



**ENVS 201**  
**Introduction to Environmental Studies:**  
**Social Sciences**

**F 2017**

**M/W 2:00-3:20 150 COL**

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Office hours: M 10:30-11:30, Th 9:30-11:30, F by appointment

GTFS :

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Overview and Learning Outcomes:

Environmental Studies 201 introduces some of the major contributions of the social sciences to understanding how and why environmental problems happen—the social ‘root causes’ of these problems. Environmentally harmful human behavior is not simply a fact of life: it is a product of specific social conditions, which can be studied, understood, and *changed*. This course also examines social approaches to resolving environmental problems, including ideas such as ‘sustainability’, ‘market-based’ environmental policies, reforms of property systems, conservation, life-cycle analysis and social movements that promote concepts such as environmental justice, and natural and social capital. In this course students practice applying these conceptual approaches by using them to analyze the root causes, consequences, and possible solutions to specific environmental topics. We will focus on issues that include global warming, consumerism, biodiversity conservation and energy reform.

Upon conclusion of this course you will have: (1) developed a fundamental knowledge and literacy about major environmental issues as listed in the course schedule, (2) learned to critically examine how these issues are presented and processed by various stakeholders, and (3) become aware of creative and successful attempts to solve the problems we have

investigated. We will pay special attention to how the issues are perceived and addressed differently within various countries, cultures and communities. This process will be aided by the use of personal stories, reference to historical events, welcoming guest speakers with a range of expertise and perspectives, reading from a diverse set of authors and critically engaging with documentaries and videos video clips. We will also encourage and facilitate some degree of engagement with the broader campus and Eugene communities.

## **Introduction to Environmental Studies**

Pedagogy: We will achieve course objectives through selected readings, lectures, guest speakers, video clips (typically 0-20-30 minutes), participatory class events (using the Canvas platform) and weekly discussion sections. Lecture slides will be posted before each class to aid in note taking though these are in no way an adequate substitute for class attendance. I will do my best to create an enjoyable atmosphere of respect and intellectual integrity. In turn it is essential that you be committed to taking an active and respectful role in your learning process.

Communication: The syllabus, course announcements, assignments, project instructions, some notes and images, additional readings, website links, scores and contact information will be posted on Canvas. Check the site on a regular basis. If you do not have reliable access to Canvas, please notify the instructor. You may contact the instructor by email or during office hours. I will try to respond within 24 hours with the exception of weekends.

Ethics of our learning environment: Everyone should respect this as a place for learning for *everyone* in class. Respect includes arriving on time and refraining from the disruptions of early departures. The latter includes refraining from early packing up of computers and notebooks. **Laptops may only be used for taking notes. No cell phone activity at any time. This includes during videos.** Do your best to contribute to a respectful, supportive learning process while we work through challenging ideas and different viewpoints. Even though this is a large lecture class, we will take time for discussion on a regular basis.

## **GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS**

Course grades will be determined by quality of work in the following:

Exams: 60%. (25%, 20%, 15%)

Three exams will determine the majority of your grade. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice and identification of major terms and concepts. Make-up exams will be allowed only for documented medical reasons. *There will be no comprehensive final exam for the class, but you will have a short exam during the last scheduled class period.*

Research and Social Change Project: 25%

With subject matter approval by the instructor and GTF, each discussion section will research a topic related to the class, prepare an annotated bibliography and summary *and* engage in a social change project related to the research (Detailed instructions to follow.)

Discussion Sections and Active Learning Assignments: 15%

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

Readings will be accessed through postings on the course Canvas site. We strongly suggest you complete the readings prior to lectures.

## **METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)**

All work will be assessed using the following standards:

**A** indicates thorough, original, insightful and well-presented work (90% or higher of possible points)

**B** meets general expectations for 100-level work, is complete and well-presented (80-89%)

**C** indicates acceptable but sub-par work in comparison to general expectations and peer performance (70-79%)

**D** does not meet minimum standards and expectations, requires re-submission for credit if time allows except for exams

This breakdown is an approximation for evaluation purposes on all assignments. Your final letter grade will be determined by your place within a distribution of all class scores and the break points for letter grades *may be adjusted down* to reflect the overall performance of the class. In other words, a 90% total will guarantee at least an A- score but the A range may be adjusted down to the high eighties if only a small number of students achieve the 90% level. This will be the case for all letter grades. I will post a performance curve after each exam to give you an approximation of how you performed in relationship to the class.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

**Readings: All readings are listed by class date in the Canvas site under MODULES.**

### **I. Course Introduction and Overview: Social Science Perspectives on the Environment**

*Sept. 25*

**The Human Impact**

*Sept. 27, Oct. 2*

**Destroying and Saving the World: The Case of Climate Change**

### **II. Root Causes of Environmental Problems-Social Science Perspectives**

*Oct. 4*

**Ideas of Nature**

*Oct. 9*

**The Population “Problem”**

*Oct. 11*

**Political Economy, Trade and the Environment**

*Oct. 16*

**Growth and Consumerism**

*Oct. 18*

**Consumerism**

**Exam I Prep**

***OCTOBER 23***

**EXAM ONE** (50 pts., 25% of course grade)

**III. SOCIAL SCIENCE SEEKING SOLUTIONS**

*Oct. 25*

**Sustainability Re-Examined**

*Oct. 30*

**Environmental Law**

*Nov. 1*

**Environmental Economics and green Business**

*Nov. 6*

**Ecological Economics and Natural Capital**

*Nov. 8*

**Environmental Justice and other Compelling Notions**

***November 13***

**Exam II**

**IV. Case Studies**

*Nov. 15, 20*

**Biodiversity Conservation**

*Nov. 22, 27*

**Impacts of Food and Agriculture**

*Nov. 29*

**Course Overview**

**EXAM THREE** (15% of grade)