

**Environmental Studies 101:
Introduction to Environmental Studies
Spring 2024
3 credits, XS, GC**

TTH, 9:40-11:10, Sage 4221

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Course Description: The goal of this course is to introduce students to the field of environmental studies by using an interdisciplinary perspective to explore the complex relationships between humans and the natural world, in the U.S. and globally. We will explore four case studies: sustainability, human/animal relations, food and agriculture, and climate change. 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 relationship between social relations and environmental relations and the interconnections between human and biotic communities; and the responsibilities that we have as individuals and communities to help maintain healthy, sustainable environments.

Bulletin Course Description: The goal of this class is to provide an introduction to the field of environmental studies by using an interdisciplinary perspective to explore the complex relationships between humans and the natural world, in the U.S. and around the globe. Prerequisite: Course is to be limited to students with less than 60 credits or Environmental Studies majors and minors or those with department consent.

The University Studies Program, Explore Courses, and Your Liberal Arts Education: The University Studies Program (USP) serves as the foundation of your university education. You may already be familiar with the Quest sequence (Quest I, Quest II, Quest III) that serves as the backbone of the USP. As an Explore: Society course, this section of ES 101 affords you further opportunity to expand your learning across the disciplines as you prepare to pursue your chosen major(s) and minor(s). The broad interdisciplinary range of courses you take through the USP comprises what is referred to in educational circles as a liberal education. It's important to understand that a liberal education need not be politically "liberal": people of many political stripes believe in its importance. "A liberal education" (also often called a liberal arts education) is a way of designating a kind of education that provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (i.e., culture, science, and society) by exposing them to a diversity of fields and ways of thinking (while, of course, allowing them to focus on particular areas of interest by choosing majors). Its purpose is the creation of literate citizens, people with a sense of social responsibility who possess the practical transferable skills—e.g., critical thinking, written and spoken eloquence, problem-solving acumen—to effect meaningful change both in their communities and in their chosen fields of endeavor. The goal of this class, then, 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 contexts. In short, a liberal arts education provides the tools we need to be active citizens of our communities – and 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.

ES 101 as a Global Citizenship Course: Global Citizenship is the knowledge of nations, cultures, or societies beyond the U.S.; the recognition of how interaction, interdependence, and inequity among

diverse geographical, social, political, or economic systems have shaped historical and contemporary global challenges and opportunities; and the skills to engage with the responsibilities of informed citizenship in a complex, interdependent, and changing world. A global perspective is essential to a liberal arts education. Understanding our interconnected world requires insight from multiple perspectives and multiple players. Environmental issues are a perfect opportunity to practice an internationally aware, globally sensitive perspective, which will enhance your awareness and citizenship skills whether you continue pursue this field of study or not.

Required Textbooks (Available at the UWO Bookstore)

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*
- Paul Hawken, editor. *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*

Additional course readings will be available electronically on Canvas. These are REQUIRED readings; you are strongly urged annotate them as you read. **Always** bring the readings with you to class (in print or on a laptop, iPad, or e-reader) so that you make use them to aid in class discussion.

Learning Outcomes: The primary goal of this course is to practice the skill of engagement—to learn how to think critically about complicated real-world issues, comprehension of which depends upon understanding and appreciating multiple disciplinary and cultural perspectives. While practicing this skill, we will also work towards achieving this learning outcomes:

- Articulate important ideas in Environmental Studies – to describe, for example, several basic ecological processes in relation to biodiversity and maintaining ecosystem integrity – as well as the roles of science, society, and ethics in dealing with environmental problems.
- Explain the ways that environmental issues manifest in globally diverse geographical, social, political, and economic systems (e.g., how are the impacts of climate change felt differently in Wisconsin than, say, in the island nations of the Pacific Ocean?).
- Outline the connections between personal experiences, local action, and global impact (e.g., what is my personal ecological footprint, and how might it compare to the footprints of people living in different parts of the world?).
- Elaborate how environmental problems have social implications and social causes, and that the costs and consequences of environmental problems vary across social divides (i.e., environmental justice).
- Examine, evaluate, and propose solutions to environmental problems by connecting ecology, economy and society and identifying tradeoffs among them.
- Formulate their own conclusions about complicated environmental issues and communicate these ideas in a variety of formats. This might include class discussions, written essays, formal presentations, or roleplays.

