

Environmental Literacy
ENVL 105
Spring 2009

Course Times and Location: M, W, F 10:00-10:50 Plumas Hall 201
Instructors: James Pushnik **Office:** Holt 101 D
Office Hours Daily 2:00-3:00 **Office Phone** 898-6362
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Texts: Path to a Sustainable World: Developing Ecological Consciousness. Christopher Uhl. 2004. Rowman and Littlefield Publishing
Earthscore: Your Personal Environmental Audit and Guide. Morning Sun Press

Course Description:

This course will introduce you to the issues and practices of environmental literacy. *Environmental literacy is the capacity to perceive and interpret the relative health of environmental systems, and to connect this to an individual's physical, mental and social well-being.* We will explore such questions as: What evidence is there that suggests that we are in an era of environmental disintegration? How do we reconnect human thinking with environmental realities? Why do humans continue to engage in environmental destructive activities? Are there underlying social and economic roots that cause these environmental problems? and Can personal and societal action be taken to mitigate our impact on global ecology? During this course you will be encouraged to recognize that your life is dependent upon the environment, and that your personal decisions affect the environment.

Schedule of Discussion Topics		
Date	<i>Earth, Our Home</i>	Reading
1/26	Environmental Literacy: What does it mean?	
1/28	Seventh Generation Exercise	"Does environmental reporting tend to be biased"
1/30	Historical Perspective of the Environment	Student survey of environmental attitudes
2/2	Cultivating Awareness: A Living Planet Gaia	Uhl 5-30
2/4	Systems and System Thinking	Web Essay by Donella Meadows
2/6	System Thinking Extension	
2/9	Earth Metabolism: Earth's Ecosystems Systems and Cycles	Uhl 33-52
2/11	Awareness of Earth's cycles Discussion of essay	"Diversity and Ecosystem Productivity
2/13	Earth System Interactions and Earth System Dynamics	Uhl 52-62
2/16	Web of life	Uhl 63-82
2/18	Human survival depends on the web of life	Uhl 82-90 "Making highways to the hospital or protecting an endangered beetle
2/20	Nurturing Relationships with Living Systems	Uhl 91-101
2/23	Understanding the Earth's Biota	Uhl 101-119
2/25	Biodiversity and its significance	
2/27	<i>Reflective Essay due</i>	
<i>Assessing the Health of the Earth</i>		

3/2	Gauging the health of Earth	Uhl 125-141
3/4	Listening to what the birds tell us	Guest Lecture
3/6	Listening to what the soil and water is telling us.	“Should the Gulls be poisoned to make way for other birds?”
3/9	Population Explosion	Uhl 157-174
3/11	Energy Sources and Human Consumption Patterns	“Differing approaches to the Population Problem”
3/13	Our Ecological Footprint	Uhl 175-185
3/16-3/20	SPRING BREAK	
3/23	Exploration of the Ecological Footprint Concept	Wedge Game
3/25	Planetary Systems Destabilization	Uhl 187-200
3/27	Destabilization of Earth’s Climate	Uhl 200-221 “Are all risks equivalent?”
3/30	Climate Change, Scientific Uncertainty and Risks	Lecture Notes
4/1	<i>Examination 1</i>	
Healing the Earth: The Sustainability Revolution		
4/3	Shaping our consciousness: Ways of Thought	Uhl 229-246 “Legal rights for trees and streams”
4/6	Human perceptions of environmental risks	Guest Lecture: TBA
4/8	The sustainability revolution	Uhl 246-259
4/10	Designing a Sustainable Society	Uhl 263-276
4/13	World System Theory	
4/15	Tragedy of the Commons Exercise	
4/17	Economic Dimensions of Sustainability	Uhl 276-289
4/20	Environmental Economics	Guest Lecture: TBA
4/22	Discussion of essay	“Green consumerism or No consumerism?”
4/24	Political Dimensions of Sustainability	Uhl 289-303
4/27	Political Barriers to a Sustainable Culture	Guest Lecture TBA
4/29	Transforming Society	Uhl 307-318
5/1	Cities of the future: Planning and design for sustainable living	“Methyl Bromide and the Ozone Layer”
5/4	Food, Population, Health and the Environment	Guest Lecture Lecture Notes
5/6	Understanding Social Transformation	Uhl 318-330
5/8	Setting Policy	“Will a technological fix work, or do we need a fundamental social change?”
5/11	Alternative Energy Strategies: Wind, Solar, Hydrogen and Biological	
5/13	Alternatives Futures: Sustainability, Inequality and Social Change	Lecture Notes
5/15	Intentional Communities <i>Final Reflective Essay due</i>	Guest Lecture : Dr. Mark Stemen
5/20	<i>Examination 2</i>	10:00-11:50

