

ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH

Political Science 261-001C

Tues/Thurs 11:30-1:00, Sage Hall 4221



Photo and caption: Julian Agyeman et al. located at www.thepolisblog.org/2013/01/julian-agyeman-et-al-on-environmental.html.

“The enormous financial gains that are being made by those fortunate enough to benefit from neo-liberal economic policies come with large social and ecological costs in terms of higher pollution levels, greater resource exploitation, less protection for workers and massive social and cultural dislocation.”

PROFESSOR INFO

Jerry D. Thomas

J.D. Chicago-Kent College of Law,
Illinois Institute of Technology

Ph.D. University of Kentucky

M.P.A. University of South Carolina

Office Location: Sage Hall 4634

Office Hours: TR 10:00-11:30 or by appointment

Contact: 424-0727, thomasj@uwosh.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a survey course examining relationships between social structure, culture, and natural environments. The course is an interdisciplinary one, but emphasizes social scientific perspectives. Namely, the course examines a number of aspects of environment and society related to politics, government, economics, and policy. A major theme throughout this course is sustainability.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

There are two sets of learning outcomes for this course. The first set is specific to environment and society. The second set is based on UWO's essential learning outcomes for all students.

Environment & Society Learning Outcomes

Throughout the course students will:

- Evaluate approaches to global climate change
Assess self attitudes toward those approaches.
- Discuss with classmates how we understand environmental issues culturally and socially.
- Research and evaluate political components of environment and society, including political parties and interest groups.
- Identify and assess various lenses through which environmental issues should be examined, including science, economics, politics, and philosophy.
- Identify and discuss with classmates various environmental values related to sustainability.
- Critically examine environmental social justice, with particular attention to race, gender, and socio-economic status.
- Evaluate sustainability through ecocentric, bio-centric, and anthropocentric lenses.

UWO Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)

- Critical and creative thinking
- Oral and written communication
- Knowledge of sustainability and its applications

Knowledge of sustainability and its applications is the ability to understand local and global Earth systems, the qualities of ecological integrity and the means to restore and preserve it, and the interconnectedness of ecological integrity, economic well-being, and social justice, in order to analyze complex environmental, economic and social issues to respond effectively to them.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

I use the 93/90/87 grading scale for this course.

A	93–100	B-	80–82	D+	67–69
A-	90–92	C+	77–79	D	63–66
B+	87–89	C	73–76	D-	60–62
B	83–86	C-	70–72	F	0–59

Exams (2 exams x 20% each = 40%)—Exams are a combination of objective, short-answer, and essay/issue spotter questions.

Assignments (30%)—There are regular homework assignments and in-class activities. Examples include one-page papers, group problem solving, mini-quizzes, mini-research assignments, and personal reflections. There is also a group research assignment.

Participation (30%) —Good participation grades are *earned*, not *given*. Good participation means a student reads and briefs cases before class and participates actively in discussions. Participation comfort levels vary substantially. At one end of the spectrum, there are students who fear public speaking (more than death) and would prefer to remain anonymous in class. These students should actively work to overcome this fear. On the other end of the spectrum are gunners. Gunners are eager to speak and tend to dominate conversation. These students should be mindful that learning involves active listening and should provide others an opportunity to speak. Quality of participation is just as important as quantity. Students receive the best participation grades when they demonstrate critical thinking and when they assimilate complex ideas, including classmates' ideas, across a range of topics. These participators contribute meaningfully to the learning of others (including the professor). Finally, there may be opportunities for formal class presentations.

CLASS GUIDELINES

I have four principles I ask students to observe. Be *honest*, *energetic*, *reliable*, and *respectful*.

