Environmental Studies: Theory and Practice
Prof. Kory Russel
Fall 2018 – University of Oregon
Course meets Tuesdays 4:00pm-6:50pm
Office Hours Wednesday 10am-Noon, Lawrence 215
ENVS 631 – CRN: 12284

Syllabus

1. Course Description

This course has numerous intentions, chief among them: to open a series of conversations around our field of inquiry - environmental studies, to highlight its intrinsic interdisciplinary nature, and to foster a more cohesive and inclusive research community in our program.

For these reasons, we will strive to answer questions such as: what is ‘environmental studies’? Is ‘interdisciplinarity’, or ‘activism’, or ‘justice’ a central hallmark of this field of inquiry? What is the relationship between natural sciences and the values that animate our ethical judgments?

ENVS 631 is one of the first classes in your graduate sequence at University of Oregon. While this class is designed to provide you an introduction to environmental studies, both from a theoretical and practical perspective, it also has some specific goals based on your graduate trajectory.

For our Master’s students, ENVS 631 is the first class in your ENVS 600-level sequence. This class is supposed to help you navigate a new research world in such a way that you can find your own interest and the specific questions that you would like to answer in your dissertation/ research project. ENVS 632 will help you find the appropriate methods for your inquiry and ENVS 633 will provide you enough time to design your project, to present a poster at the JCC conference, and to prepare you for a successful defense. You will have the opportunity to begin synthesizing your own ideas and plan for the future both within our program and beyond.

For our PhD ESSP students (with or without a focal department), ENVS 631 is one of first required classes in your graduate sequence in Environmental Studies. Unlike for our Masters students, this class is not designed so that you can find your final topic/ specific research question, but it is conceived to offer you an opportunity to explore some of traditional ENVS topics in an interdisciplinary setting. Ideally, this class should help you in your graduate trajectory either by providing you additional time to deepen your knowledge about some classical environmental debates or by reading new materials that would further your own research.

Last, this course is also to help you learn more about our program. Who are the
faculty in ENVS at University of Oregon? How is our program unique?
Welcome to our ENVS program! We are thrilled to have you onboard.

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.
- Foster development of intellectual and social community within ENVS
- Gain a sense of what ENVS encompasses at the University of Oregon and 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 interdisciplinary perspectives that contribute to environmental studies including their research methods, vocabularies, core concepts, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses.

4. Class Meetings

Class will meet Tuesdays from 4:00 - 6:50 pm in 249 Columbia.

Most classes will have the following structure: 1. A guest lecturer (50 min) 2. A conversation about the topic/ texts proposed as required readings (30-50 min), 3. followed by one or two student-presentations (40 min/ presentation) where the presenter is either introducing the class to a future topic related to their MA project or, for our PhD students, attempting to answer question that will play a role in their graduate development. 4. Lastly, we will address a professional development topic (30 min).

4. Office Hours and Contact Information

Office: 215 Lawrence Hall
Email: krussel@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: Wed. 10:00am-Noon

5. Course Requirements and Grading

Grades on papers and exams will be given on the standard 0-100 point grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-93</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-83</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final grades will be weighted as follows:
1. Participation and Attendance (includes all ENVS organized events) 20%
2. In-Class Presentation (1) 20%
3. Short Reading Reflections and Professional Development Projects 20% (6)
4. Prospectus & Final Project Presentation 10%
5. Final Term Paper/ Final Project Description 30%

1. **Participation/attendance:** You are expected to participate actively in this course, which includes attending every class, reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and professionally in class discussions. Missing three classes for any reason 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. The quality and quantity of your participation in the class discussion will be evaluated in assigning 20% of your final grade.

**Note about attendance of ENVS events:** Some of the central goals of ENVS 631 are to foster the development of an intellectual community in our program and to help you gain a sense of what our program encompasses at University of Oregon. For this reason, as part of your duties as a graduate student, you are expected to attend all the ENVS organized events/talks this fall. This will include both our brownbag seminar and also any formal ENVS lectures. These events will be specified in the classroom as the information becomes available to us throughout the term.

