

Intro to Environmental Studies

ENVR 110 Sect 2 / Spring 2012

Meeting Times:

Tuesday / Thursday, 9:30-10:45, Dunn Hall Room 206
(Field Trip – Saturday, May 5)

Instructor:

Bill Brown

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Office Hours – Monday 9-12, 1-3; Tuesday and Thursday 11-Noon, and by appointment

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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 issues and solutions, and it includes a section focusing 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 look at historical and contemporary views of the environment, briefly review human impacts on 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, 2011. *Sources: Environmental Studies*, New York: McGraw-Hill

Terrie, Philip. G. 2008. *Contested Terrain: A New History of Nature and People in the Adirondacks*, 2nd 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. 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 Moodle. Readings and assignments may change, so check Moodle as well as your Potsdam email 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 before the start of class. For the Personal Essay, and Adirondack Assignment, and Research Project 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 during class – this includes texting. 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:

Team Research Project and Paper (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. Group class presentation and individual 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.

Exam (20%)

The exam will take place on April 5th.

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%)

We refer to the Adirondacks as a case study in environmental studies, with particular emphasis on stakeholders. 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 2012 Schedule

- Jan 24 (T) **Introduction**
What is Environmental Studies? Syllabus
- Part I HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY VIEWS**
- Jan 26 (H) **Marsh – Thoreau**
Reading: Marsh, from “*Man and Nature*”
 Thoreau “*Walking*”
(Getting to Know You)
- Jan 31 (T) **Muir**
Video: *Hetch Hetchy*
Reading: Muir, from “*The Mountains of California*”
- Feb 2 (H) **Pinchot**
Video: *Hetch Hetchy*
Reading: Pinchot, from “*The Fight for Conservation*”
- Feb 7 (T) **Carson – Leopold**
Reading: Carson “A Fable for Tomorrow”, “And No Birds Sing”
 Leopold, from “*A Sand County Almanac*”
- Feb 9(H) **Personal Essay Peer Review**
(Essay: Draft Due for Peer Feedback)
- Part II INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS**
- Feb 14 (T) **Human Impacts on the Environment**
Reading: Martin “*Prehistoric Overkill: The Global Model*”
 Harris “*Human-Environment Interactions*”
 Vitousek “*Human Domination of Earth’s Ecosystems*”
(Essay: Final Due)
- Feb 16 (H) **Global Environmental Issues**
Reading: Speth & Haas “*Global-Scale Environmental Challenges*” pp.12-51
 Worm “*Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services*”
- Feb 21 (T) **Library Resources for Environmental Studies**
Meet in Crumb Library
- Feb 23 (H) **Sustainability**
Reading: Speth & Haas “*Toward Planetary Stewardship*”
(Quiz # 1)
- Feb 28 (T) **Human Population – Demographic Transition**
Video: World Population
Reading: “World Population Highlights”, Population Reference Bureau
 Cohen, from “*How Many People Can the Earth Support?*”
(Ecological Footprint: <http://www.myfootprint.org>)
- Mar 1 (H) **Environmental Issues: Ecological**
Reading: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, “*Ecosystems and Human Well-being*”
 Teal “*Life and Death of the Salt Marsh*”
(Journal Article #1)

Mar 6 (T) **Environmental Issues: Social**
Reading: White “*The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*”
 Bullard “*Environmental Justice for All*”

Mar 8 (H) **Environmental Issues: Economic**
Reading: Abramowitz, from “*Putting a Value on Nature’s Free Services*”
 Garrett Hardin, from “*The Tragedy of the Commons*”
 Daly “*Economics in a Full World*”
(Newspaper Articles #1)

Mar 13 (T) *Spring Recess*
Mar 15 (H) *Spring Recess*

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

Mar 20 (T) **Ecological-Social-Economic: *The Lorax***
Reading: Darling ‘*The Lorax Redux*’
(Quiz #2)

Mar 22 (H) **Biodiversity**
Reading: Secretariat of “*The Convention on Biological Diversity*”
 Vandermeer, from “*Rethinking Rain Forests*”
(Journal Article #2)

Mar 27 (T) **Soils and Agriculture**
Video: “*Earth on Edge*”
Reading: Brown “*Could Food Shortages Bring Down Civilization*”
 Federoff “*Radically Rethinking Agriculture*”
 Cummings “*Ripe for Change: Agriculture’s Tipping Point*”

Mar 29 (H) **Global Climate Change**
Reading: McKibben “*The Most Important Number on Earth*”
 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “*Climate Change 2007*”
 Shiva, “*Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of ClimateCrisis*”
(Newspaper Articles #2)

Apr 3 (T) **Global Climate Change**
Reading: Pacala “*Stabilization Wedges*”
 Jacobson “*A Path to Sustainable Energy by 2030*”

Apr 5 (H) **EXAM**

Apr 10 (T) *April Recess*

Part IV **THE ADIRONDACKS**

Apr 12 (H) **Adirondacks**
Video: “*The Adirondacks*” Adirondack Museum
Reading: Terrie: Introduction, Chapter 1 & 2
 Weston: Introduction, Chapter 1& 2

Apr 17 (T) **Adirondacks**
Video: “*The Adirondacks*” PBS
Reading: Terrie: Chapter 3& 4
 Weston: Chapter 3 & 4

Apr 19 (H) **Adirondacks**
Video: “*The Adirondacks*” Adirondack Museum
Reading: Terrie: Chapter 5, 6 & 7
 Weston: Chapter 5, 6, & 7

Apr 24 (T) **Adirondacks The Adirondack Club and Resort**
Reading: Terrie: Chapter 8 & 9
 Weston: Chapter 8, 9, & 10
(Adirondack Stakeholder Project Due / Webliography)

Part V MULTIDIMENSIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

Apr 26 (H) **Environmental Issues and Solutions** (Group Presentations)

May 1 (T) **Environmental Issues and Solutions** (Group Presentations)

May 3 (H) **Environmental Issues and Solutions** (Group Presentations)

May 5 (Sa) **Field Trip – Alternative Energy and Sustainable Living**
Reading: Flavin and Dunn, from “*Reinventing the Energy System*”

May 8 (T) **World in Balance: *China***
Reading: Diamond, “*Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*”
(China’s Environmental Future)

May 10 (H) **Sustainable Communities**
Reading: World Commission on Environment and Development, “*Our Common Future*”
(Sustainable Home Design)

May 15 (T) 12:30-2:30 pm **Think Locally, Act Neighborly**
(Final Paper Due: Research Project)

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