

# **ENVS 201: Introduction to Environmental Studies--Social Science**

## **Winter 2012 Course Syllabus**

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### **Course Description**

This course will introduce students to social science perspectives on the root causes, consequences, and possible solutions to environmental problems. Our first task will be to become “bilingual,” able to utilize terms, theories, and concepts from both the natural and social sciences. For social science majors, this will require that you raise up your level of “ecoliteracy” and be able to speak fluently the language of ecology and environmental science. For all students, it will require thinking holistically in terms of the interrelations between social and environmental systems. Next we will begin surveying the terrain of socioenvironmental problems related to human uses and abuses of natural resources and native ecosystems. We will investigate some of the most “global” of all environmental challenges: climate change, energy systems, population growth, and food systems. We will finish the course with an investigation of the philosophy and practice of contemporary environmental activism in the U.S. In small class discussion sessions, our goal will be to explore some of the possible pathways and potential pitfalls to social change, with an eye towards envisioning the creation of future “ecotopian” communities in the Pacific Northwest. Throughout this survey of socioenvironmental relations and problems, we will take a critical approach to the globalization of corporate capitalism, urban-industrialism, and “technocentrism” for their adverse effects on social equality and environmental sustainability, contrasting them with more communitarian and “ecocentric” models of socioenvironmental relations.

### **Course Readings**

There are two required texts: Charles Harper’s “Environment and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues (2012, 5th edition), and Douglas Bevington’s “The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear” (2009). Both books are available at the UO Duckstore, and may also be available as “Kindle” files. Readings should be completed by the dates they are assigned, and students should be prepared to discuss material from the readings in lecture and discussion sessions. In addition, some supplemental readings may be assigned later in the term and will be posted on Blackboard.

### **Course Requirements**

There will be three short exams and a comprehensive final exam that cover materials from the lectures, films, and readings. The exams will be composed of standard multiple choice/true-false/matching/short essay questions. Short exams will comprise 60% of the total course grade (20% total for each exam—see additional information on scoring exams below). There will be a final comprehensive exam that emphasizes material from the final four weeks, and includes material from previous weeks. The final exam will comprise 25% of the total course grade. There will be a group project during scheduled discussion sessions that will comprise 10% of the grade. Student attendance in lectures and active participation in discussion sessions will earn the remaining 5% of the total course grade.

### **Formula for Scoring the Exams**

Each exam will be taken twice: first, students will take the exam individually, then students will take the exam collectively in their assigned learning groups to receive bonus points. The learning groups will turn in a collective answer sheet based on their agreed-upon answers formed after discussing each of the questions. Each student's grade on an exam will reflect a combination of their individual and group scores. First, students will receive the score of their individual exam, then the score from their group exam will be added to it. The group bonus points will be equal to half the difference between the average score of the individuals within a group, and the score from the collective answer sheet. For example, if the members of Group X get the following grades on their individual exams: 90, 80, 70, 60, 50, and 40, the average of these individual scores is 65. If Group X gets an 85 on their collective exam, then half of the difference between the collective score (85) and the group average score (65) will be added to each individual exam score (85 minus 65 equals 20; 20 divided by 2 equals 10). Thus, in this example, every member of Group X would get 10 extra points added to their individual scores, thereby raising their scores to 100, 90, 80, 70, 60, and 50. There is no penalty if the score from a collective exam is lower than a student's individual exam. Thus, collective exams are intended to raise student scores, but more importantly, improve student learning and understanding of the material.

### **Illness and Social Responsibility**

Attendance at all classes is strongly recommended, but students feeling any flu-like symptoms or other severe illnesses (e.g. high fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, congestion, aching joints, or general fatigue) are encouraged to stay home to heal and prevent further spread of disease.

### **Attendance, Missed Exams, and Make-up Exams**

Attendance will be taken at each scheduled discussion session, and short exams will be given in the discussion sessions. Only one absence will be accepted; every unexcused absence after that will lose class participation points. *There will be no make-ups for missed exams without prior permission from the instructor!* Only students with valid reasons and prior permission from the instructor can make up missed exams. Make-up exams must be taken within one week following the scheduled exam. In case of absence for any illnesses or family emergencies on exam days, students should email their GTF on that day and put their name, the time of their session, and write "out ill" in the subject line of the email message (e.g. "Ed Aiken 10am out ill"). Students must bring documentation for their absence upon their return. There should be no incentive for taking an unnecessary "sick day" on exam days since make-up exams automatically miss out on opportunities for group bonus points.

