

# Intro to Environmental Studies

## ENVR 110 / Spring 2011

### Meeting Times:

Lecture – Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 – 3:15, Kellas 217

Field Trip – Saturday, April 30

### Instructor:

Bill Brown

Timmerman 229, Phone 267-2858

Office Hours – Tuesday 11-Noon, Thursday 11-Noon and 3:30-4:30pm, and Mon by Appt.

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### Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of environmental issues. It incorporates the social, political, economic, cultural, and biophysical dimensions of a diversity of environmental problems and solutions, and it includes a special focus on the Adirondacks. Human-environmental relations are complex and this course aims to provide students with the tools to critically analyze environmental issues from a variety of perspectives. The course will briefly review human impacts on the environment, look at historical and contemporary views of the environment, and explore potential solutions to current environmental problems. Students are expected to actively engage in class discussions, small group projects, and practical exercises.

### Required Texts:

Easton, Thomas, 2009. *Sources: Environmental Studies*, New York: McGraw-Hill

Terrie, Philip. G. 2008. *Contested Terrain: A New History of Nature and People in the Adirondacks*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Adirondack Museum/Syracuse University Press.

Weston, Anthony. 2009. *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 4th ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing

### Course Goals & Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the interdisciplinary dimensions of environmental issues.
- Analyze complex environmental problems and solutions.
- Critique media coverage of environmental issues.
- Demonstrate effective critical thinking skills.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the history of conservation in the US.
- Apply knowledge of the Adirondacks as a particular place.
- Gain an understanding of environmental citizenship.

This course is also designed to impart the critical thinking skills of the General Education designator “FC”, and will introduce students to essential standards of good reasoning; strengthen basic reasoning skills in oral and written exercises; and encourage the application of critical thinking to evaluate arguments. (See Learning outcomes for FC below).

### Class Attendance and Conduct

You are expected to attend all classes. Your grade will be lowered for each absence after 2. Excused absences, such as illness, require documentation from the health center or other appropriate source. The classroom should provide an atmosphere for learning and a forum for the exchange of ideas. Discussion and debate is encouraged - while being respectful of one another and of differing points of view.

### Daily Schedule and Assignments

Please complete the readings and assignments listed for each day before you come to class. Daily assignments and course materials are on Blackboard: <http://blackboard.potsdam.edu/>. Readings and assignments may change, so check blackboard regularly. Specific guidelines for individual assignments will be provided.

### Late Assignments

No late homework assignments, newspaper topics, or journal articles will be accepted. If you are absent, email or send the assignment to me by the start of class. For the Individual Research Project, Personal Essay, and Adirondack Assignment, your grade will be lowered for each day it is late – so plan ahead to complete them on time.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism, cheating, and conduct contrary to SUNY Potsdam Policies will not be tolerated. Do not present other's words or ideas as your own. Properly cite any sources using MLA style (see SUNY Potsdam Library Page for details).

### Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Cell phones are to be turned off and no texting is permitted during class. Laptops may be used for class purposes, such as taking notes.

### Learning Outcomes for FC (Critical Thinking)

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Identify the main question, problem, or claim in discourse, and think through it in a critical, creative manner according to the standards of good reasoning, that is, the rules of argument.
- Model critical thinking processes, or patterns, in the humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences.
- Self-consciously apply the standards of critical thinking.

1. Identification of the issue or question: Understanding of considerations relevant to the issue or question; knowledge of who bears the burden of proof.
2. Identify the logical structure of arguments, including: ability to identify the evidence offered to support the premises; ability to identify the explicit and implicit premises or assumptions the argument requires for the conclusion to follow.
3. Evaluate arguments and counterarguments, competing hypotheses, or rival explanations including: determining whether the conclusion follows from the premises; considering whether all the premises are true, and relevant; evaluating the supporting evidence, data, models, concepts, experimental design, or the reliability of the source providing evidence; developing skill in formulating counter-examples, alternative explanations, or conceptual models that may account for the evidence, data, etc; recognizing informal fallacies.
4. Use the above standards to construct and evaluate one's own arguments.

## Basis for Grade:

### Individual Research Project (20%)

You will research a current environmental issue, incorporating an interdisciplinary framework and include the ecological, social, and economic dimensions of the issue – along with proposed solutions. Class presentation and final paper.

### Homework Assignments, Newspaper Topics and Journal Articles (15%)

Written assignments on various topics. You will also access and critique current environmental topics using a variety of sources and provide one-page written critiques.

### Quizzes (10%)

There will be two quizzes.

### Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm will take place on March 3rd.

### Personal Essay on the Environment (10%)

The essay will provide you with the opportunity to critically analyze your own personal views of the human role in the natural world. It will require analysis of at least two of the course readings.

### Adirondack Assignment (10%)

Throughout the semester we refer to the Adirondacks as a case study in environmental studies. You will prepare a written argument around a particular environmental issue.

### Attendance and Class Participation (15%)

You are expected to come to class having completed readings and assignments, and prepared to participate in discussions and class activities. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

## General Grading Scale

92-100	4.0
89-91	3.7
85-88	3.3
82-84	3.0
79-81	2.7
75-78	2.3
72-74	2.0
69-71	1.7
65-68	1.3
62-64	1.0

Note: For Environmental Studies Majors a minimum grade of 2.0 is required.

