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<http://www.atsweb.neu.edu/sociology/j.perrolle/socU485/socU485sp04.html>

## **SocU485 Environment, Technology, and Society Syllabus Spring 2004**

Northeastern University, Key Number 69388

[Course description](#).

Class meets sequence 2: MWTh 9:15-10:20 in room 411 Robinson

Prof. Judith A. [Perrolle](#) ([www.ccs.neu.edu/home/perrolle/](http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/perrolle/))

### **Required Text** (at the Bookstore)

G. Tyler Miller, Jr. *Living in the Environment*, 13th Edition, Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 2003.

[Online resources](#) for the textbook.

[Blog](#) (not required) for people who want to write online journals.

### **About the Course**

The goal of this course is to explore the complex relationships among human society, technology, and the natural environment. Sociology will be emphasized, but the study of environmental sociology requires basic concepts drawn from the other social and natural sciences. It is important for students to develop an interdisciplinary approach to environment and technology issues and to integrate this approach with their own perspectives.

To facilitate this process, students are asked to keep a journal in which they record their reactions to lectures, readings, and discussion questions. Journals should be typed, but may be written in an informal style. Journal entries will be due every two weeks and cover what will be for most students a fairly heavy reading schedule. Several specific questions will be assigned for each chapter and should be answered in a good paragraph each. In addition, you are to write a short essay (one or two paragraphs will do) reacting to the material you have read and heard. If you can't think of what to write about, you can answer one of the critical thinking questions (from the end of chapters or from one of the guest essays) or do one of the online exercises from the textbook publisher's website.

Grades for the journals will be based on evidence of your having read the assignments, listened to lectures and discussions, thought about both, and put the material together

with your own experience in an analytical and critical way. Your opinions will not be graded, but your ability to support your opinions with a logical argument will.

The 6th journal entry will be an analysis of the technological causes and possible solutions to an environmental of your own choice. It may be based entirely on the material in the textbook, although it is recommended that you use the online resources as well. Grades for the final journal will be based on your ability to:

1. describe an appropriate problem;
2. present culturally, economically and politically feasible options for solving it;
3. indicate what the best solution would be and why (being careful to evaluate technological solutions rather than simply asserting them);
4. and document your sources of information (use page numbers for material from the textbook and URLs for online material). Note: There is an excellent online guide to citing electronic sources at <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>.

