with several fundamental environmental challenges specific to Canadian society, while gaining insight as to how public policy might potentially address some of these challenges

Mode of Instruction: Online asynchronous / exams in class

This course is online except tests and is mounted to OWL Brightspace.

This class is designed to be asynchronous, meaning we will not have a regular, mandatory time when the entire class must be online, and students will 'self-pace' their learning.

Format: On a weekly basis (each Monday), a video of my class lecture (with PDFs of my lecture PowerPoint) will be posted on the Sociology 2220 OWL Brightspace website. These lectures will follow the below schedule of weekly assigned readings. Students will also be provided assigned text readings each week. This will form the basis for the 'self-paced' learning.

I am a very accessible Professor and will have hours posted for students who want to talk to me individually. My hours will be 'drop in' (scheduled weekly: Fridays 1:30-3:30 p.m.). Details will be forthcoming, but the basic idea is that I will be available at this time via a Zoom link. If not convenient, I can also take meetings booked at other times. All of these interactions will be online (not face-to-face) and will be facilitated through UWO ZOOM.

Students will receive all instructions and support through the class website set up on OWL Brightspace.

This course begins the week of January 6th and continues through to the final examination period, honoring all important dates derived from university approved guidelines and academic policies.

Course textbooks/materials:

Most of the required readings and selected recommended readings for this course are available on the course website.

Environment and Society: A Critical Introduction, 2022. 3rd Edition Paul Robbins, John G. Hintz, Sarah A. Moore Wiley-Blackwell.

E-Book \$58.95

The book is available at the University Bookstore (both hard copies and e-books). This version of the text book is different from earlier versions, so I recommend that you locate the 3rd edition!

Students will need to have access to a personal computer with relatively up to date operating system, functional mic and camera, and reliable mid to high-speed internet.

Method of evaluation:

(i) Mid-term exam (50%)

(ii) Final exam (50%)

Both the mid-term and final exams will comprise of both multiple choice and short essay questions (3 hours). All content from required readings and course lectures are fair game in these exams. The multiple-choice questions may be drawn from the required readings. By short essay questions, I am referring to questions that can be answered in a couple of paragraphs minimum (but there is no upper limit in terms of how you want to answer these). The essay questions will be based on the course lectures.

All exams will focus on untested material since the last exam. The tests are not cumulative!

The exams themselves will be closed book, in person, and synchronous.

The midterm exam (3 hours) will be scheduled on campus on Week 8 of this term. Two specific times will be given to assist in your scheduling. This midterm is a “**designated assessment**”

The final exam (3 hours) will be during the final examination period, again on-campus.

Once scheduled these exams cannot be missed except under circumstances acceptable to the Academic Dean’s Office (like any other scheduled exam in a course). Sign-ups for the midterm exam will be available well ahead of time.

Academic Integrity

- *Link to Western Scholastic Discipline policy:*
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Schedule of Classes, Readings, Assessments:

Week of January 6th

Introduction/Course logistics

Video: The world at 8 billion

Week of January 13th

Global Population Growth

Robbins et al. Chapter 1

United Nations Population Prospects 2024

file:///C:/Users/dkerr/Downloads/undesa_pd_2024_WPP2024_Summary_of_Results-1.pdf

Week of January 20th

Origins Pandora’s Seed (details forthcoming)

Week of January 27th

Population and Scarcity

Robbins et al. Chapter 2

Week of February 2nd

Markets and Commodities

Robbins et al. Chapter 3

Week of February 9th

Institutions and the “Commons”

Robbins et al. Chapter 4

Week of February 16th
Reading week (no classes)

Week of February 23rd
Midterm test (3 hours); time and location to be announced

Week of March 2nd
Environmental Ethics
Robbins et al. Chapter 5

Week of March 9th
Risks and Hazards
Robbins et al. Chapter 6

Week of March 16th
Political Economy
Robbins et al. Chapter 7

Week of March 23rd
Carbon Dioxide
Robbins et al. Chapter 9

Week of March 30th
Trees/Conservation vs Forest Management/Biodiversity loss
Robbins et al. Chapters 10 & 11

Final examination period:
Final exam will be held during the examination period

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King’s is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western’s Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.