draft 8/24/13

David Barnhill tel: 424-0746
Office: Sage Hall 3451 email: barnhill@uwosh.edu

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 490
Senior Seminar in Environmental Studies
Fall 2013, TuTh 9:40-11:10. Sage Hall 3215
Course website: www.uwosh.edu/facstaff/barnhill/490
Climate change website: www.uwosh.edu/es/climate-change
***Environmental Studies website*:** www.uwosh.edu/es
Office hours*: by appointment: barnhill@uwosh.edu.*

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.
--Preamble to the Earth Charter

"Climate change is not 'a story,' but a background condition for all future stories. . . . The pressing, nay existential imperative to divert from the status quo and radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions is necessarily enmeshed in all major human decisions."
--David Roberts, *Grist*, 21 August 2013

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed as the capstone in Environmental Studies. In it ES majors and minors will pursue their own senior thesis. But this will be a shared experience, as students research and write the thesis in dialogue with the other students in the class. The UWO Environmental Studies Program has several distinctive characteristics, and these directly impact the Senior Seminar.

1. It is based in the liberal arts. The UWO College of Letters and Sciences is a liberal arts college, and all of its programs share the vision of the liberal arts. Rather than merely providing vocational training, it challenges students in a variety of ways that will enrich the student's life after graduation and empower the student to be creative and responsible as a member of various human and natural communities. COLS explains the liberal arts this way:

> *A liberal arts education transcends preparation for specific careers. A liberal arts education prepares students to be responsible citizens who understand and contribute to the changing world in which they live. It exposes students to a broad spectrum of knowledge about the human experience and the natural world, from contemporary science to literature, music and art. It enhances the skills of communication and critical thinking. It challenges students to appreciate their cultural heritage, to be sensitive to diverse traditions and opinions and to value truth. It encourages students to develop a lifelong commitment to inquiry. In sum, a liberal arts education develops the whole person who values knowledge for its own sake as well as for the achievement of specific objectives.*
> <http://www.uwosh.edu/colleges/cols/home.htm>

2. It is fully interdisciplinary. At this point you should understand why Environmental Studies is an interdisciplinary endeavor: the relationships between humans and nature are complex, and to understand them, one must understand their ecological, socio-cultural, and philosophical dimensions. You have learned how to evaluate scientific data (both natural and social scientific) and to analyze the social and ethical aspects involved. In the senior thesis you will demonstrate your ability to draw from various disciplines and integrate knowledge in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

3. It is a flexible program. Students enter the ES program with a wide variety of interests and goals. Our recently created major has two emphases and five tracks to give students many options. This also makes the program diverse.

4. A socially engaged program. Environmental Studies at UWO is not pursued simply as an intellectual endeavor. We live in a world of substantial environmental and social problems, and the program is geared toward analyzing those problems, discovering solutions to them, and being civically engaged in making a better world. The senior thesis is an opportunity to articulate how an environmental problem can be effectively responded to.

CLIMATE CHANGE

While students will be writing their own independent senior thesis, the class has an overarching focus: climate change. Climate change is the most critical environmental issue. Not only are its projected consequences greater than any other problem, it also makes almost every other environmental problem much worse. Climate change is also highly complex. There are a wide variety of issues, and climate change can be approached by many different disciplines. Whatever your own focus is in the ES program, climate change is relevant to it. All students have been exposed to the issue of global warming and climate change in previous classes. We will briefly review the basics and go into greater depth, attending to a broader range of topics and approaches. By the end of class, each student will develop their own sophisticated position on climate change.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

Every program at UWO is required to have an assessment plan as a way to measure ***outcomes***: the learning and skills we expect students to gain in the program. The Senior Seminar and in particular the senior thesis are the principal ways we assess our students' outcomes.

With this in mind, the senior thesis should demonstrate your ability:

1. **To understand the complex nature of an environmental issue: climate change**. This involves recognizing the problematic nature of scientific knowledge involved (e.g., conflicting, ambiguous, or insufficient data), of the social dimensions (political, economic, sociological, and/or psychological), and of the humanistic dimensions (ethical, philosophical, aesthetic and/or religious).
2. **To apply key concepts in Environmental Studies** in analyzing the problem and possible solutions to climate change, including concepts found in the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.
3. **To understand and critically evaluate different policy positions** in relation to climate change.
4. **To articulate the student's own position** concerning climate change, supporting that position with evidence, argument, and authority, while recognizing the potential limitations and problems of that position.
5. To articulate the ways that climate change and the student's position on it **calls for an active response,** such as social and environmental policies or personal engagement.

The thesis should also demonstrate the student's **research and communication skills**, including the ability:

6. To use in a critical and sophisticated way **a wide variety of research tools**, both electronic and paper.
7. To **produce an annotated bibliography** of sources, print and electronic, on a specific environmental studies topic, briefly summarizing the source and evaluating the usefulness and limitations of each item for that specific topic.
8. To **write a thesis in a clear, efficient, and compelling way** that is understandable to an educated general audience and sophisticated enough for an expert audience.
9. To present the thesis (as a work in progress) as a **professional PowerPoint presentation** and lead a discussion on the issues; OR to present a **professional poster** and respond to questions about it.

REQUIRED READINGS AND FORMAT

There will be a few readings on e-reserve, but there are no texts required for this seminar. Students will develop their own readings in consultation with the instructor and fellow seminar participants. Students will share their research and lead discussions of their topic. In addition, there will be time to reflect back on your environmental studies career.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

See course website for assignment descriptions. See syllabus for due dates.