A Note on Community Engagement & Environmental Studies: Practicing the skill of engagement is a central goal of this course. Because of its broad interdisciplinarity, the ES Program is both one of the most challenging and one of the most rewarding programs at the university. The key to meeting the challenges and gaining the rewards of our program is embracing the idea of community. Just as environmental problems cannot be solved without communities coming together in dialogue and action, our classes require you to come together as a community characterized by open participation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. Participation means actively contributing both your voice in class discussions and your work to build knowledge together. Respect means listening and making space for your peers' voices while also feeling free to disagree. And responsibility means holding ourselves accountable for being curious, engaged, and informed members of our shared community.

What we discuss in our classes is often difficult, but if we see each class as a community in which we are actively engaged, we will gain not only the rewards of knowledge and capacity for action, but a sense of feeling supported, both academically and emotionally – of confronting the problems we face together. Further, an environmental education obligates us to address issues we see and to collaborate with others to build relationships and try to make things better.

Technology in Class: We all use devices. But critical and analytical thinking take a hit once screens are out. You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in this class as long as it contributes to your learning. However, even when devices like laptops are used for typed notetaking, studies show they invite rote transcribing versus mental processing or thinking (Mueller and Oppenheimer, 2014). This leads to poorer academic performance. Other research demonstrates that when students engage in off-task behavior on their devices, it hurts the learning of the peers sitting near them. In one study, students who were not using a device in a class lecture but were seated within view of a peer with a device, performed 17 percent worse on an exam based on that lecture material than students who were not within view of someone else's device (Lang, 2020).

So: Consider hand-writing your notes on readings and in class for potentially more efficient, deeper, real-time learning. At the very least, recognize that devices will detract from your own ability to participate in this discussion-driven class, and also might distract your peers.

Grades and Expectations: Your final grade for the class will be determined by a grading system called Specifications Grading. Also known as "contract grading," this model has been used successfully in many classes, and on many college campuses across the country. Specifications Grading allows you to have more flexibility, choice, and control over the time that you commit to this class and your final grade. Grades are based on the level and amount of work that you complete. You decide what grade you choose to earn, based on your level of engagement with class materials and discussions. In this course, we are taking the unusual step of having no assigned papers or exams. Instead, your grade will be based on your ongoing *engagement* with course materials. Your engagement is measured in three ways: Attendance/Participation, Canvas Reading Assignments, and Reflection Papers.

- **Attendance/Participation:** Attendance is crucial to your success. Students are expected to be active participants in the class. This means being present, engaged in course materials, and contributing to discussions. When in class you are expected to be actively taking notes, asking and answering questions when appropriate, and contributing to an overall environment of exploration and discussion. I keep close track of attendance and participation. If you attend class but are on your devices, sleeping, or leave for long periods, that is not active participation. The minimum expectation is that to get credit for attendance/participation, you need to be in class and to make at least one contribution to class discussion that engages with material of the day. In-class writing assignments will be occasionally used and collected, and these will count as a part of evaluating your participation. If you are absolutely petrified of speaking in class, please speak to me and we can discuss alternate arrangements. Absences may be excused with proper documentation (notes from the Athletics Department, Dean of Students, doctor, etc.). Excused absences do not count as missed courses.
- **Canvas Reading Assignments:** For each day with assigned reading, there is an assignment posted to Canvas. There are a range of assignment styles and types. These assignments are not intended to take a long time, but rather to guide your thinking about the reading assignment and to prepare you for the day's discussion. These assignments are due at the start of class on the assigned day, and there is no opportunity to make up missing assignments. You can receive full or

partial credit for each assignment. You simply need to complete the assignment, as indicated in the directions, to receive full credit.

