ENVS 101 - Introduction to Environmental Studies (Spring ’09, Period 5, MWThF)

Instructor  
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Objectives:
(1) To engage students in a rigorous, intellectual study of and discourse on modern environmental subjects that considers the scientific as well as the moral, economic, and political implications
(2) To establish the critical importance of scientific research and concepts in informing environmental questions and concerns
(3) To encourage the pursuit of study in the field of Environmental Studies and its many related subspecialities (i.e., ecology, ethics, economics, climatology, policy, chemistry, psychology, etc.)

Topics
(1) Introduction: The Environment & Science
(2) Climate Change  
   The Greenhouse Effect & "Global Warming”
(3) Population Growth  
   Demographic Transition & Reproductive Revolution
(4) Biological Destruction  
   Biodiversity; Rainforests; Extinction
(5) Ecological Footprint & Precaution

Texts:  Breakfast of Biodiversity, Ivette Perfecto & John Vandermeer, Food First Books, 2005  

Exams
There will be three exams and an optional cumulative final exam. The three mandatory exams will consist of multiple choice questions and essays. The exam questions will be based primarily on the materials presented and discussed in class; therefore, class attendance is essential if you are to obtain the information necessary for the exams. (If you MISS CLASS, the best strategy is to get the lecture notes from another classmate, copy them, make note of any confusing material, and see me with questions that arise.) If students choose to take the optional final, the score obtained will be added as a 4th exam (not substituted for the worst exam grade). Students taking the final are expected to take it at a time negotiated with the professor.

Grading
Grading Scale
Exams (3) 39%  
A+ = > 98%  
A = 98-93%  
A- = 93-90%
Final Exam (optional) (20%)  
B+ = 90-86%  
B = 86-74%  
B- = 74-70%
Making a Difference 12%  
C+ = 70-67%  
C = 67-63%  
C- = 63-60%
Labs (3) 24%  
D+ = 60-57%  
D = 57-53%  
D- = 53-50%
Journals (6) 10%  
F = <50%
Class Attendance 6%  
Class Participation 9%
Field Trips (extra) + 3% possible

Readings
The readings consist of two books and a series of scholarly articles. A day-by-day schedule of the readings can be found on an included handout. Though this is an introductory course, the reading load is stiff because students need to engage directly with the environmental literature in order to capture important nuances, subtleties, and complexities. The course focuses on depth rather than breadth, yet readings are supposed to generate questions that encompass a wide variety of environmental issues as well.
Class Attendance and Class Participation
Students are expected to attend all classes. An attendance sign-up sheet will be passed around each day. It is the student’s responsibility to initial the sign-up sheet. Each student gets two “free” absences. All other absences are considered unexcused. (Absences due to school sponsored athletic/scholarly events will require an additional journal based on the reading for that day.) Each unexcused absence will result in a 6% reduction in the attendance evaluation.

Class participation is encouraged and will be evaluated during several CP days (noted on the assignment sheet). A student missing a CP class will receive a zero for participation. One’s class participation evaluation is based on: (a) amount of engagement with the readings; (b) willingness to take risks, i.e., speak from the heart, take “unpopular” positions, or identify strengths/weaknesses in one’s family, culture, or society; and, (c) ability to keep discussion going in a productive way, such as, identifying areas of contention or responding to another’s comments. (Absences on CP days can be replaced with an extra journal entry, but the student must approve this beforehand.)

Making a Difference (MAD)
Students will work in pairs to design, research, and present a proposal to the Knox Campus (via a report and a 5-minute presentation done during finals). The proposal will consist of a well-researched, well-reasoned argument for making a change on the campus that will improve the college’s environmental impact or footprint. There will be a few intermediate steps during the term to allow for the professor to provide guidance and direction and to keep students’ proposals moving along.

Labs
There will be three labs in ENVS 101. See “lab overview sheet”, which is located at MOODLE, for specific information regarding the expectations of the labs. Note: All work done on the labs is to be the student’s own; a student can discuss the lab’s content with others but the written work must be performed and submitted independent of other students.

Journals
Students are required to keep a journal during the term. Six journals entries are to be completed during the course of the term. Journals will be collected 3 times during the term as noted on the ASSIGNMENT SHEET.

Journals should be legibly hand-written into a spiral bound notebook that will be provided by the professor. Though the professor will provide specific instructions for each journal, each entry should be: between 2-3 pages single-sided (1-2 pages double-sided); focused on an environmental topic, and, connected directly to the topics raised in the class. If the journal is described as an “open” one, the following are optional forms: (1) a personal reaction to topic, article, or position; (2) a summary and response to a newspaper/Internet article; (3) a presentation and argument for an actual or hypothetical law; (4) a short story that incorporates appropriate themes; or, (5) a “letter” to the editor or a politician.

Students may find relevant articles to review in the environmental journals found in the Knox Library (Link, http://deptorg.knox.edu/envs-infosite/journals.htm), World Watch Magazine (which a free online subscription is available) or one of the following websites:
- www.enm.com
- www.ens-news.com
- www.earthvision.net
- http://www.planetark.com/dailynewshome.cfm
- www.caprep.com
- www.gristmagazine.com

Field Trips
There will be several opportunities for field trips during the term. Students are expected to attend one field trip. Going on more than one field trip, will be considered extra credit; each additional trip will boost a student’s final overall grade by 1% (up to 3% boost). If a field trip is an “all-dayer,” an additional 1% will be granted. Students not attending any field trips will have their final grade reduced by 1%. Students are asked to plan ahead to enable them to attend a field trip.

Speakers
In the event that an ENVS-related speaker comes to the college, students are encouraged to attend. Students attending approved speakers will have an exam grade boosted two points if they, (1) communicate to the professor that they attended the talk; and, (2) provide a brief synopsis or reaction to it (sent via email). Students are allowed to receive up to five such boosts over the course of the term.

Flunk Day Policy