

Environmental Sociology

Possible Test Questions for Test 2:

Unless otherwise notified, 4 of these questions
(or some version of them) will be randomly selected for Test 2

Be sure to link your answers to the text, PowerPoint slides and class discussion. Feel free to use personal experiences or those you know of to provide examples when answering the questions.

UPDATED: February 23, 2025

Stuart, Chapter 2:

1. (a.) What does Stuart mean when she says that environmental problems/impacts are socially constructed? (b) What is the role of science in defining the climate crisis? (c.) How is science a social process? (d) How is science influenced and who is involved?
2. (a.) Why are scientific findings sometimes contested? (b) What is public sociology and how can it play a role where there are disagreements interpreting scientific findings? (c.) What other roles can environmental sociologists play? (d) Discuss how public sociology addressed the use of highly fluorinated compounds.
3. (a.) What is “risk” and why is it considered a social construct? (b.) Use the “flame retardants” discussed by Stuart as well as climate change as examples. (c.) List at least three of the four factors Stuart contributes to causing something to be perceived as a risk? (d.) Why does Stuart feel we are entering a time of more risk? Provide examples.
4. (a.) What is meant by a “false balance?” Provide an example. (b) What is meant by “reinforcing spirals.” Provide an example.
5. (a.) How did the water crisis that occurred in Flint, Michigan in 2014 come about? (b.) What were its effects? (c.) How is this an example of environmental injustice? (d.) How did the public become aware of the problem? (e.) What was done to fix it?
6. (a.) What is meant by environmental injustice (EJ)? (b.) How is this defined by the EPA? (c.) Use the case of soil contaminated by PCBs as an example. (d.) Describe at least three forms of environmental injustice as discussed by Stuart. (e.) Why are the impacts of global warming more harmful to lower-income people and people in the Global south? (f.) Is this environmental injustice? Explain.
7. (a) Identify three of the American values discussed in class that affect attitudes toward the environment and explain what effects they have. (b) What is the difference between the terms climate “change” and climate “crisis?” (c) How are the terms related to the social construction of ideas? (d) How is climate justice similar to environmental justice and how is it different? (e.) Provide examples of climate justice.

Hannigan Chapter 3:

8. Hannigan notes that: The public's environmental concern is not constant but fluctuating.
(a) Why is this? Hannigan provides three stages or steps that must be taken to convince the public and "fix" the environmental problems. These include: assembling, presenting and contesting. For each: (b) Define what it is; (c) explain why it is important; and (d) briefly how it might be accomplished.
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9. (a) When attempting to collect environmental data, who typically provides it and shows the seriousness of the problem (Hannigan discusses two groups of people)? (b) Describe three problems that can occur when assembling the data. (c) Describe three problems when attempting to contest/argue the case of a serious environmental problem.
10. Hannigan provides six necessary factors for successfully constructing an environmental problem. (a) What is meant by constructing an environmental problem? (b) Describe five factors that can help to successfully construct an environmental problem, be sure to explain how they can help (Hannigan provides at least six).
11. Hannigan explains that persuading the public about an issue typically requires: grounds, warrants, and conclusions. (a) Describe each of these and explain how they contribute to persuasion. (b) Hannigan offers three steps to effective persuasion, beginning with presenting the data in a persuasive way. Describe each step along with information important to each.
12. (a) Once the data/claims have been assembled and presented to the public, what does Hannigan recommend for spurring or getting the public to contest/give attention to the issues? Provide at least five recommendations (Hannigan provides at least 8)?
13. (a) Who does the public generally believe are/respond to as effective claims-makers (e.g., types of professions) with regard to claims about the environment (provide at least four)? (b) What does Hannigan note can go wrong during the presenting of the claims (discuss at least three)?
14. Hannigan explains that some environmental claims capture the public eye while others do not and he attributes this to: uniqueness, relevance, stature, and familiarity. (a) Explain what each of these are, how they are related to capturing the public eye, and (b) provide an example of each.
15. One means of contesting environmental issues is to provide law makers with "draft" legislation that they can submit at the city, state, or national level. What should be included in draft legislation to increase its chances of acceptance (describe at least three)?