- **Reflection Papers:** The last assignment for each of the four units is slightly longer—a reflection paper that asks you to pull on multiple course days and to think back on what you have learned and what it means. The specific prompt for each reflection paper is posted in Canvas. Like the short assignments, you can receive full or partial credit for each assignment, but you do not receive a traditional grade in the form of an A, B, C, etc.

Choosing your Own Grade: You choose the grade you earn in the following way:

To earn an A:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attend and participate in 24 class meetings● Earn 39/44 possible assignment points● Earn full credit on all 4 reflection papers
To earn a B:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attend and participate in 22 class meetings● Earn 36/44 possible assignment points● Earn full credit on all 4 reflection papers
To earn a C:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attend and participate in 20 class meetings● Earn 33/44 possible assignment points● Earn full credit on at least 3 reflection papers
To earn a D:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attend and participate in 18 class meetings● Earn 30/44 possible assignment points● Earn full credit on at least 3 reflection papers
To earn an F:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fail to meet minimum requirements for a D.

Golden Tokens: Every student begins the class with two Golden Tokens. Golden tokens may be used in the following ways: to count in the place of a missed course, to count as full credit on a reading assignment, or to increase from partial to full credit on a reflection paper. There might be opportunities to earn additional tokens as the semester progresses.

Academic Misconduct and Processes: See the following URL:

<https://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/university-policiesprocedures/academic-misconduct>

A Note about AI/ChatGPT: Generative AI technologies are becoming widespread and have the potential to enhance learning experiences and promote critical thinking in this course. However, it is important to note that the use of AI should be supplementary and should not replace the development of essential cognitive skills. Generative AI is like Wikipedia - a great place to start, but you, as the author, are responsible for ensuring that the information and outputs are appropriate. Often, ChatGPT and similar sites are wrong in their interpretations of a text. Again, AI can be great for inspiration, especially when you're stuck, but you must clearly demonstrate your own knowledge surrounding content in this course. Know that work created by AI tools may not be considered original work and instead is considered automated plagiarism. Remember that most of the writing assignments in this course are based on YOUR OWN reflections and interpretations of readings, so there is no right answer. Do not rely on generative AI to do the thinking for you. I want to know what YOU think, not read a word salad created by ChatGPT. If you use an AI tool at any point in the development and/or creation of your work for this course – including discussion board posts, exams, and reading responses – you must include appropriate citations and the acknowledgment of what tool you used, and the date.

Canvas: In addition to the course syllabus and the required scholarly articles, any assignment details or important slides displayed or distributed in class will be posted to Canvas.

Early Alert: After the third week of class, you will receive a grade for your overall progress in this course and each of the courses you are taking in your first semester. This process is called “Early Alert.” You will receive this information in an email during the fifth week of classes. Early Alert is designed to help you evaluate your academic performance and your class attendance so that you know if you are on the right track. If you need to make some changes, there are resources available to support your academic success. These Early Alert grades are not permanent and will not appear on your transcript. They are designed to help and support your learning.

Statement of Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: It is the policy and practice of UW Oshkosh to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, please notify me as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 920-424-3100 or dean1@uwosh.edu. For more information, visit the Services for Students with Disabilities website at <http://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/disability-services>.

Students are advised to see this URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/resources/consumer-information/>

Course Schedule: Please note that you need to arrive to class having carefully read anything listed as “To Read” for that day and having completed your reading assignments *before* the start of class. Please also note that that following schedule is subject to modification as necessary – though any changes will not add to your workload. I may assign brief additional readings related to current events (e.g., drawn from news items that appear over the course of the semester), but I will give you time in class to read these articles.