D2L

Students are required to use D2L. For questions about training or for technical assistance, call the UW help desk at (888) 435–7589.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is expected. I take attendance at the beginning of each class, mainly to learn student names. Remember, participation is required. You cannot participate if you are absent. Absences are sometimes necessary. If you are absent, it is unnecessary to e-mail or contact me, unless it is an extended absence. It is your responsibility to contact a classmate for any missed notes or assignments. I do not supply notes or one-on-one lectures to students. I am always happy to meet with students to review unclear points.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MAKE-UP WORK

Students are expected to turn in assignments on the due dates. I accept late assignments (with a stiff penalty) only if I have not returned graded assignments or discussed the answers in class. Students who miss in-class assignments will be excused only if they have bona-fide excuses according to university policy (e.g., documented illness, family death). Make-up exams are given only if the student contacts me in advance. In short, turn in assignments on time. If you are unable to do so, contact me to discuss your individual situation.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is committed to a standard of academic integrity for all students. The system guidelines state, “Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors.” Students are subject to disciplinary action for academic misconduct. Students on the UW Oshkosh campus have been suspended from the university for academic misconduct. Students are encouraged to review the procedures related to violations of academic honesty as outlined in Chapter UWS 14, Wisconsin Administrative Code, which can be found on the Dean of Students website at www.uwosh.edu/stuaff/dean/student-conduct. Specific questions regarding the provisions in the code (and institutional procedures approved to implement the code) should be directed to the Dean of Students Office.

SCHEDULE, READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

This course is about the environment. Hence, there is no printed textbook. All readings are available electronically at no cost to students. Changes to the schedule will invariably occur. I will communicate changes in class or by e-mail.

Week 1 (Jan 28)

Introductions, Course Overview

Homework: D2L profile

Activity: Introductions (class expertise)

Activity & Discussion: Tragedy of the Commons

Week 2 (Feb 4)

Activity and Writing Assignment: Campus Environmentalism. Research students groups and campus organizations that are related to environmental issues. Contact one of these entities and arrange to either 1) attend a meeting or event or 2) conduct an interview. Write a one-page paper discussing environmentalism at UWO. Incorporate observations from your meeting, event, or interview. Due: March 5.

Homework: Research environmental and climate change issues. Identify (1) an environmental issue you believe everyone knows, and (2) an environmental issue that you recently learned and/or an issue that not many people know but should know. Write one paragraph about each issue. Be prepared to present and discuss these issues during class. Students should bring to class an artifact (art, dirt, picture, recycling label, examples of wasteful consumer packaging, extinct butterfly specimen, fossil, etc. be creative) or a video clip (2-3 minutes max) or a brief reading (e.g., poem, religious passage, policy statement) that can be used to enhance the class discussion.

Student Discussions and Mini-Presentations:

Overview of environmental issues

Activity: What did you know/learn?

Homework: Defining sustainability (D2L)

Discussion: Sustainability

Video (in class): *The Business Logic of Sustainability*, Ray Anderson (TED Talks)

Writing Activity: Write 10-minute paper summarizing your view of sustainability.

Week 3 (Feb 11)

Homework: Watch *An Inconvenient Truth* available at <http://vimeo.com/16335777>. Write a one-page reaction paper (double-spaced). Reaction papers “react” to something you watched.

- Do you agree or disagree with Gore? Why?
- Did the video spark a question/idea?
- Is the video overly political or partisan?
- Are you inspired to take responsibility or action?
- Is the film over-used or off-putting?

Discussion: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Video: *Cool It*

Discussion: Compare and contrast Gore’s and Lomborg’s approaches to climate change.

Week 4 (Feb 18)

Homework: Take an online assessment to determine your Carbon/Ecological Footprint. There are many assessments available including www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/index.htm or www.myfootprint.org/. Write a one-page summary of your results and what you learned about yourself.

Read: Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* and Carson, *Silent Spring* (D2L)

Discussion: Ecological Footprints

Discussion: Leopold

Homework: Read *Wisconsin's Changing Climate: Impacts and Adaptation*. 2011. Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts. Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Dept of Natural Resources at www.wicci.wisc.edu/publications.php (ch. 1–2, pp. 1–44)

Discussion: Wisconsin’s Changing Climate—Mitigation and Adaptation

Activity: Write a letter to a friend or family member telling them what you learned about climate change in Wisconsin.

Week 5 (Feb 25)

Homework: Research Sustainable Cities (or Eco-cities) online. Develop a list of best practices for sustainable cities. Document your sources.

Discussion: Sustainable Cities

Group Activity: Sustainable city best practices

Homework: UWO as leading green university (Readings TBD). Develop an elevator pitch (1-minute speech) for UWO environmentalism. Be prepared to give your pitch during class.

