

# SO368-15 The Sociology of Green Transformations

**21/22**

**Department**

Sociology

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Alice Mah

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

There is an urgent need for societies and economies to shift away from fossil fuels and unsustainable models of economic growth to tackle escalating global social and environmental crises. This module interrogates debates, policies, movements, and conflicts over green transformations, drawing on perspectives from environmental sociology and interdisciplinary social sciences. The module will address different social and political visions of transformation, across markets, states, civil society, and social movements in both the Global North and the Global South, examining competing political interests and deepening social inequalities during processes of social and economic change. Students in the module will critically examine a range of debates surrounding green transformations, including dominant market-based and technology-based "solutions", Green New Deal proposals, calls for "just transitions" to protect displaced workers and communities, and alternative ecological proposals from civil society and social movements.

### Module aims

This module aims to equip students with an advanced and critical understanding of the key debates, challenges, conflicts, and dilemmas surrounding green transformations. Students will gain an appreciation for the important role of sociological and interdisciplinary social science

perspectives and methodologies for confronting global environmental challenges and for interpreting and evaluating the "solutions". The module is designed as an optional module for both final year UG and PGT students.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Introduction to the Sociology of Green Transformations;

PART I: Transforming States and Markets;

Week 2: Corporate Power and Energy Transitions;

Week 3: Markets, Technology, and Environmental Solutions;

Week 4: The Circular Economy and Zero Waste;

Week 5: The Green New Deal;

Week 6: Reading Week;

PART II: Movements and Philosophies;

Week 7: Just Transitions;

Week 8: Degrowth and Post-Growth;

Week 9: Anticolonial and Indigenous Ecologies;

Week 10: Ecological Conflicts and Incommensurable Values

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Identify, interpret, and critically analyse key interdisciplinary social science debates and perspectives on green transformations
- Develop a critical and reflexive appreciation for the role of sociological perspectives for understanding and interpreting green transformations
- Gain an advanced and critical understanding of the role of social inequalities and power in shaping global environmental challenges
- Interpret and critically evaluate different proposed solutions for tackling global environmental challenges from sociological and interdisciplinary social science perspectives

## **Indicative reading list**

Barca, Stefania. 2012. "On Working-Class Environmentalism: An Historical and Transnational Overview," *Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements* 4: 61-80.

Barca, Stefania, Alexander Paulson, and Ekaterina Chertkovskaya, eds. 2019. *Towards a Political Economy of Degrowth*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Benanov, Aaron. 2020. *Automation and the Future of Work*. Verso.

Blauwof, F.B. 2012. Overcoming Accumulation: Is Capitalist Steady-Steady Economics Possible? *Ecological Economics* 84: 241-261.

Bullard, Robert D. 1990. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Chandler, Alfred D. 2005. *Shaping the Industrial Century: The Remarkable Story of the Evolution of the Modern Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industries*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University

Press.

Colburn, Theo. 2013. *The Fossil Fuel Connection*. EarthFocus <https://tinyurl.com/y9jq8c6g>

Dauvergne, Peter. 2018. *Will Big Business Destroy our Planet?* Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Downey, L. 2015. *Inequality, Democracy, and the Environment*. New York: New York University Press.

Escobar, Arturo. 2018. *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Duke University Press.

Ferguson, James. 2005. "Seeing Like an Oil Company: Space, Security, and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa." *American Anthropologist*, 107: 377-382.

Gómez-Barris, Macarena. 2017. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Heaney, Michael T., and Fabio Rojas. 2014. "Hybrid Activism: Social Movement Mobilization in a Multimovement Environment." *American Journal of Sociology* 119(4): 1047-1103.

Hess, David J. and Lacey A. Satcher (2019) "Conditions for successful environmental justice mobilizations: an analysis of 50 cases." *Environmental Politics* 28(4): 663-684.

Kallis, Giorgos, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa, and Federico Demaria. 2020. *The Case for Degrowth*. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Klein, Naomi. 2019. *On Fire: The Burning Case for the Green New Deal*. Penguin.

