

Environmental Studies: ES 101, a Quest 1 Course

Signature Question: Sustainability

Course description and goals

Over the past 200 years, humans' impact on the natural world has changed dramatically. The goal of this course is to explore our relationship with the natural world and how our behaviors and actions affect it. To do this, we will examine case studies that explore four main topics: climate change, chemicals and agriculture, technology, and people and wildlife. Central themes of the course will include changing perceptions of the relationship between nature and culture; the different cultural lenses through which people look at nature; the role of science and the media in environmental policy making; and the responsibilities that we have as individuals and communities to maintaining healthy, sustainable environments. We will analyze all topics in the context of the three pillars of sustainability: economics, environmental health, and social justice.

This course is a Quest I course focused on the Signature Question of Sustainability. What is a Quest I course? As part of the University Studies Program (USP), all new students at UW Oshkosh will take a Quest I course during their first fall on campus. This will be a great opportunity for you to get to know UW Oshkosh – both its resources and people – as well as the USP, which will form the core of your college education. Each of the Quest I courses will focus on a specific Signature Question/topic: Intercultural Knowledge (How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?), Civic Knowledge (How do people understand and engage in community life?), or Sustainability (How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?). This course is specifically designed to dive into the issues associated with understanding and creating a sustainable world.

Additionally, a goal of this class is to further your liberal arts education. What does this mean? The liberal arts education focuses on general learning, intellectual ability, and critical thinking rather than technical or professional skills. The goal of this class is not just to convey specific information about environmental issues (although you will learn much about this) but to teach you how to interpret this information critically, and how to understand modern environmental issues in their social, historical, and political context. A liberal arts education provides the tools we need to be active citizens of our communities. As we will learn this semester, active citizenship plays a key role in resolving the complex environmental dilemmas that we as a society face today.

In Spring 2008, UW Oshkosh adopted a set of Essential Learning Outcomes to help define the meaning of a liberal education. One of these outcomes is the recognition that a liberal education recognizes our “Responsibility, as individuals and communities.” This includes “Knowledge of sustainability and its applications.” This course is designed to help us think about our responsibilities to each other, to our communities, and to our environment.

Instructor/class information

Instructor

M. Elsbeth (Misty) McPhee

mcpheem@uwosh.edu

424-0644

office hours:

Tues 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Fri 11:30 pm – 12:30 pm

If these don't work for you, I'm happy to set up an appointment at a more convenient time. Through Google, all students have access to my calendar and I request that you look at it BEFORE contacting me about an appointment.

office: 3448 Sage

Class

Meeting times/locations:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

1:50 am – 2:50 pm

Sage 2221

Required Texts & Materials

Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2009)

Sandra Steingraber, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment* (Da Capo Press, 2010)

Renee Askins, *Shadow Mountain: A Memoir of Wolves, a Woman and the Wild* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002)

Bill McKibben, *Hope, Human and Wild* (Canada: Milkweed Editions, 2007)

Other readings will also be required. These are listed below and will be available as pdfs through D2L. As we go through the class I might change reading assignments based on class discussion so pay attention to announcements so that you don't read the wrong papers.

Grading

Your grades will be based on:

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Class participation | 100 |
| 2. Campus participation | 80 |
| 3. Quizzes (5 pts each) | 50 |
| 4. Two short reflections (10 pts each) | 20 |
| 5. Reading responses (5 @ 10 pts each) | 50 |
| 6. Four exams (50 pts each) | 200 |
| 7. Group presentations | 50 |
| 8. Final reflection | 50 |
| Total points: | 600 |

To figure your grade at any point throughout the term, add the total points earned and divide by the total points possible up to that point. Attendance is expected and that, with participation, can raise a borderline grade.

| <u>% of total points</u> | <u>Grade</u> | <u>% of total points</u> | <u>Grade</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 94-100 | A | 73-76 | C |
| 90-93 | A- | 70-72 | C- |
| 87-89 | B+ | 67-69 | D+ |
| 83-86 | B | 63-66 | D |
| 80-82 | B- | 60-62 | D- |
| 77-79 | C+ | ≤ 59 | F |

Description of assignments/points

1. **Class participation** will be graded based on attendance and overall participation and engagement in the course. Obvious signs of engagement are questions and participation in discussion; other signs are coming to talk to me in office hours or before/after class; and finally, just general attitude and attendance in the classroom.

