

**Environmental Studies 261**  
**Environment and Society**  
**Spring 2008**

Tuesday-Thursday

9:40-11:10

Arts & Communications S147

Professor: Jim Feldman

Email: [feldmanj@uwosh.edu](mailto:feldmanj@uwosh.edu)

Telephone: 920-424-3235

Office: Swart 320

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15-2:45, or by appt.

**Course Description:**

This is a broad, comparative course that examines the complicated, varied, and changing relationships between human societies and natural environments. We will consider how human societies have arranged the natural world through their economic, political, and social systems, and the impact of these systems on the environment. We will explore the different demands placed on the environment by industrialized and industrializing nations, democratic and authoritarian regimes, and capitalist and communist economies. Each society arranges its world differently, faces different environmental problems and devises different solutions to these problems. Placing societies and environments in a comparative context helps provide a more complete understanding of today's environmental issues. As this course serves as a core social science course within the Environmental Studies curriculum, we will also be considering the way that different disciplines—such as economics, political science, history, and anthropology—treat the study of human-environment interactions.

An additional 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, then, is not just to convey specific information about the ways that different societies deal with 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 an international community face today.

**Attendance, Discussion and Participation**

Your participation in discussions and other class activities is essential. Lectures, discussions and other activities will be integrated. Come to class each day prepared to discuss the reading assigned for that day. There will be a variety of short assignments, many completed during class, throughout the semester. These will range from short writing pieces to found object exercises or internet searches. They will be collected and will count, along with your attendance and participation in class discussions, toward 15% of your grade. Attendance will be taken each day; your grade will drop significantly with each absence. If you have more than five unexcused absences, you will fail

the course. An “unexcused absence” is any absence for which you cannot provide a note from a doctor, another professor, or some other documented explanation of your absence. If you simply cannot make a class, please contact me before the class meets; perhaps an arrangement can be made to ensure that you are not penalized for missing class for legitimate reasons. There will be no opportunity to make up short assignments. Your **active** participation is the key to your learning the material and to the success of the course—both for you as an individual and for the class as a whole.

Please check your email account regularly for updates and last minute information about upcoming class meetings. Also, email is generally the best way to get in contact with me.

### **Reading Journal**

Twelve times over the course of the semester, students are expected to hand in reading responses. These are to be brief (1 page, double spaced) answers to the questions listed on the syllabus. There are fourteen questions listed below; each student is responsible for handing in twelve total reading responses. These reading responses will be count toward 10% of your total grade. There will be no opportunity to make up short assignments.

### **Research Review & Presentation**

Students are required to write a 5-6 page research paper, due—along with a powerpoint presentation to the class—at one of three class meetings set aside for this purpose (April 1, April 17, and May 5). Students are free to choose the topic of their research, so long as it relates to materials discussed in class. This assignment will be discussed more fully during class.

### **Exams**

Exams: There will be an in-class midterm on **March 23** and a comprehensive final exam on the last day of class, **May 11**. Both of these exams will consist of one essay and a short-answer section and will test your understanding of key concepts.

### **Readings**

A note on the readings: the amount of reading fluctuates from week to week. Sometimes you are asked to read well over 100 pages of a single source. Try to keep your eye on the syllabus so that you can tell when a week of heavier reading is coming, and plan ahead.

Both of the following books are available at the University Book Store in Reeve Memorial Union, as well as on reserve at the library:

Christof Mauch, Nathan Stoltzfus, & Douglas R. Weiner, *Shades of Green: Environmental Activism Around the Globe* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006)

Mark Plotkin, *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: An Ethnobotanist Searches for New Medicines in the Amazon Rain Forest* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994)

Electronic Reserve Readings—in an effort to save students the cost of a University-produced reading packet, a variety of course materials have been placed on the Polk Library's Electronic-Reserve. These are **REQUIRED** readings, and students are **REQUIRED** to print them out and bring them to class the day that we will be discussing these readings in class.

### **Course Policies and Conduct**

All of us must do our best to be intellectually honest and tolerant of personal differences.

Environmental topics are often controversial, and we all have our own beliefs. I hope that everyone will feel safe to express an idea, even if that idea is not a popular one.

There are some university guidelines for behavior that I expect all of us to abide by as well. One of these has to do with plagiarism, or taking credit for the work of others. This is a serious offense and will be treated according to university guidelines; failure of the course is a potential outcome of academic dishonesty. This doesn't mean you shouldn't talk with other students about what you are thinking or writing; but when you write something on a paper or exam, it must be in your own words, not copied from someone else. We will discuss what plagiarism means more fully during the course of the semester. If you have any questions about academic honesty, and what might or might not be considered plagiarism, please ask, rather than taking a risk with grave consequences.

Please let me know what I can do to accommodate any disabilities that you might have.

### **Grading Breakdown and Course Requirements**

Attendance and Participation	15%
Reading Journal	10%
Position Paper	20%
Midterm	25%
Final Exam	30%

We will follow the standard university grading scale:

A 93-100		C 70-77
AB 88-92		D 60-69
B 83-87		F 59 and below
BC 78-82		

### **Reading and Lecture Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

February 5: Introduction and Course Themes

February 7: Comparing Political Systems and Nuclear Disasters

Reading: Sich, "Truth was an Early Casualty," ER

Keller, "Ecology and Community," ER

Reading Journal 1: Referring to the reading, craft an argument about how different economic/political systems respond differently to environmental crises? You might pay particular attention to Chernobyl and Three Mile Island.

