



ENV 400: Current Global Environmental Issues

Course Syllabus

Spring 2011

Human alteration of earth is substantial and growing.

Peter M. Vitousek et al.
Science 1997

Beyond our genetic coding, we need to go to the earth, as the source whence we came, and ask for its guidance, for the earth carries the psychic structure as well as the physical form of every living being upon the planet. Our confusion is not only with ourselves; it concerns also our role in the planetary community.

Thomas Berry

Not unlike the lobster, we humans tend not to notice changes in our "water" so long as they happen gradually. For an American, dropping into the "hot pot" of Haiti or Burkina Faso creates a shock of realization: the entire planet is in the same pot, and while there are local spots hotter than others, our "pot" is warming worldwide.

Thom Hartmann
The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight

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Office hours: MWF 11:30 –2, TR 11:30-12:30 or by appointment

Texts:

Required: You should purchase these (Amazon or Barnes & Noble)

Worldwatch Institute. *State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet*. W.W. Norton & Company. 2011.

Easton, Thomas, A. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Environmental Issues*. 13th ed. McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2010.

Course Description:

This course surveys the major environmental challenges facing the planet-at-large and those issues that are particularly poignant to island peoples today. Students will learn, discuss and debate the major proximal cause(s) and potential short-term and long-term consequences of each issue as far as they are currently known. Issues covered will include: population increase, global warming, fresh water consumption, fresh water pollution, waste management, species extinction, habitat depletion, coral reef bleaching, resource depletion, urban sprawl/development and more.

General Purpose of the Course:

This is an interdisciplinary course with the general goal of having us come to understand and be able to: explain, dialogue, intelligently argue-about, problem-solve and see the connections between, the major environmental issues facing the people and ecosystems of planet Earth today. This course does not exist solely in the classroom; it is a course aimed at helping us know, act and better live in our current world. You may take what you learn through this course with you when you graduate.

Environmental Studies Learning Outcomes this course helps to meet:

Since this course is required for students seeking a certificate, minor or major in Environmental Studies it has been designed to partly teach some of the Environmental Studies Program Learning Outcomes. Specifically this course helps the Program to meet 5 of its seven Program Learning Outcomes. Those five are the following:

A student graduating with a bachelor of science in Environmental Studies will be able to...

- 1. Demonstrate an understanding of the central importance of spirituality, ethics and worldview in the “environmental movement”**
- 2. Demonstrate problem-solving skills from diverse disciplines for diverse populations**
- 3. Demonstrate an understanding of science and scientific investigation**
- 4. Demonstrate an understanding of the roles and importance of laws, politics and economics in environmental issues**
- 5. Demonstrate an understanding of the major environmental issues and their potential solutions**

Student Learning Outcomes for this particular course:

Students taking this course will demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The major global and Pacific Island environmental issues
2. The causal sequence of events that is believed to have resulted in/created each of the global issues discussed in class
3. The general mechanism(s) by which each of the issues discussed is detrimental to people and/or ecosystems
4. One or more potential solutions to each environmental issue and the pros and cons of each from a variety of stakeholder perspectives
5. The role of diverse environmental ethics in contributing to the creation of and solutions to global environmental issues
6. How to effectively argue for particular solutions to environmental issues
7. The connections between environmental issues and real-life situations
8. Their hands-on role in issues of public concern

Course Requirements:

Your grade in this course will be based on the following. Each of the items/activities listed below will be described to you in writing or orally in class. The dates of each activity (or its parts) are indicated on the Schedule portion of this syllabus.

- One final synthesis/position paper based on all our readings & discussions
- “*Causes, Consequences and Solutions*” Portfolios (3)
- Issue Exposés (You lead discussion)

Course Grading: The proportion that each of the above contributes to your grade in this course is as follows:

Final Synthesis paper	30%
“ <i>Causes, Consequences and Solutions</i> ” Portfolios	30%
Issue Paper Exposé & Discussion Leading	40%
	100%

Final Synthesis paper: Covers the readings and presentations. Take home.

