

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY
Qualifying Exam
2023

The questions below constitute the qualifying exam for Environmental Sociology. To complete the exam, you must answer one question from each of the three sections below in an essay format. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8–10 pages long (i.e., 2,000–2,500 words). Although you must cite to referenced work in each essay, one comprehensive bibliography for all three questions will be sufficient. You may consult materials from the reading list you've been provided, as well as any other scholarly sources you've read during the exam period.

This qualifying exam is to be completed in two weeks. The evaluation of the exam will take two weeks. You will be notified of your performance by email. Make sure that the office has your up-to-date contact information. Please use the identifying student number that you have been assigned at the top of your exam. The exams are graded confidentially, and numbers only will be used to identify the author of the exam. See the *Graduate Handbook* for any further details.

A. Choose one of the following:

1. This year's COP27 annual UN climate conference concluded in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt with countries agreeing to set up a "loss and damage" fund, which would offer vulnerable nations financial assistance in responding to the climate crisis. Explore this multilateral funding mechanism from the perspective of at least three theoretical perspectives that constitute environmental sociology.
2. What is the primary concern of environmental justice scholarship? What have we learned from this scholarship over the past two decades about the causes and consequences of unequal exposure to environmental problems.

B. Choose one of the following:

1. Environmental problems, especially climate change, are typically framed as technical scientific problems. What perspective can sociologists bring to these questions that is often missed in this conventional framing?
2. The IPCC reports on climate change and other authoritative sources contend that "humans" are causing environmental harms. This speaks to what some call an "anthropogenic" theory. What exactly is this idea? Explain why it either has merit, or, if not, articulate a more convincing way to grasp these problems.

C. Choose one of the following:

1. Since the inception of U.S. environmental sociology, three macro-level theories of the nature-society relationship in capitalism or modernity have competed with each other: eco-Marxism, ecological modernization, and the risk society thesis. How does each explain environmental problems and nascent efforts at containing them? What is the advantage of each? What are their shortcomings?
2. Describe how eco-Marxism, Frankfurt School, and Actor-Network Theory frame the relationship between nature and society. How do they define/know nature, its relation to humans, society, science, and technology? What issues and concepts are introduced by scholars and activists when they apply these frameworks to the Global South?