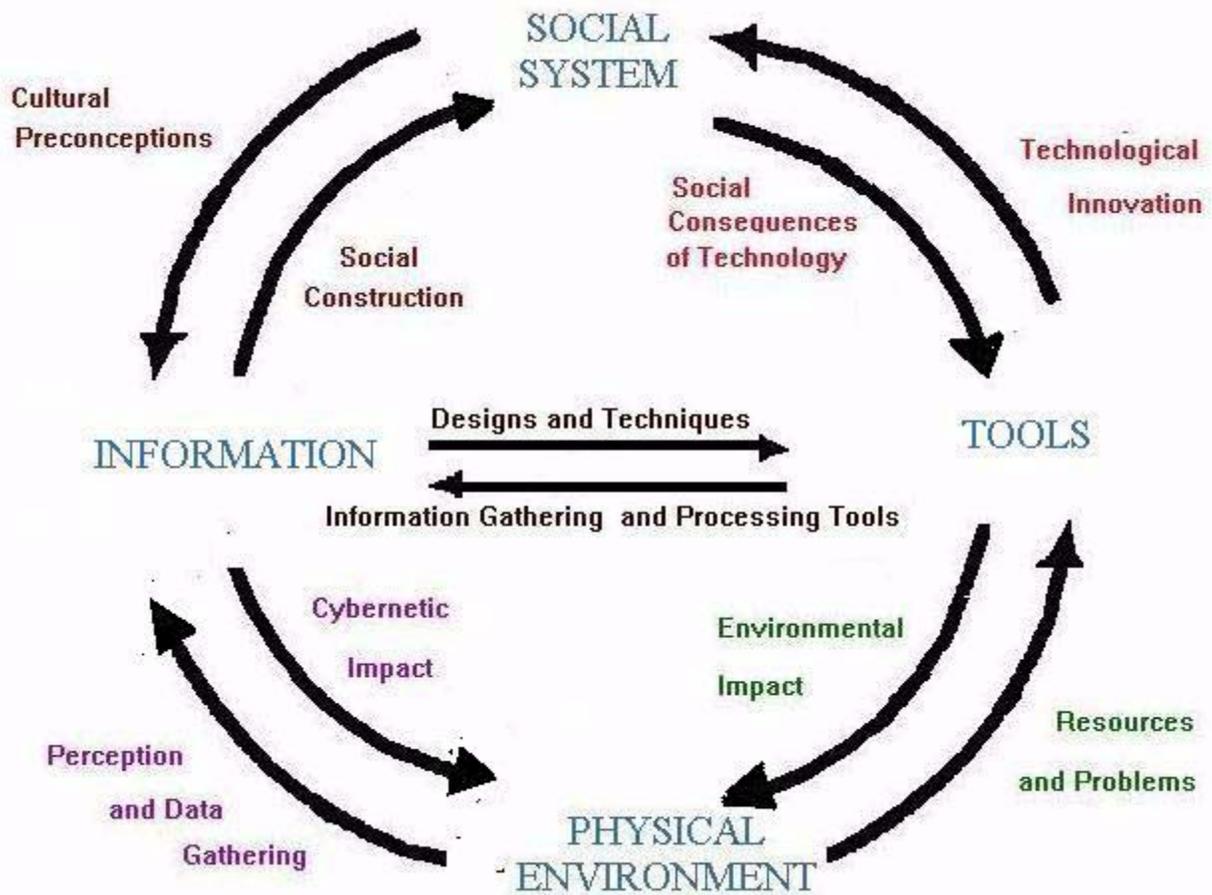
If you want to base your problem on the textbook material use the index and detailed table of contents to locate relevant information in the material that hasn't been assigned. You can cite it simply as (Miller, page number). Students who wish to may substitute an appropriate environmental activity for the final essay, **BUT THESE MUST BE CHECKED WITH THE INSTRUCTOR FIRST.**

### **Journal Due Dates:**

- [Journal 1](#) due W January 14, 5 % of grade
- [Journal 2](#) due W January 28, 20 % of grade
- [Journal 3](#) due W February 11, 20% of grade
- [Journal 4](#) due W February 25, 20 % of grade
- [Journal 5](#) due W March 17, 15 % of grade
- [Journal 6](#) due at the time of the scheduled exam, 20 % of grade [If you have not finished your sixth journal you will have to do it as an open book final exam.]
- **Class participation** may raise your grade by half a letter.

## **Ideology, Technology, and the Environment W Jan 7 - W Jan 15**

We will use the first weeks to explore our beliefs about technology and environmental problems. This is part of a phenomenon called [social construction](#). Our beliefs can be based on [ideology](#) if we do not test our ideas against evidence in the natural world. One starting point is to consider how technology and the environment are related, and how human beliefs and behaviors influence those relationships:



### Explanation of Figure

Another way to look at technology is to consider the uses and abuses of some ordinary, traditional objects, such as [shoes](#).

**Read in Miller:** Chapters 1 and 28.

### **Links:**

Lancaster University's Environmental Philosophy web site [Environmental  
www.lancs.ac.uk/users/philosophy/mave/Guide\\_1.htm](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/philosophy/mave/Guide_1.htm)

[Chapter 1 links](#)

[Chapter 28 links](#)

### **Journal 1: (due W Jan, 14)**

1. (This answer will be graded pass/fail) Briefly define (in your own words) technology and environment. Explain what you hope to get out of this course.
2. Answer Critical Thinking questions 9 and 11 on page 21 (Chapter 1).