2. **In-class Presentation:** Each graduate student will sign up to take responsibility for a 50 min presentation during one week of the course. During that week, you will propose a short reading to the whole class related to your research interests, you will introduce the topic for class discussion (~25 min), and you will be especially well prepared to answer questions about the readings you have offered to us (~25 min). Your teaching and leadership in discussion for your week will be the basis for 20% of your final course grade.

3. **Short Reading Reflections:** Each week, on Monday, you will have the opportunity to submit via email (before midnight) a summary of the next day’s assigned readings (if there is more than one, please focus only on one of
them). Summaries should be limited to one single-spaced page (~500 words – at most) for each assigned reading and you should aim to be as clear, concise, and comprehensive as possible within that space. You must complete a total of 6 summaries throughout the quarter.

It is very important that in the last section of the summary (last 1/3), you raise a critical concern/question with respect to the argument you've just summarized. Your summaries will be graded as either DUCK+ (especially insightful summary and sharp question/reflection) or DUCK- (completeness of summary and quality of question needs improvement). Extra or late summaries cannot be accepted in order to make up for delinquency in completing these assignments at the proper time.

4. **Term paper prospectus**: You will submit during week 9 (by midnight November 21st) a prospectus of your final paper with two components: (1) a 1-2 page detailed description of the topic and outline of your proposed argument or project; and (2) an annotated bibliography of at least five primary or peer-reviewed secondary texts that you intend to consult (in addition to texts assigned as required readings during the course). Each annotation should be around one double-spaced page and include a summary of the book or article as well as an indication of its relevance for your project.

5. **Final Term Paper/ Final Project Description**: Final papers should explore in detail a specific and an independently-chosen topic related to the course or to your graduate research projects. It must include (a) examination of at least five scholarly sources in addition to course texts, and (b) the development of your own original position or critical response. Term papers should be around 10-11 double-spaced pages. Final papers must be proofread and use a standard system of citation (e.g., APA or Chicago). Papers are due Tuesday, December 4th, 5:00 pm via email, and extensions will be granted only in the case of genuine, documented emergencies. Late papers will lose one letter grade for each calendar day that they are late.

The final paper/project description should help our **Master’s students** to set up the stage for their future thesis/final project. While it might not include a fully developed argument, it should nonetheless identify a specific topic, provide a robust literature review, and formulate a precise question (that you will continue to explore later in your 600-level sequence).

For our **PhD Students**, this final paper should help you explore a topic of your interest that might/or-might-not be related to your future projects. The expectation is that you identify a specific topic, formulate a precise question/hypothesis, relate your inquiry to the existing literature (on that topic), and lead your reader to a well-supported conclusion.
Grading rubric for final exam papers (final):
A = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
C = Okay. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
D = Poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
F = Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Failure to complete the final term paper will result in an automatic failure in the course (grade F).

6. Course Policies

Incomplete and extensions will be given only in the event of documented emergencies.

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

Sexual Violence: The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24h hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu

Accessibility: The UO is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please
notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that results in disability related barriers to your participation. You are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall, (541) 346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

**Academic Misconduct:** With the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has become an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade.

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me.

Plagiarism and cheating on exams undermines the integrity of the academic community. When undetected, it gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class, we will do our best to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students who are aware of violations by others should bring this to my attention. This is the right thing to do. It is also in your own self-interest.

**There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course.** Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be given to the university authorities. For more on the University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website:

[https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism](https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism)

**External Sources:** Using sources not listed on the syllabus in researching and writing your papers is fine, as long as they are both to the point, and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, cite your sources! It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism.

This is probably the best place to make this point, too: Wikipedia can be valuable for getting a very broad grasp of positions and debates, but when it gets into details, especially on philosophic topics, it is very often horrible – sketchy, convoluted, misinformed, and often simply wrong. If you wish to consult online resources, I suggest you use some of the other, much better sites. Most prominent is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, but others are useful as well in Environmental Studies:

7. Website and Course Readings

All the information about this course and other comments or events related to the class will be posted on Canvas. Almost all the required readings will also be posted on Canvas in their own specific modules.

