

ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH

Political Science 261 (Environmental Studies 261) T/TH 9:40–11:10 Clow 13



Krištof Kintera, We've got the power! (2003)
300 kg of potatoes, 250 pairs of zinc and copper electrodes, microchip controller, LCD displays, digital watches, all powered by electric energy extracted from potatoes

PROFESSOR INFO

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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.
- 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, biocentric, and anthropocentric lenses.

UWO Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)

This course focuses on the following ELOs.

- Critical and creative thinking
- Oral and written communication
- Technological and information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving
- Knowledge of sustainability and its applications

CAMPUS RESOURCES

I want you to be successful. To read about the campus services available to support your success, please visit www.uwosh.edu/home/resources. Here are a few key resources that may be helpful.

Center for Academic Resources: The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Tutor List 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 the Center, 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.

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 (www.uwosh.edu/wcenter), call 424-1152, email wcenter@uwosh.edu, or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

Reading Study Center: The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking. For more info, email readingstudy@uwosh.edu, view the website (www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter), visit them in Nursing Ed Room 201, or call 424-1031.

Polk Library: Polk Library has many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information. Contact him at 424-7329 or mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at rap@uwosh.edu.

ASSESSMENT 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

Midterm Exam (20%)—Essay questions.

Assignments (30%)—Homework assignments and in-class activities. Examples include one-page papers, group projects, quizzes, mini-research assignments, and personal reflections.

Group Civic Engagement Project (20%)—A group community project allows students to apply course concepts to sustainably improve the state of environment and society.

Participation (30%) —Good participation grades are *earned*, not *given*. Good participation means a student reads and prepares before class and participates actively in discussions. Participation comfort levels vary substantially. At one end of the spectrum, some students fear public speaking (more than death) and would prefer to remain anonymous in class. These students should work actively 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. Such participators contribute meaningfully to the learning of others (including the professor). There are opportunities for formal presentations.

DEADLINES AND MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to turn in assignments on the due dates. Students who miss assignments will be excused only if they have a bona-fide excuse according to university policy (e.g., documented illness, family death, university-sponsored activity). In short, turn in assignments on time. If you are unable to do this, please contact me to discuss your individual situation.

ATTENDANCE

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.

EARLY ALERT

During the fifth week of classes, you will receive by e-mail a grade for your progress in this course. Early Alert is designed to help you evaluate your study skills and performance so that you know if you are on the right track. If you need to make changes, there are resources available to support your academic success. Early Alert grades are not permanent and do not appear on your transcript.

D2L

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

ACADEMIC HONESTY

UWO 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 UWO 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, available on the Dean of Students website at www.uwosh.edu/stuaff/dean/student-conduct. Specific questions regarding the code (and institutional procedures approved to implement the code) should be directed to the Dean of Students Office.

CLASS GUIDELINES

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

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Environmental issues affect all global citizens irrespective of race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, national origin, ethnicity, physical and learning ability, and myriad other characteristics with which students identify. Hence, this course intentionally incorporates pedagogies that foster inclusive excellence, such as feminist pedagogy and active learning. Input from all students is valued and expected.



Source: Gloria Dawson. Fighting for Food in the South Bronx (September 12, 2013) available at modernfarmer.com/2013/09/finding-farm-bronx/

Tanya Fields isn't asking for much. She just wants to bring a little food justice to the South Bronx. After working in the environmental justice community for years, she found the edible elements of the fight were often overlooked — and she wants to change that.

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 (Feb 4 & 6)

Introductions, Course Overview, Democratic and Authoritarian Classrooms, Inclusive Excellence, Class Expertise (interviews)

Homework: D2L profile

Activity & Discussion: Tragedy of the Commons; Class Expertise.

Homework: Research environmental and climate change issues. Identify (1) an environmental issue you believe everyone knows, and (2) an environmental issue 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.

Week 2 (Feb 11 & 13)

Student Discussions and Mini-Presentations:

Overview of environmental issues

Activity: What did you know/learn?

Activity and Writing Assignment: Campus Environmentalism. Research environmental campus groups and organizations. 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: February 25.

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.

Homework: Watch *An Inconvenient Truth* available at <http://vimeo.com/16335777>. Write a one-page

reaction paper. 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 action?
- Is the film over-used or off-putting?

Week 3 (Feb 18 & 20)

Discussion: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Video: *Cool It*

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

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)

Week 4 (Feb 25 & 27)

Discussion: Campus environmentalism (one-page papers due at beginning of class).

Discussion: Ecological Footprints

Discussion: Leopold and Carson

Activity: Develop UWO Student Best Practices for Sustainability

Homework: Watch Mitra’s Ted Talk videos about Self-Organized Learning Environments (SOLE).

Discussion: Group Civic Engagement Projects. Objective: Creating a SOLE, sustainably improve the state of environment and society.

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)

Week 5 (March 4 & 6)

Discussion: Wisconsin’s Changing Climate—Mitigation and Adaptation

Group Activity: Write a letter to a friend, family member, or government leader telling them what

you know about climate change in Wisconsin and what actions Wisconsin should take.

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 paper summarizing Mallory’s main points.

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

Week 6 (March 11 & 13)

Group Project Preparation & Discussion

Discussion: Sustainable Cities

Activity: Research Workshop

Homework: Find a *scholarly* documentary or article related to environmental science. Write a one-page paper summarizing the documentary/article and how we should use this information to make environmental policy decisions and social choices.

Discussion: Science in environment and society.

Week 7 (March 18 & 20)

Review (Concept Mapping) and Exam 1

Week 8 (March 23–30)

Spring Break (No class)

Week 9 (April 1 & 3)

Debrief: Exam 1

Guest Speaker: Brian Kermath, UWO Campus Sustainability Director

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

Field Trip: Blackhawk Commons

Discussion: Food and the Environment (discussion to be held in Blackhawk Commons conference room)

Week 10 (April 8 & 10)

Field Trip: Biodigester

Homework: Image Project. Research the Internet for images that portray concepts of consumerism, materialism, and the environment. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation (about 5 minutes) that contains these images and a caption for each image. Be sure to include your sources for the images. The best presentations will incorporate concepts we have discussed in class.



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.

Week 11 (April 15 & 17)

Discussion and Student Presentations:

Consumerism, Materialism, and the Environment (Image Project)

Video: *Bag It* (or other film TBD)

Discussion: Reassessing Sustainability (micro (individual) and macro (global) perspectives)

Week 12 (April 22 & 24)

Discussion & Activity: Earth Day (April 22)

Homework: Research current events related to environment and society. Write a one-page paper connecting current event to sustainability thesis.

Discussion: Current Events related to Environment & Society

Week 13 (April 29 & May 1)

Discussion: Topic TBD by class

Activity: Write a 10-minute reflection in class

Group Project Discussions and Presentations

Week 14 (May 6 & 8)

Group Project Discussions and Presentations

Week 15 (May 13 & 15)

Discussion: Topic TBD by class

Wrap-up and final assessments