Participation grades will be given as follows:

- A = participates often and meaningfully in class discussions
- A- = participates a fair amount
- B = participates some
- B- = participates rarely
- C = in class but doesn't participate
- D = in class but not paying attention at all (sleeping, on computer)

2. A big part of the Quest I experience is getting out of the classroom and participating on the campus as a whole. You will be expected to attend four co-curricular activities on campus that are relevant to the content of this course. For example, in October, the University hosts the Earth Charter Summit that typically has wonderful speakers and activities. These events and lectures are often directly relevant to our discussions in ES 101 and you will receive 20 points for attending and writing a one-page description of the event.

One of your best resources on this campus is your peers, especially those who have been there, done that. In this class we are fortunate to have someone who is specially trained and willing to help you become familiar with academic life at UW Oshkosh — Grayson Bourke. Grayson will attend campus events with the class, answer your questions about the campus, help you with your ePortfolio, and refer you to various resources. You should not hesitate to get to know him as he is an important part of the Quest I experience. In fact, you must meet with him on an individual basis by **1 November**.

3. I will frequently give a short **quiz** at the beginning of class. These will always be on the **readings and material from the most recent lectures**, so I strongly recommend you go over your notes immediately after each class and immediately prior to the following class.

Quizzes can NOT be made up under any circumstances.

4. In the first two weeks of the semester, you will write two reflections on the following discussion questions:

Reflection #1: What is sustainability and how does it relate to me?
How does it relate to UWO?

Reflection #2: Can there be "sustainable growth"? "sustainable development"? What does a sustainable Oshkosh look like? a sustainable USA? a sustainable planet?

Reflection #1 will be uploaded into your ePortfolio.

5. There will be 5 response papers due throughout the semester. These will be 2-3 page (double spaced) written responses to assigned readings and lectures. For **EACH** of the individual readings, you will answer the following questions:

- What is the main question addressed by the author(s)?
- What were their primary findings?

- What was the significance of findings? i.e., why do you think their work was important?
- How is the reading relevant to our class?
- What is a question that came up for you that you'd like the class to discuss? (see below for a description of discussion questions)

You will also provide a discussion question for each reading. These are big-picture questions that foster discussion (NOT questions about details of the readings). For example, do not ask, "How many bushels of corn were harvested in 2004?" but, "What implications does the increase in corn production have on family farms?"

These do not have to be formatted like a formal paper. Feel free to use subheadings and bullets to make it clear to me that you've addressed all required pieces.

They will be graded based on how obvious it is to me that you read the assignment carefully. Thus, I recommend you be thorough and refer to the papers in detail.

Ultimately, the responses are just that – your *response* to the reading. Tell me what you think, how it relates to what we've talked about in class, etc. A great reading response addresses **every** assigned paper but doesn't just regurgitate what it said – it actually shows that you have thought about the topic.

Though this is not a formal paper, **you must provide a bibliography and correctly cite the papers** you read and any other sources you used to formulate your ideas. For example, in text, you will cite a paper in this way (Smith et al. 2008). At the end of the paper, please use the following format:

Smith, M., P. Jones, and S. Johnson. 2008. Effects on toxins on behavior in children. *Ecotoxicology* 25:54-58.

If you have any questions, please ask me.

Please turn in documents as **PDFs** – other formats will not be accepted.