There is one required book: The Wizard and the Prophet: Two Remarkable Scientists and Their Dueling Visions to Shape Tomorrow’s World by Charles C. Mann. 2018

8. Topics and Readings

Here is a tentative schedule of topics and readings. This list of readings is only indicative for a possible trajectory for the class. Amendments and alterations - based on students’ interest & presentation schedule - will be implemented as we go. This syllabus is an evolution of previous syllabi developed by both Nicolae Morar and Kari Norgaard.

All recommended references will be posted on Canvas and are available electronically.
### Week 1: Introduction to the course  
**9/25**

*Course Introduction, early history of environmental movement, origins of field of environmental studies, engaging environmental studies interdisciplinarity/ “How Do I Succeed and Get My Degree?”*

**Required Reading**

ENVS graduate handbook (Either MA or PhD as appropriate).


**Assignment:**

Bring questions from Handbooks to class

### Week 2: The Case of Biodiversity: Humanities/ Social Sciences/ Natural Sciences  
**10/2**

**Required Reading**


### Week 3: From Wilderness, to Diversity and Balance, and to Environmental Values  
**10/9**

Faculty Guest: Lauren Hallett (ENVS & BI) from 4:00-4:50 pm

**Required Reading**


Hallett et al., “Biotic mechanisms of community stability shift along a
precipitation gradient.” 2014.


**Professional Development: Preparing Conference Presentations**


---

**Week 4:** Uncertainty & Complexity... and why does it matter in ENVS?

10/16

Faculty Guest: Josh Roering (ENVS & Geology) from 4:00-4:50 pm

**Required Reading**


**Professional Development: Preparing Conference Posters**

Making a better research poster [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwMFhyH7_5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwMFhyH7_5g)

Presenting an academic research poster [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ozwCEeaVWE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ozwCEeaVWE)

Look at this resource online - [https://guides.nyu.edu/posters](https://guides.nyu.edu/posters)

---

**Week 5:** Representation, the Environment, and Climate Change

10/23

Faculty Guest: Emily Scott (ENVS & His of Art & Arch) from 4:00-4:50pm

**Required Reading**


Kolbert, Why facts don’t change our minds (New Yorker)

Professional Development: Professional Writing – Journal Articles

From Get a Life PhD Blog: http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/2014/05/how-to-publish-article-in-academic.html

Writing An Informative Abstract – PDF on canvas and check out: https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/abstracts/

Week 6: Environmental Justice
10/30 Faculty Guest: Barbara Muraca (ENVS & Philosophy) from 4:00-4:50 pm

Required Reading


Professional Development: Public Writing – Blogs and Op Eds

Explore various blogs and bring examples to class of at least 3 that you like


Week 7: Research and Campus Resources
11/6
Faculty Guest: Dean Walton (Science & Tech Outreach Librarian) from 4:00-4:50 pm

Required Reading


Week 8: Engaging Environmental Studies: Activism and Academia
11/13
Faculty Guest: Kathy Lynn (ENVS) from 5:00-5:50 pm

Required Reading


Professional Development: Public Writing – Your Future, CV Workshop

Reading: [http://enviroeducation.com/resources/pursuing-a-degree-in-environmental-studies-where-will-it-lead](http://enviroeducation.com/resources/pursuing-a-degree-in-environmental-studies-where-will-it-lead)

Week 9: ENVS: The Role of Social Sciences
11/20
Faculty Guest: Ronald Mitchell (ENVS & Political Science) from 4:00-4:50 pm

Required Reading


Mitchell, Unpublished Paper
Week 10: Prospectus due on November 21st by Midnight
11/27 Mini-conference – Final Project Presentations & Discussion

Finals Week: Final papers are due on Tuesday, December 4 at 5pm (via email)