Levy, David L., and Peter Newell. 2005. *The Business of Global Environmental Governance. Global Environmental Accord*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Markowitz, Gerald E., and David Rosner. 2002. *Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Martínez-Alier, J., Pascual, U., Vivien, F.D. and Zaccai, E., 2010. Sustainable De- Growth: Mapping the Context, Criticisms and Future Prospects of an Emergent Paradigm. *Ecological Economics* 69(9): 1741-1747.

Mayer, Brian. 2011. *Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Mazzucato, Mariana. 2018. *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy*. Penguin.

Meadows, D., Randers, J. and Meadows, D., 2004. *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2013. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso.

Morena, Edouard, Dunja Krause, and Dimitris Stevis, eds. 2020. *Just Transitions: Social Justice in the Shift Towards a Low-Carbon World*. Pluto Press.

O'Neill, Kate. 2019. *Waste*. Polity Press.

Pellow, David N. 2018. *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?* Cambridge: Polity.

Polanyi, Karl, and Robert Morrison MacIver. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Ponte, Stefano. 2019. *Business, Power and Sustainability in a World of Global Value Chains*. London: Zed.

Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998

Shiva, Vandana. 2013. *Making Peace with the Earth*. Pluto Press.

Smil, V. 2019. *Growth: From Microorganisms to Megacities*. MIT Press.

Stevs, D. and Felli, R., 2020. Planetary Just Transition? How Inclusive and How Just?. *Earth System Governance* 6: 100065. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2020.100065>

- Tsing, Anna L. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Fife in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton University Press.
- Tuck, Eve. 2009. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79: 409-428.
- Voulvouli, Aimilia. 2011. "Transenvironmental Protest: The Arnavutköy Anti-Bridge Campaign in Istanbul." *Environmental Politics* 20(6): 861-878.
- Wang, Xinghong and Yuanni Wang. 2020. "Soft Confrontation: Strategic Actions of an Environmental Organization in China," In *Toxic Truths: Environmental Justice and Citizen Science in a Post-Truth Age*, edited by Thom Davies and Alice Mah, 220-236. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Whyte, Kyle. 2017. "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene." *English Language Notes* 55(1): 153-162.
- Walls-Wallace, D. 2018. *The Uninhabitable Earth*. Penguin.
- Wiebe, Sarah M. 2016. *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Wylie, Sara A. 2018. *Fractivism: Corporate Bodies and Chemical Bonds*, Durham, Duke University Press.

## **Interdisciplinary**

The topic of green transformations is highly interdisciplinary, and the module engages with perspectives from across the social sciences and indeed the natural sciences. The most clear interdisciplinary connection is with the Global Sustainable Development programme, as this course would be complementary to the perspectives offered there. The module highlights the valuable and distinctive contributions of sociology to interdisciplinary debates on environmental issues, while opening up engagements across disciplines for synergies and cross-fertilisation.

## **Subject specific skills**

- critical understanding of key perspectives, approaches, debates, and topics within a key subfield with the discipline , demonstrating breadth as well as critical depth of knowledge;
- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge, particularly regarding other disciplines and perspectives;
- use a range of sociological methods of research and inquiry to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis;
- develop existing skills and acquire new competences in research analysis and critical thinking that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.

## **Transferable skills**

- critical thinking, analysis, and research skills would be valuable skills for working in organisations
  - effectively communicate and demonstrate the value of sociological approaches to specialist and non-specialist audiences for understanding, interpreting, and confronting complex social and environmental issues.
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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Private study	132 hours (47%)
Assessment	132 hours (47%)
Total	282 hours

### Private study description

Students are expected to read set texts each week in preparation for the seminar.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
Essay	100%	132 hours
Assessed Essay		

### Feedback on assessment

Students will receive written, electronic feedback on all work through the Tabula system. They can receive verbal feedback during Advice and Feedback hours.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 3 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Optional for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
  - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
  - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
  - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
- Year 4 of USOA-L306 BA in Sociology (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- ULAA-ML34 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
  - Year 3 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
  - Year 4 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
  - Year 4 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
- Year 4 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 4 of UPOA-ML14 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology (with Intercalated year)