Discussion & Elevator Pitches: UWO Environmentalism

Week 6 (March 4)

Campus Environmentalism Paper Due: March 5

Guest Speaker: Brian Kermath, UWO Campus Sustainability Director

Homework: Read Mallory, Chaone. *What Is Ecofeminist Political Philosophy? Gender, Nature, and the Political*. 32 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS 3, 305–322 (2010). Write a one-page summary of the main points of the article.

Discussion/Activity: Ecofeminism (discussion to be held in the UWO Women's Center)

Week 7 (March 11)

Review (Concept Mapping) and Exam 1

Week 8 (March 18)

Spring Break. No class.

Week 9 (March 25)

Debrief: Exam 1

Video: *Bag It*

Field Trip: Biodigester

Week 10 (April 1)

Homework: Watch video (TBD). Write a one-page reflection paper.

Discussion: Food and the Environment

Field Trip: Blackhawk Commons

Week 11 (April 8)

Homework: Research the Internet for images that portray the concepts of consumerism, materialism, and the environment. Prepare a 2-minute Powerpoint presentation that contains these images and a caption for each image. Be sure to include your sources for the images. Bring your Powerpoint on a thumb drive to class so you can present it to the class. The best presentations will incorporate concepts we have discussed in class.

Discussion and Student Presentations:

Consumerism, Materialism, and the Environment (Image Project)

Homework: Costanza, Robert, Herman E. Daly, and Joy A. Bartholomew. *Goals, Agenda, and Policy Recommendations for Ecological Economics* (intro only) (online)

Discussion: Ecological Economics and Policy

Review: Sustainability Lenses

Week 12 (April 15)

Discussion: Environmental Policy Process

Field Trip: Bus Trip (TBD)

Week 13 (April 22)

Group Project Preparation

Group Presentations and Discussion: Political Parties and the Environment

Week 14 (April 29)

Group Presentations and Discussion:

Environmental Social Justice

Group Presentations and Discussion: Interest

Groups, Agencies & Stakeholders

Week 15 (May 6)

Wrap-up, review, and exam 2

Students are strongly encouraged to use campus resources, including the ones listed below.

READING AND STUDY SKILLS CENTER

www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter •

Nursing/Education Bldg., Room 201.

The Reading/Study Center offers students at all stages of academic development an opportunity to acquire more sophisticated reading and study techniques. Students can schedule an individual consultation for topics such as note-taking, learning and memory enhancement, textbook reading strategies, test preparation, time management, and test-taking techniques. Learning specialists will work with students to assess individual strengths, target areas for improvement, and apply new strategies directly to their courses. Other forms of assistance include a walk-in reading skills lab, one-credit classes, workshops, and self-help resources.

CENTER FOR ACADEMIC RESOURCES

www.uwosh.edu/car • 424-2290 • car@uwosh.edu

• Student Success Center, Suite 102

The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free tutoring for students in most undergraduate courses. Check the Tutor List page on CAR's website for a current list of available tutors. 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. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request a tutor. The Center for Academic Resources also provides support to students through Supplemental Instruction and the Peer Educator program.

THE WRITING CENTER

www.uwosh.edu/wcenter • 424-1152 •

wcenter@uwosh.edu • Student Success Center, Suite 102

All UW Oshkosh students are eligible for free, one-to-one conferencing at the Writing Center. All writers can benefit from talking with engaged, interested readers about their work. Trained peer consultants help writers of all ability levels understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They also can help writers learn to identify and correct their own proofreading errors. Students can make an appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available.

CENTER FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT & DIVERSITY

www.uwosh.edu/acad-supp/CASD • 424-3081 •

burgos@uwosh.edu • Center for Equity & Diversity, Room 120

The Center for Academic Support & Diversity provides academic and student support services that assist in the retention and graduation of multicultural students (African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino American, Hmong American and Native American) and eligible first-generation, low-income students. The Center offers an array of programs and services including academic advising, multicultural advising and counseling, specialized tutoring, mentoring, forums/seminars/workshops, and cultural programs.