### **Electronic/Wireless Policy in the Classroom**

While electronic screens and wireless devices have improved our lives in many ways, they also can be very disruptive to fellow classmates, and undermine learning in the classroom. New cognitive research challenges the notion that individuals can efficiently "multitask" and effectively learn new information. Consequently, in the interest of establishing a focused learning environment for all students, *all electronic screens and wireless devices must be turned off and put away by the start of each class* (i.e. cell phones, iPhones, tablets, and laptops connected to the internet). Students who insist on taking lecture notes with their laptops or tablets must sit in the designated computer section of the classroom. Texting, websurfing, emailing, etc.

may result in immediate dismissal from that class, and will affect your grade. Please see the instructor if you have special needs or would like to discuss this policy further.

### **Course Outline and Required Readings**

All readings should be completed by the date they are assigned, and students should be prepared to discuss and apply the reading material in class. The syllabus, schedule, and films are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. All students are responsible for any announcements made in class, and should check Blackboard often for any revisions to the course schedule.

#### **Week 1: Social and Environmental Systems and Relations**

M 1/9: Introduction to the Course

Reading: course syllabus

W 1/11: Social Structures and Ecological Processes

Reading: Harper Ch.1: 1-28

Discussion Sessions:

Student and GTF introductions; organize groups and create a name for your community

#### **Week 2: Natural Resources and Native Ecosystems: Uses and Abuses**

M 1/16: Martin Luther King Holiday (no class)

W 1/18: Uses and Abuses of Soil, Water, Forests

Reading: Harper Ch.2: 33-56

Discussion Sessions:

Group project planning session: environmental philosophy and ethics

#### **Week 3: Climate Change: Global Warming and Societal Risk**

M 1/23: Atmospheric Pollution and Climate Change

Reading: Harper Ch.3: 61-89

W 1/25: Societal Change and Risk

Discussion Sessions:

\*Exam #1 (will cover material from Weeks 1 and 2)

#### **Week 4: Energy Systems: Sources and Sinks**

M 1/30: Energetics and Energy Problems

Reading: Harper Ch.4: 93-123

W 2/1: Alternative Energy Sources

Discussion Sessions:

Group project planning session: natural resources and energy sources

**Week 5: Population Growth and Food Systems: Carrying Capacities**

M 2/6: Population Dynamics

Reading: Harper Ch.5: 127-156

W 2/8: Food Systems

Discussion Sessions:

\*Exam #2 (will cover material from Weeks 3 and 4)

**Week 6: Globalization of Corporate Capitalism: Social and Environmental Impacts**

M 2/13: Globalization and Social/Environmental Inequality

Reading: Harper Ch.6: 160-187

W 2/15: Sustainable Societies

Discussion Sessions:

Group project planning session: population and food systems

**Week 7: Environmentalism: Philosophies and Practices**

M: 2/20: President's Day Holiday (no class)

W 2/22: History and Philosophy of American Environmentalism

Reading: Harper Ch.8: 223-252

Discussion Sessions:

\*Exam #3 (will cover material from Weeks 5 and 6)

**Week 8: Environmentalism in Film: Mobilizing Mainstream Society**

M 2/27: Film: *"The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour"*

W 2/29: Film: *"Pickaxe"*

Discussion Sessions:

\*In-class essays on films

Group project planning session: open

**Week 9: Grassroots Biodiversity Activism: Radical Reformers**

M 3/5: Introduction to Grassroots Biodiversity Activism

Reading: Bevington Ch.1: 1-13; Ch.2: 15-40

W 3/7: Case Study: The Headwaters Forest Campaign

Reading: Bevington Ch.3: 41-109

**Week 9 continued:**

Discussion Sessions:

Group project planning session: prepare powerpoint presentations

**Week 10: Course Summary**

M 3/12: Case Study: The Center for Biological Diversity

Reading: Bevington Ch.5: 161-214

W 3/14: Prospects for Social Change and Environmental Sustainability

Reading: Bevington Ch.6: 215-240

Discussion Sessions:

\*Group Project Presentations

**Week 11: Final Exam Week**

W 3/21: Final Exam 3:15pm to 5:00pm

(exam is comprehensive but will emphasize material from Weeks 7 to 10)