# Intro to Environmental Studies – Spring 2011 Schedule

## Part I INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- Jan 25 (T) **Introduction**
- Jan 27 (H) **Human Impacts on the Environment *The Lorax***  
Reading: Harris “*Human-Environment Interactions*”  
Darling ‘*The Lorax Redux*’  
(Getting to Know You)
- Feb 1 (T) **Human Population – Demographic Transition**  
Video: World Population  
Reading: “World Population Highlights”, Population Reference Bureau  
Cohen, from “*How Many People Can the Earth Support?*” (Sources)  
(Ecological Footprint: <http://www.myfootprint.org>)
- Feb 3 (H) **Library Resources for Environmental Studies**  
Meet in Crumb Library  
(Individual Research Project: 3 Ideas)
- Feb 8 (T) **Political and Social Issues**  
Reading: Bullard, from “*Environmental Justice for All*” (Sources)  
Speth and Haas “*Introduction: Toward Planetary Stewardship*”  
(Newspaper Topic #1)
- Feb 10(H) **Environmental Economics**  
Reading: Daly “Economics in a Full World”  
Garrett Hardin, from “*The Tragedy of the Commons*” (Sources)  
(Journal Article #1)
- Feb 15 (T) **Global Environmental Issues**  
Reading: Speth & Haas “Global-Scale Environmental Challenges” pp.12-51  
(Quiz #1)

## Part II HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY VIEWS

- Feb 17 (H) **Marsh - Thoreau - Muir**  
Video: *Hetch Hetchy*  
Reading: Marsh, from “*Man and Nature*” (Sources)  
Thoreau “*Walking*”  
Muir, from “*The Mountains of California*” (Sources)
- Feb 22 (T) **Pinchot - Leopold**  
Video: *Hetch Hetchy*  
Reading: Pinchot, from “*The Fight for Conservation*” (Sources)  
Leopold, from “*A Sand County Almanac*” (Sources)
- Feb 24 (H) **Carson – E.O.Wilson**  
Reading: Carson “A Fable for Tomorrow”, “And No Birds Sing”  
E.O.Wilson, from “*The Current State of Biological Diversity*” (Sources)
- Mar 1 (T) **Personal Essay**  
**(Short Essay: Draft Due for Peer Feedback)**
- Mar 3 (H) **Mid-Term Exam**
- Mar 8 (T) *Spring Recess*

Mar 10 (H) *Spring Recess*

**Part III** **THE WORLD WE LIVE IN / PRECIOUS RESOURCES**

Mar 15 (T) **(Short Essay: Final Due)**

**Biosphere - Ecosystems – Ecosystem Services**

Reading: Vitousek et al. from “*Human Domination of Earth’s Ecosystems*” (Sources)  
**(Newspaper Topic #2)**

Mar 17 (H) **Environmental Issues: Ecological**

(Individual Research Project Presentations)

Reading: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, “*Ecosystems and Human Well-being*”

Mar 22 (T) **Environmental Issues: Ecological**

(Individual Research Project Presentations)

Reading: Abramowitz, from “*Putting a Value on Nature’s Free Services*” (Sources)

Mar 24 (H) **Global Climate Change**

Video: Copenhagen Summit

Reading: Lovins, from “*More Profit with Less Carbon*” (Sources)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “*Climate Change 2007*” (Sources)  
(Journal Article #2)

Mar 29 (T) **Environmental Issues: Social**

(Individual Research Project Presentations)

Reading: Shiva, “*Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of ClimateCrisis*”

Mar 31 (H) **Environmental Issues: Social**

(Individual Research Project Presentations)

Reading: Vandermeer, from “*Rethinking Rain Forests*” (Sources)

Apr 5 (T) **Soils and Agriculture**

Video: “Earth on Edge”

Reading: Berry, from “*The Unsettling of America*” (Sources)

Cummings “Ripe for Change: Agriculture’s Tipping Point”  
(Webliography)

Apr 7 (H) **Environmental Issues: Economic**

(Individual Research Project Presentations)

Reading: Lester Brown, from “*Food Scarcity*” (Sources)

Apr 12 (T) **Environmental Issues: Economic**

(Individual Research Project Presentations)

Reading: Pimentel, “*Comparisons of Organic and Conventional Agriculture*” (Sources)

Apr 14 (H) **Rulebook for Arguments**

(Quiz #2)

Apr 19 (T) *(No Class – Full Day Field Trip on April 30)*

Apr 21 (H) *April Recess*

**Part IV** **THE ADIRONDACKS**

Apr 26 (T) **Adirondacks**

Video: “*The Adirondacks*” Adirondack Museum

Reading: Terrie: Introduction, Chapter 1 & 2

Weston: Introduction, Chapter 1& 2

- Apr 28 (H)      **Adirondacks**  
 Video:            *"The Adirondacks"* PBS  
 Reading:        Terrie: Chapter 3& 4  
                      Weston: Chapter 3 & 4
- April 30 (Su)    **Field Trip – Alternative Energy and Sustainable Living**  
 Reading:        Flavin and Dunn, from *"Reinventing the Energy System"*
- May 3 (T)        **Adirondacks**  
 Video:            *"The Adirondacks"* Adirondack Museum  
 Reading:        Terrie: Chapter 5, 6 & 7  
                      Weston: Chapter 5, 6, & 7
- May 5 (H)        **Adirondacks    The Adirondack Club and Resort – Jim LaValley ARISE**  
 Reading:        Terrie: Chapter 8 & 9  
                      Weston: Chapter 8, 9, & 10  
 (Adirondack Stakeholder Project Due)

**Part V            MULTIDIMENSIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS**

- May 10 (T)        **World in Balance: China**  
 Reading:        Diamond, *"Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed"* (Sources)  
 (China's Environmental Future)
- May 12 (H)        **Sustainable Communities**  
 Reading:        World Commission on Environment and Development, from *"Our Common Future"* (Sources)  
 (Sustainable Home Design)
- May 18 (W)        2:45-4:45 pm **Think Locally, Act Neighborly**  
 (Final Paper Due: Individual Research Project)

***Note that the syllabus is subject to change. Additional readings and assignments will be posted on Blackboard throughout the semester.***