Course Grade:

Course evaluation and grading will be determined on the percentage basis of 400 total possible points. The following percentage grading scale will be used to assign letter grades.

A 100-92	B- 81-80	D+ 69-68
A- 92-90	C+ 79-78	D 67-60
B+ 89-88	C 77-72	F 60-0
B 87-82	C- 71-70	

The total possible **400 points** will be distributed as follow:

1. **Discussion and Summary Participation.** Following the weekly essay discussions on Fridays, you should answer 5 questions that will be posted on the class WebCT site about the topic of the week. To receive maximum points for your question set, you should also search the web for possible answers or opinions which you would share with the class. Questions sets will contribute a total of 100 points (10 points each for the 10 question sets) toward the overall grade in the course.
2. **Two classroom examinations** will be given during the semester. These examinations will be administered at the transition points between course modules (approximately at 3 to 4 week intervals). Examination format will consist of both short answer and essay questions. Each examination will contribute a possible 50 points each (100 point total).
3. **Formal reflective essays** will be written following the conclusion of each module of the course. Each of these essays should be written from the developing perspective introduced in the class. The first will ask you to identify and research the causes and consequences an environmental issue that affects your home town or region. The second essay will require you to address what actions the community in response to the environmental impact (social activities, political and economic decisions) and should be summative, asking you to express how you personally can help to contribute to the mitigation of the environmental problem that you identified. Each essay should be 500 words in length and will contribute a possible total of 100 (200 points total). When writing each essay be sure to follow the guidelines for grading identified in the rubric.

General Education Requirements:

Environmental Literacy (ENVL 005) will satisfy your General Education Area E- Life Learning. Area –E (Life Long-Learning) emphasizes recognition of ourselves as a complex integrated physiological, psychological and sociological entity, we will extend this understanding to include our relationship with the environment and examine how it will influence each of these levels of human experience. Written assignments will meet the GE writing requirement of 1500 words.

Course Objectives:

ENVL 005 will help you develop an awareness of environmental issues and problems that will influence your life during college and beyond and assist in the establishment of a foundation from which you will recognize the decisions you make concerning your life will have implications for our collectively shared environment. To this end we will:

- Stimulate you to be curious about yourself as a complex individual and how you are integrated into a complex multifaceted environmental-social system.
- To introduce you to the foundations in environmental literacy and ecological thought.
- To provide an awareness of the potential physiological implications to the individual of changing environmental conditions during your lifetimes and your progenies futures.
- To examine the psychological perspective that allows humans to perceive or not the threat of potential ramifications of unbalanced environmental management
- To encourage you to develop social consciousness and engage actions this will lead to achieving an environmentally sustainable lifestyle.
- To empower you with the potential to make environmentally conscience changes by introducing you to the many resources for environmental research and action, both on and off-campus.

- Instill a lifelong interest in living a sustainable lifestyle, both at home and work, and provide you with the skills to be a lifelong learner in environmental literacy.

Course Requirements:

- You are expected to attend every class meeting, be punctual, not leave early, and hand in assignments on the due dates. *No late assignments* will be accepted without prior arrangement with instructors.
- You are expected to do the reading assignments before the class meeting. Check the website for updates and links at least weekly.
- Class participation is encouraged and expected.
- You are expected to be considerate of your instructor and fellow students - no inappropriate discussions or inconsiderate behavior, including any use of cell phones.
- Withdrawal deadlines and criteria will be strictly adhered to.