“State of the World 2011” Portfolios: For **Three** of the global issues (of your choice) that we cover in class, you will be required to turn in a written explanation of the: (1) Causes, (2) Consequences and (3) potential Solutions for that issue. Portfolios will be due two weeks (to the day) after we finish each issue. There is no length requirement. **Late papers will not be accepted. Plagiarism within your portfolios will result in you receiving an F for the course.** Details describing the grading criteria for these explanation papers will be shared with the class in the form of a grading rubric handout prior to the due date of the first paper.

Global Environmental Issue Exposés: You will lead one or two guided discussions (depending on the size of the class). In this course we read a number of contemporary articles about each of the issues. You will each lead a discussion about one or two of the articles. I’ll explain the grading parameters for this assignment in class. You will choose your issue(s) early in the course. I am going to let you choose the article(s) the class will read and that you’ll explain if you’d like to choose it. You must have the article approved by me. Finally, **you MUST get the paper to me so I can scan or copy it for the rest of the class ONE WEEK prior to the day you lead discussion or you will receive an F for your discussion.**

Class attendance and participation: All learning is a cooperative venture (unlike memorizing). If you don’t contribute, you don’t learn as much. In a class of this type without a traditional text, the lectures provide the majority of general synthesized information. Thus attendance is mandatory if you want to pass the class. This is worth 10% of your course grade.

Mobile Rules: Due to a recent problem with cell phones, the following rules are in place: 1) cell phones are off unless you have an emergency—let me know at the beginning of class; 2) text messaging is totally unacceptable in class—if you are caught, you are out of class for that day and listed as not attending.

Course Atmosphere: This course is meant to be a seminar experience; it is not a lecture course. This means we will be *discussing* issues, the readings, our ideas and opinions, watching videos, debating each other and educating each other almost every day. So if you are shy you’ll have to try and shed that skin and be bold! Fake it if you have to – remember that everyone’s thoughts are valuable and if you don’t share yours the rest of us will be denied that “gold.”

In order to speak in class you do not have to raise your hand, but do please wait for people to finish what they are saying before you start to speak. We learn from each others often differing opinions...the point of this class is not to all agree on topics related to each of the issues. Be an “open vessel,” *listen* to what others say and *think* about their points and points of view. You will learn more from each other than from your professors as you go through college!!!

First day of class version

Current Global Environmental Issues Course Schedule Spring 2011

WEEK	TOPIC	PRESENTERS	ACTIVITIES
1/17-20	Course Introduction & Mechanics Introduction to Global Enviro Issues	Bordner	Introductions; Course Assessment Reading/Discussion
1/23-27	Consumerism	Bordner	Reading/Discussion
1/30-2/3	Population Growth	_____	Reading/Discussion
2/6-10	Solid Waste/Recycling	_____	Reading/Discussion
2/13-17	Food Availability	_____	Reading/Discussion
2/21-24	Water consumption	_____	Reading/Discussion
2/27-3/2	Water Pollution	_____	Reading/Discussion
3/5-9	Climate Change	_____	Reading/Discussion
By Monday 3/12: You MUST have at least ONE Portfolio turned in already			
3/12-16	Energy	_____	Reading/Discussion
3/19-23	Species Extinction	_____	Reading/Discussion
3/26-30	S P R I N G B R E A K	(Read on the beach!)	
4/2-5	Habitat Loss	_____	Reading/Discussion
4/9-13	_____	_____	Reading/Discussion
4/16-20	_____	_____	Reading/Discussion
4/23-27	_____	_____	Reading/Discussion
4/30-5/4	Summary of Issues; Sustainability Solutions roundtable	_____	Reading/Discussion

Important Dates You Should Know:

- You MUST turn in your SECOND and THIRD portfolio by Wednesday, May 2nd
- Final Synthesis paper: DUE 5/9, 3pm my office