If you are late and the dropbox is closed, put your assignment in the "Late assignments" dropbox. **I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY ASSIGNMENT VIA EMAIL – EVER.** If it goes into the late dropbox, I don't guarantee it will get graded before the end of the term. Do not complain about timing – if you were late, I have no obligation to be timely. All late submissions are subject to a 10 - 20% penalty and will appear as a 0 on D2L until I grade it.

6. On the Monday of Thanksgiving week, there will be no class. You, however, are to watch a movie that relates to any of the topics we've covered. Below is a list of possible movies, but you are welcome to choose another if you'd like. You will include a discussion of the movie in the reading response due after break. The movie portion of the response should describe the movie (don't assume I've seen it!), talk about why you chose that movie, and how it relates to what we've covered in class.

Wildlife

Milking the Rhino (on reserve at Polk)

Climate change

An Inconvenient Truth

Fuel

The 11th hour

Who Killed the Electric car?

Note: "Day After Tomorrow" is NOT acceptable!

link to more ideas on D2L

Sustainable Food

Food, Inc.

Sustainable Table

Ingredients

Fresh

The Future of Food

Food Matters

Dive!

Chemicals

Erin Brockovich

Living Downstream

Amphibian Extinction

Cancer Causing Agents

Other

The Pacific: Biodiversity and the Protection of Coral Reefs

Also, on the Polk Library's home page (link on D2L), there is a link for Films on Demand – this gives you access to TONS of cool documentaries!

7. There will be four exams in this course. They will be primarily short answer questions. The class before each exam, you will have a reading response due. I see the preparation of the reading response as a great way to study for the exam as you will need to think about and synthesize what we've read and learned.

- I **never give exams earlier** than the announced date and time.
- If you miss an exam due to a University-sponsored activity (e.g. athletics contest), you will know ahead of time and your coach will have provided you with a letter. Bring a copy of that letter to me ahead of time, to permit a make-up to be arranged.
- If you miss an exam for any other University-accepted reason (e.g. illness or bereavement), provide me with written proof to permit a make-up to be arranged.
- **Absolutely NO** late exams will be scheduled for reasons of holiday or end-of-term travel.

8. At the end of the term, you will be placed into a group and you and your group-mates will be responsible for researching the sustainability practices of a given organization in the Oshkosh area. You will present your findings to the class.

Your presentation will be evaluated by your peers and I will also grade you on your behavior as an audience member. Were you engaged? Did you ask questions?

9. Final reflection. For the last day of class, you will turn in a response to the questions:
 - a. What is sustainability and how does it relate to me? to UWO?
 - b. How has my perception of sustainability changed since the first week of class?
 - c. How can I make a difference?

This paper will be uploaded into your ePortfolio.

10. **Early alert:** Instructors at UW Oshkosh are asked to check out how you all are doing during the first 2-3 weeks. By this point, you will have written a couple of reflections and participated in several discussions. If you're having trouble with any aspect of the class, you might receive some notification letters from on campus offices that can help you. If this happens, don't panic, but do take it seriously; this Early Alert system is there to make sure you get help with your studying/writing/organization right away, and is not intended to be a form of punishment.
11. **MAP-Works** (Making Achievement Possible-Works) is a survey that is all about you! To help you have a wonderful first-year of college, we need you to take this survey. You will receive an email from map-works@uwosh.edu inviting you to take the survey. Advisors, hall directors, instructors and many other people on campus will use this information to help you be successful and to provide you with what you need. You will receive a report with suggestions on how achieve your goals; please review it. Once you've taken the survey, set up an appointment with either me or Grayson, your peer mentor, to talk about your survey report. Please bring your MAP-Works survey report with you when you meet with us. You must schedule this meeting by **16 October**.

The not-so-fine print

1. **ACADEMIC RESOURCES**

The UW Oshkosh Writing Center

The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available. For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), call 920-424-1152, email wcenter@uwosh.edu, or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

Polk Library/Information Literacy

Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access,

evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes. Phone: 920-424-7329; email: mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: rap@uwosh.edu.

