ENVS 631: Environmental Studies Theory and Practice
Fall 2014 | CRN 12324

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Class Meeting Times: Tuesday/Thursday 4-5:50 | 249 Columbia
Office hours: Wednesday, 9-11 / Thursday, 1-2

Course Goals

- Engage in thoughtful conversation concerning the natural world and our dialogue with it—how humans conceive of and define nature, alter and transform it, and embrace or ignore responsibility for conserving, restoring, or sustaining it.
- Familiarize ourselves with the local environment, considering it as a concrete exemplar for our more general discussions of humans, nature, culture, and environment
- Foster development of intellectual and social community within ENVS
- Gain a sense of what ENVS encompasses at the University of Oregon
- Become acquainted with a few ENVS faculty at Oregon
- Explore possible scholarship or research support opportunities, and identify one or more areas of potential research within ENVS suitable for a thesis or project
- Provide continuing advising about the ENVS program and requirements
- Deepen our understanding of the different disciplinary perspectives that contribute to environmental studies including their research methods, vocabularies, core concepts, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses

Methods and Activities

Class Participation and Attendance. I expect everyone to participate actively, which includes attending all class sessions, reading all assigned material prior to class, arriving to class on time, and engaging productively in class discussion. Missing three classes will result in a full grade reduction. An additional full grade reduction will be made for each additional missed class after the third. Three late arrivals for class will count as one absence. Although no relevant remark is out of bounds, I ask that we all treat each member of the class respectfully and professionally. Twenty-five (25) percent of your final course grade will be determined by the quality and quantity of your participation in class discussions. In addition to any penalties that you receive for failure to attend class, absences from class will also depress your participation grade.
Reading Reflections: For five class periods with assigned readings for discussion, you will turn in (due at the beginning of class) a brief reading reflection (maximum of 1000 words). These essays should briefly state central points that you have distilled from the reading and offer your reflective response, interpretive insights, consideration of implications, possible objections, further development of the ideas, unresolved questions, and so forth. Each assignment will account for five (5) percent of your grade (25 percent total).

Student Selected Readings: For part of the term, we will read and discuss articles or book excerpts chosen by students. These may be related to the work you will be doing to prepare your research presentation and seminar paper (see below) and will provide a means for the rest of the class to better understand an issue or topic that each of you is interested in exploring further. We will discuss and decide on format of these sessions as a group (e.g., suggested length of readings and how they will be led by class members).

Research Presentations: During the last week of the term, each student will give a 10 to 15 minute presentation on a research topic. For master’s degree students, presentations will concern potential thesis or terminal project topics. Doctoral students should give a presentation suitable for a professional conference in their respective focal discipline. As time allows, each presentation will be followed by 5 minutes of audience Q&A. Your presentation will be graded on content, delivery, response to questions, and professionalism, and will be worth twenty (20) percent of your final grade.

Seminar Paper: Your final seminar paper, approximately 10-12 pages with standard font and margins, should concern a topic relevant to your current or proposed research. For master’s students, this paper should be an exploratory investigation of a potential thesis or terminal project topic. For doctoral students, this paper should serve as a draft of work designed for submission to a professional conference or journal. Use a reference/citation system that is standard for your disciplinary area. Papers are due by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, December 9 (the time of the scheduled final exam) and are worth thirty (30) percent of your final course grade.

Reading and Discussion Schedule
Week 1: Introduction
Tuesday, September 30: Introductions and logistics

Thursday, October 2: Discussion of classic texts, old and new

Reading Response Paper 1 due October 2.

Henry David Thoreau, excerpt from “Huckleberries” (1861); and “Economy,” “Sounds,” “The Bean-Field,” “Higher Laws,” from Walden or, Life in the Woods (1854). Thoreau’s writings can be found online; see especially the Walden Woods Project:
http://www.walden.org/Library/The_Writings_of_Henry_David_Thoreau:_The_Digital_Collection/Walden


Week 2: History
Tuesday, October 7: ENVS Faculty Visit: Katie Lynch.

Thursday, October 9

Week 3: Social Sciences
Tuesday, October 14: ENVS Faculty Visit: Richard York, Professor of Sociology and ENVS
Robert D. Bullard, excerpt from *Dumping in Dixie* (1994), 1-5, 55-59.

Thursday, October 16
*Reading Response Paper 2 due in class, October 16*


Week 4: Sciences
Tuesday, October 21


Thursday, October 23: Faculty Visit, David Sutherland, Assistant Professor of Geological Sciences and ENVS

**Reading Response Paper 3 due in class, October 23.**


Week 5: Humanities
Tuesday, October 28: Faculty Visit from Sarah Wald, Assistant Professor of English and ENVS

Thursday, October 30  
**Reading Response Paper 4 due in class, October 30**
Carl Sandburg, “Skyscraper” (1916).

Week 6: Research / Politics / Activism
Tuesday, November 4: Visit from IRB representative and discussion of research.
Naomi Klein, “Capitalism vs. the Climate,” *The Nation*, November 9, 2011.
Thursday, November 6

**Reading Response Paper 5 due in class, November 6.**

Week 7: Student Selected Readings and Discussion
Tuesday, November 11
Daniel Smith, “It’s the End of the World as We Know It … and He Feels Fine,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2014. [Katrina]
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/20/magazine/its-the-end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it-and-he-feels-fine.html?_r=0

Thursday, November 13
Mike Hulme, “The Performance of Science,” chapter 3 in *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* (Cambridge, 2009), 72-108. [Keyyana]

Week 8: Student Selected Readings and Discussion
Tuesday, November 18
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2012.678035

Thursday, November 20
U.S. Supreme Court, Sierra Club v. Morton, 405 U.S. 727 (1972), Sierra Club v. Morton,

Week 9: Thanksgiving
No class this week. Happy Thanksgiving.

Week 10: Research Presentations
Tuesday, December 2
Student presentations TBA.
Thursday, December 4
Student presentations TBA

Final Paper due Tuesday, December 9, by 5 p.m.