#### **Week 2**

February 12: The Population Bomb and the Developed World

Reading: Paul Ehrlich, "The Population Bomb," ER

Paul Ehrlich, "Too Many People," ER

Robert Kates, "Population and Consumption," ER

February 14: The Population Bomb and the Developing World

Reading: Betsy Hartmann, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*, excerpts, ER

Reading Journal 2: Whose perspective on population makes the most sense—Ehrlich, Kates, or Hartmann—and why?

### **Week 3**

February 19: Reconsidering Malthus: Population and Security

Reading: Julian Simon, “The Ultimate Resource,” ER

Easton, ed., “Is Genetic Engineering the Answer to Hunger?” ER (read all articles)

Reading Journal 3: Will genetically modified foods solve the population problem? Should they be used at all? What would Simon, Malthus, and Hartmann say about this? What do you think?

February 21: Film: Life Running Out of Control

### **Week 4**

February 26: Reconsidering Malthus: Population and Resource Wars

Reading: Klare, “Oil, Geography, and War: The Competitive Pursuit of Petroleum Plenty,” ER

Gregory D. Foster, “A New Security Paradigm,” ER

Reading journal 4: Do Klare and Foster consider population in their discussions of new security paradigms? How do they consider (ignore) the question of overpopulation? How would their arguments look different if it had been written by a Malthusian (someone who believes that we have surpassed the carrying capacity of the earth)?

February 28: Economists and the Valuation of Nature

Reading: Robert Stavins, “Market-Based Environmental Policies,” ER

Easton, ed., *Taking Sides*, “Should a Price Be Put on the Goods and Services Provided by the World’s Ecosystems?” ER (read both articles)

Reading Journal 5: Do you think the market-based solutions that Stavins suggests might work? Why or why not? Which of the *Taking Sides* authors would agree with Stavins’ perspective?

### **Week 5**

March 4 Environmental Politics around the Globe

Reading: Clapp & Dauvergne, *Paths to a Green World*, ER

March 6: The Public Commons and International Politics of the Environment

Reading: M. Soroos, “Global Institutions and the Environment: An Evolutionary Perspective,” ER  
Earth Charter Principles, ER

Reading Journal 6: Do you think that international diplomacy will solve global environmental problems? Or do other social, cultural and economic changes have to be made first? Be sure to refer to refer to the readings in your answer.

### **Week 6**

March 11: Globalization and Political Economy

Reading: Judith Layzer, “Trade vs. the Environment,” ER

Reading Journal 7: After considering the readings, which approach to regulating trade and the environment makes the most sense to you? Is globalization a force that will help protect the

environment, or further exploit it? Think of at least one positive and one negative example (from outside of the reading) of how globalization and economic integration has had an impact on nature.

March 13: Film: DAM/AGE

### **Week 7**

March 18: Review

March 20: MIDTERM

### **Spring Break**

### **Week 8**

April 1: Presentations

April 3: Wilderness Movements in the US—the Historians Perspective

Reading: Mauch, Stoltzfus, & Weiner, *Shades of Green*, 13-40

Reading journal 8: What is “progress”? How has it been defined over the course of American history, and why is it important to understanding American ideas about environmentalism?

### **Week 9**

April 8: Nature Protection in the Soviet Union

Reading: Mauch, Stoltzfus, & Weiner, *Shades of Green*, 41-68, 101-134

Reading journal 9: Drawing from the readings, make an argument about the relationship between environmentalism and political freedom?

April 10: Tourism and Wildlife Protection in Africa

Reading: Mauch, Stoltzfus, & Weiner, *Shades of Green*, 69-100

C. McIvor, “Management of Wildlife Tourism and Local Communities in Zimbabwe,” ER

Reading Journal 10: Referring to the readings, construct an argument about what you see as the relationship between locals and outsiders in nature protection.

### **Week 10**

April 15: Environmentalism of the Poor

Reading: Mauch, Stoltzfus, & Weiner, *Shades of Green*, 183-218

Reading Journal 11: How do the environmental movements in Mexico and the Brazil differ from those in richer countries like the United States?

April 17: Student Presentations

### **Week 11**

April 22: Anthropologists and Organizing Society

Reading: Mark Plotkin, *Tales of a Shaman’s Apprentice*, Chapters 1-2

Reading Journal 12: Why, according to Plotkin, is ethnobotany important? Do you agree?

April 24: Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Reading: Plotkin, *Tales of a Shaman’s Apprentice*, Chapters 3-4

**Week 12**

April 29: Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice

Reading: Plotkin, *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice*, Chapters 6, 7, 9

Reading Journal 13: Is having a Shaman's Apprentice program the same as having a shaman? Is anything lost in this shift? Why is it important to preserve shamanic knowledge?

May 1: Treaty Rights and Pigeon Poaching in New Zealand

Reading: J. Veitayaki, "Taking Advantage of Indigenous Knowledge: The Fiji Case," ER

**Week 13**

May 5: Presentations

May 7: Green Capitalism and Simple Living

Reading: Business for Social Responsibility, "Environmentally Sustainable Business Practices," ER

Brower & Leon, "The Real Impacts of Household Consumption," ER

Reading Journal 14: Who bears the greatest responsibility to change—consumers or businesses? Be sure to refer the readings in your answer.

**Week 14**

May 12 Concluding Thoughts and Final Review

Reading TBA

**May 14 FINAL EXAM in class**