Undergraduate Advising Resource Center (UARC)

<http://www.uwosh.edu/advising/>

Learn about different majors, get advise about registration, and more.

Center for Academic Resources

<http://www.uwosh.edu/car/>

Get tutoring support.

2. Cell phone use will NOT be permitted in my classroom. If your cell phone goes off or you text during class, you will be asked to leave and you will receive an F for that day's participation.
3. Laptops: you are more than welcome to use laptops in class to take notes, but you are NOT to use them for any other purpose. If I see you using your laptop for anything other than note-taking, I will ask you to close your computer and you will receive an F for that day's participation.
4. The University uses the Google mail system which includes Google Calendar. This is what I use to manage my schedule. All students have access to my calendar and I request that you look at it BEFORE contacting me about an appointment. I love it when students come see me, but organizing meetings is much easier if you look at my calendar first.
5. **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE WELCOME IN THIS COURSE.** Please contact me after the first day or two of class so that we may arrange all possible accommodation ahead of time.
6. **EMAIL COMMUNICATION and D2L** will be used frequently throughout the semester to communicate between Instructors and Students. Emails constitute legal, official University communication. Not checking your email is not an excuse for performance problems in the class. Contact Academic Computing or any Campus Computer Lab supervisor for assistance with email and D2L.
7. **ACADEMIC HONESTY** policies are clearly defined at this University and all students are expected to abide by them. Penalties for violations are

severe in this course. Cheating on an exam (including looking at someone else's paper) at a MINIMUM leads to zero on that exam, with no opportunity for a make-up or extra credit. A second offense is an F in the course and a report to Dean of Students.

Proposed lecture and assignment schedule

| Date | Day | Topic | Class activity | Assignments due |
|--|------------|--|---|--|
| 4 Sept | Wed | Welcome to Environmental Studies! | <i>Discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Env'l Studies? • What is sustainability? | |
| 6 Sept | Fri | What is sustainability? cont. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussion • Emergent systems group activity | <u>Read:</u> Munier 2005 Due: Sustainability reflection 1 |
| 9 Sept | Mon | How and why to study Sustainability at UWO | <i>Discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a liberal education? • What is the University Studies Program? • What resources are at UWO? | Due: Sustainability reflection 2 |
| <i>Climate change: What do Alaskans and Polynesian Islanders have in common?</i> | | | | |
| 11 Sept | Wed | Are we changing the Earth | Movie: <i>Are We Changing Planet Earth?</i> | <u>Read:</u> Dobson 2002 |
| 13 Sept | Fri | Alaska and Tuvalu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture/discussion on Shishmaref, AK and Tuvalu | |
| 16 Sept | Mon | Climate change and the rest of the world | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture | <u>Read:</u> Patz et al. 1996 <u>Read:</u> Hansen 2008 |
| 18 Sept | Wed | Can we make a difference? | Movie: <i>Can We Save Planet Earth?</i> | |
| 20 Sept | Fri | Case studies in the U.S. | Exercise: Climate Case Studies | |
| 23 Sept | Mon | <i>Overall discussion</i> | | <u>Read:</u> Brooke 2008 <u>Read:</u> McKibben 2009 Due: Reading Response 1 |
| 25 Sept | Wed | EXAM 1 | | |
| <i>Atrazine and Agriculture: What are we eating?</i> | | | | |
| 27 Sept | Fri | How are agriculture and chemicals related? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief lecture on Steingraber • Discussion of chapter | <u>Read:</u> Steingraber, Earth, pp 154-169 |
| 30 Sept - 4 Oct: Earth Charter events on campus | | | | |
| 30 Sept | Mon | Industrial vs sustainable agricultural systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture | <u>Read:</u> Pimentel 2005 <u>Read:</u> Berry 1977 |