1. Research Proposal. Approximately 2.5% of final grade.

2. Two progress reports. Approximately 5% of final grade (2.5% each).

3. Senior reflections. Several kinds of reflections on your experience in the ES program. Total 2.5%.

- Reflections on environmental citizenship
- Record of engagement
- Reflections on careers and qualifications
- *At end of semester, anonymous, and ungraded:* Assessment of the ES program

3. Mid-term summary. Approximately 5% of final grade.

4. Formal presentation of your research: PowerPoint or Poster. Approximately 10% of final grade.

5. First full, complete draft of research. Two hard copies, plus electronic version to me. Approximately 10% of final grade.

6. Final draft of research project. An electronic version. Approximately 35% of final grade.

7. Peer editing. Approximately 5% of final grade.

8. Discussion. Approximately 20% of final grade. All students are expected to be active and positive in all seminar discussions. This grade is determined by the quantity and quality of your participation in class discussion throughout the semester.

9. Reading responses. Approximately 2.5% of final grade.

10. Reflections on two Earth Week events. Email attachment. Due the class period the week after Earth Week. Approximately 2.5% of final grade (total for both). Two informal reflections on two Earth Week events. Each reflection should be about ¾-1 page, double spaced. Review the basic content of the event, its significance, and your evaluation of each event.

11. Participation in Career Services interviewing and networking workshops & ***mock interviews*** (required but ungraded).

CALCULATING GRADES

I grade by letter grade: A, A-, B+, etc., and if you prefer numbers, they are the same as your g.p.a: 4, 3.7, 3.3, etc.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS, ATTENDANCE, AND RETURNED ASSIGNMENTS.

- *Plagiarism:* Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty; anyone found to have engaged in either will receive an F and may face University discipline. I will submit each thesis to a website that looks for plagiarism.
- *Attendance:* Attendance by all students is crucial to the success of the course. There are no excused absences except for serious illness (bring a note) or emergencies (bring some written evidence of it).
- *Research project:* You will put your final version of the thesis in an e-portfolio. These will be available to ES faculty and to ES students.

TUTORING

The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Content Tutoring page on CAR's website (www.uwosh.edu/car) for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, stop by SSC 102 or call 424-2290. To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let him/her know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet. Tutoring takes place in SSC 102. The Center for Academic Resources also provides support to students through Supplemental Instruction (SI) and the Peer Educator program. Visit the website for more information.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR ES 490

⇨ *Note: I may change assignments or schedule if I deem the change to be beneficial to students*

Th 9/5 Introduction to the course and climate change. Discussion of possible student topics.

Tu 9/10 Discussion of (1) critical thinking, bases, (2) bias, neutrality, objectivity, balance, (3) advocacy, engaged scholarship, (4) scientific knowledge and attacks on science. Student summaries of climate change reports.
- *See "Critical Thinking in ES" page of the course website.*
- *Read assigned reports*
- *Post to D2L your summary of the report*
- *Print, read, and bring to class other assigned reading (tba)*

Th 9/12 Student summaries of climate change reports.
- *Read assigned reports*
- *Post to D2L your summary of the report*
- *Print, read, and bring to class other assigned reading (tba)*

Tu 9/17 Discussion of climate change
- *Print, read, and bring to class assigned reading (tba)*
- *Be prepared to critically discuss reading*
- ***Submit research proposal by email as Word attachment***

Th 9/19 Guest librarian: using research resources for environmental research. Meet in Polk Library Lobby (we will then go to the Computer Room, 116a)

Tu 9/24 Discussion of climate change
- *Print, read, and bring to class assigned reading (tba)*
- *Be prepared to critically discuss reading*

Th 9/26 Interviewing and networking workshop, in our classroom.
- *Work on thesis*
- **Green Job Panel at 11:30**

Tu 10/1 Group review of student research projects: topic, issues, research progress and problems.
- ***Submit by email progress report #1 as Word attachment***

Th 10/3 **Mock interviews, Dempsey 230. Sign up at Titan Jobs beforehand.**

Tu 10/8 Discussion of climate change
- ***Submit by email the three senior reflections.*** *See the assignments page for this course.*

Th 10/10 Discussion of critical thinking in your thesis, including your "bases." Discussion of class presentations.
- *See "Critical Thinking in ES" page of the course website.*
- *Come to class having identified as many bases as you can at this point (to stimulate discussion -- not to be handed in)*

Tu 10/15 Individual meetings with professor about thesis (1-2)
- ***Submit by email progress report #2***
- *Work on thesis*

Th 10/17 Individual meetings with professor about thesis (3-4)
- *Work on thesis*

Tu 10/22 Individual meetings with professor about thesis (5-6)
- *Work on thesis*

Th 10/24 Individual meetings with professor about thesis (7-8)
- *Work on thesis*

Tu 10/29 Individual meetings with professor about thesis (9-10)
- ***Submit by email midterm summary***

Th 10/31 Individual meetings with professor about thesis (11-12)
- *Work on thesis*

Tu 11/5 Class meeting to discuss projects
- *Work on thesis*

Th 11/7 Student presentations

- *Work on thesis*

Tu 11/12 Student presentations
- *Work on thesis*

Th 11/14 *No class*: work on thesis
- *Work on thesis*

Tu 11/19 Student presentations
- *Work on thesis*

Th 11/21 Student presentations
- *Work on thesis*

Tu 11/26 *No class*: *Work on thesis*

Th 11/28 *No class*: enjoy Thanksgiving break
- *Work on thesis*

Tu 12/3 Student presentations
- *Hand in two hard copies of first (complete) draft of paper, beginning of class; also email electronic copy as a Word attachment to* barnhill@uwosh.edu

Th 12/5 Peer editing
- *Comment on peers' papers*

Tu 12/10 Celebratory reflections on Environmental Studies and on students' future plans
- *Work on thesis*

Th 12/12 *No class*
- *Submit an electronic version of final draft of paper, plus hard copies of first drafts with peer editors' names and your evaluation of your peer editors. Due beginning of class.*