3. Answer Critical Thinking question 12 on page 756 (Chapter 28).

## Capitalism and Conservation W Jan 14 - W Jan 28

We will take a rapid tour of the key concepts of environmental science and the world's economy.

**Read in Miller:** Chapters 26, 3, 4, 15, 16 and 21.

**Links:**

[Chapter 26 links](#)

[Chapter 3 links](#)

[Chapter 4 links](#)

[Chapter 15 links](#)

[Chapter 16 links](#)

**In Journal 2:** due W Jan 28

1. Answer Critical Thinking questions 1 and 6 on page 62, and 10 on page 63 (Chapter 3).
2. Answer Critical Thinking question 4 on page 94 (Chapter 4).
3. Answer Critical Thinking questions 8 and 10 on page 379 (Chapter 15).
4. Answer Critical Thinking questions 6 and 8 on page 415 (Chapter 16).
5. Answer Critical Thinking questions 6 and 7 on page 557 (Chapter 21).
6. Answer Critical Thinking question 7 on page 714 (Chapter 26).
7. (graded pass/fail) Briefly discuss your attitude towards natural science and anything else you want to say about these four chapters.

## Social Construction of Environmental Problems W Jan 28 - W Feb 11

**Read in Miller:** Chapter 27.

**Links:**

[Chapter 27 links](#)

We will examine how environment and technology problems are recognized and defined. Each student will select a problem for their final journal entry. We will try to avoid assuming that "technology" is the solution to all problems.

To select your problem you may find these links useful:

- United Nations' Environment Programme's Agenda 21 emerging environmental problems listed at their Earthwatch site <http://earthwatch.unep.net/>
- The Union of Concerned Scientists' issues list <http://www.ucsusa.org/>

**In Journal 3:** due W Feb 11

1. Answer Critical Thinking questions 1, 6, and 7 on page 739 and question 8 on page 740. (Chapter 27).
2. (graded pass/fail) Write a short statement of the problem you have chosen for your 5th Journal and add any other comments you care to make about this section of the course.

## **Population, Food, and Biotechnology W Feb 11 - W Feb 25**

We will be examining the interrelated problems of population growth, food resources, and agricultural pollution. We will also consider whether biotechnology offers solutions to these problems or is introducing new problems.

**Read in Miller:** Chapters 9 (section 9.1 only), 11, 12, 13, 19 and 20.

**Links:**

[Chapter 9 links](#)

[Chapter 11 links](#)

[Chapter 12 links](#)

[Chapter 13 links](#)

[Chapter 19 links](#)

[Chapter 20 links](#)

**Read online:** Search for information on your final journal topic.

**In Journal 4:** due F Feb 25

1. Answer Critical Thinking questions 4, 6, and 7 on page 251 (Chapter 11).
2. Answer Critical Thinking questions 2, 4, 8 and 9 on page 275 and questions 10 and 11 on page 276 (Chapter 12).
3. Answer Critical Thinking questions 1, 2, and 7 on page 310 (Chapter 13).
4. Answer Critical Thinking questions 9 and 10 on page 511 (Chapter 19).
5. Answer Critical Thinking questions 5 and 8 on page 524 (Chapter 20).
6. (graded pass/fail) Give a status report on your journal 6 topic.

## **Risk and Security W Feb 25 - W Mar 17**

Lectures will cover the the use of technologies for surveillance, warfare, and terrorism. Discussions will focus on the tensions between democracy and security. Readings will cover the specific problem you have chosen.

**In Journal 5:** due W Mar 17

Write an essay on Technology, Risk, and Security. It should be at least two and one half doublespaced pages.

## **Topics to Be Chosen by Class W Mar 17 - W Apr 14**

Lectures will cover issues chosen by the class. Readings will cover the specific problem you have chosen.

Read in Miller: The chapter or chapters that cover the environmental problem you have chosen for Journal 6.

**Read online:** Additional material for your final journal.

**In Journal 6:** Discuss the environmental problem you have chosen. [More information](#) at the beginning of the syllabus.

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