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| 2 Oct | Wed | Our culinary roots: Is cancer the only problem? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture | <u>Read: Pollan In Defense of Food pp 83-136</u> |
| 4 Oct | Fri | It's not just us: Chemicals and wildlife | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture | <u>Read: Steingraber, Animals, pp 133-141</u> <u>Read: Zala and Penn 2004</u> |
| 7 Oct | Mon | You are what you eat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture | <u>Read: Pollan In Defense of Food pp 17-82</u> Due: Earth Charter event descriptions |
| 9 Oct | Wed | | Food log activity | Due: Food log |
| 11 Oct | Fri | <i>Overall discussion</i> | | Due: Reading Response 2 |
| 14 Oct | Mon | EXAM 2 | | |
| <i>Technology and the environment: Oil, Iron, and Gas</i> | | | | |
| 16 Oct | Wed | [TBD] | [TBD] | Due: Meeting with Grayson or Misty about MAP-Works survey <u>Read: TBD</u> |
| 18 Oct | Fri | [TBD] | [TBD] | <u>Read: TBD</u> |
| 21 Oct | Mon | [TBD] | [TBD] | <u>Read: TBD</u> |
| 23 Oct | Wed | [TBD] | [TBD] | <u>Read: TBD</u> |
| 25 Oct | Fri | [TBD] | [TBD] | <u>Read: TBD</u> |
| 28 Oct | Mon | <i>Exercise</i> | [TBD] | <u>Read: TBD</u> |
| 30 Oct | Wed | <i>Overall discussion</i> | | Due: Reading Response 3 |
| 1 Nov | Fri | EXAM 3 | | Due: Meet with Grayson about campus life |
| <i>People and Wildlife: Wolves in Yellowstone National Park</i> | | | | |
| 4 Nov | Mon | Why do we care about wolves? Ecology and conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture on ecology • Discussion of readings | <u>Read: Chadwick 2010</u> <u>Read: Manning et al. 2009</u> |
| 6 Nov | Wed | Reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone | Movie: <i>A Legend Returns</i> | <u>Read: Askins, pp 3-35, 53-73</u> |
| 8 Nov | Fri | Policy and stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Lecture | <u>Read: Maclennan et al. 2009</u> |
| 11 Nov | Mon | People and wolves | Movie: <i>Wolves in Paradise</i> | <u>Read: Askins, pp. 77-138, 153-176</u> |

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| 13 Nov | Wed | Wolves in Wisconsin | <i>Discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your perceptions of WI wolves? • Wolf Mgt Plan • Lecture | Skim: 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Mgt Plan |
| 15 Nov | Fri | Solving the conflict | Role play exercise | |
| 18 Nov | Mon | <i>Overall discussion</i> | | Due: Reading Response 4 |
| 20 Nov | Wed | Group projects: Class meets in Computer Lab | Work on group projects | |
| 22 Nov | Fri | EXAM 4 | | |
| <i>Our environmental responsibility</i> | | | | |
| 25 Nov | Mon | <i>No class: Movie assignment</i> | | |
| 27, 29 Nov | Wed, Fri | <i>No class - Thanksgiving break</i> | | |
| 2 Dec | Mon | Looking for hope: What can I do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Guest speakers from Volunteer and Internship offices | Read: McKibben, Chpts 1 & 2 |
| 4 Dec | Wed | Sustainability at UWO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of readings • Speaker: Brian Kermath, Director of Sustainability at UWO | Read: McKibben, Chpt 3 |
| 6 Dec | Fri | <i>Overall discussion</i> | | Read: McKibben, Chpt 4 Read: Diamond 2005 Due: Reading Response 5 (including a section on your movie of choice) |
| 9 Dec | Mon | Sustainability in Oshkosh | <i>Group presentations</i> | Due: Slides |
| 11 Dec | Wed | Sustainability in Oshkosh | <i>Group presentations</i> | |
| 13 Dec | Fri | Sustainability in Oshkosh | <i>Group presentations</i> | Due: Final response |

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