Date	Topic	Class activity	Assignments due by class time
Unit 1: Sustainability and Ways of Knowing			
Feb 6	Introduction to the course and to each other		
Feb 8	Three Pillars of Sustainability	Lecture & Discussion	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theis and Tomkin, <i>Sustainability</i> (Canvas) • Hurricane Idalia articles (Canvas) Complete Canvas reading assignment
Feb 13	Ways of Knowing	Discussion	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kimmerer, “Asters & Goldenrod” and “People of Corn, People of Light,” from <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> • Bradford, “What is Science?” (Canvas) Complete Canvas reading assignment
Feb 15	Consumption	Discussion	Read: Kimmerer, “Windigo Footprints,” from <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> Canvas reading assignment
Feb 20	Consumption	Discussion	Read: Low, “Human Behavior and Conservation,” (Canvas)

			Reflection Paper due in Canvas (required)
Unit 2: Human/Wildlife Conflict: Are we ready to share the land with predators?			
Feb 22	Wolves in Yellowstone	Lecture & Discussion	Watch “Yellowstone: A Legend Returns” (Canvas) Read Dobson, “Yellowstone Wolves and the Forces that Structure Nat. Systems,” (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Feb 27	Wolves in Wisconsin	Discussion	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbell, “A Fight Over Wolves Pits Facts Against Feelings in Wisconsin,” (Canvas) • WDNR, “Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan,” (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Feb 29	Humans as prey	Discussion	Read: Val Plumwood, “Being Prey,” (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Mar 5	Humans and Predators	Predator Debate	No Reading Reflection Paper due on Canvas (required)
Unit 3: Food: Industrial Agriculture & Its Alternatives			
Mar 7	Industrial Agriculture	Lecture & Discussion	Read: NRDC, “Industrial Agriculture 101,” (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Mar 12	Our Relationship with Food	Discussion	Read Kimmerer, “The Gift of Strawberries” and “Epiphany in the Beans,” <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> ; Canvas reading assignment
Mar 14	Pollinators and Chemicals	Discussion	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milman, “The Peak of the Pesticide,” (Canvas) • Steingraber, “Living Downstream,” (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Mar 19	No Class; REQUIRED evening talk by Robin Wall Kimmerer, details TBD; Post-lecture Canvas assignment		
Mar 21	Food Alternatives	Discussion	Watch: “Kiss the Ground,” (Canvas) Read: Foley, “Can We Feed the World and Sustain the Planet?” (Canvas) Reflection Paper due on Canvas (required)
Spring Break			
Unit 4: The Warming Planet			
Apr 2	Climate Change & the Anthropocene	Lecture & Discussion	Read: Steffen, Crlutzen, & McNeil, “The Anthropocene” (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Apr 4	No Class; assignment TBD		
Apr 9	Climate Consequences	Discussion & Presentation Prep	Read your assigned chapter of Robert Henson, <i>The Thinking Person’s Guide to Climate Change</i> (See Canvas for assignments and reading); Canvas reading assignment
Apr 11	Climate Consequences	Presentations	No reading; finish preparing presentations as needed

Apr 16	Climate Consequences in Wisconsin	Discussion & Presentation Prep	Read the Executive Summary and your assigned chapter of <i>WICCI, Wisconsin's Changing Climate</i> , (See Canvas for assignments and reading) Canvas reading assignment
Apr 18	Climate Consequences in Wisconsin	Presentations	No reading; finish preparing presentations as needed
Apr 23	Climate Justice	Discussion	Watch: Anote Tong, "My Country Will Be Under Water Soon," (Canvas) Read: Moore, <i>Great Tide Rising</i> , excerpts (Canvas) Canvas reading assignment
Apr 25	Anxiety & Hope	Discussion	Read: Hayhoe, <i>Saving Us</i> , Canvas Canvas reading assignment
Apr 30	Solutions: Drawdown	Discussion	Read: "Foreword" (p. ix), "Origins," (pp. x-xi), "Language" (p. xiii), "Numbers" (p. xiv), "On Care for Our Common Home" (pp. 190-91), and "An Opening" (pp. 216-17) from <i>Drawdown</i> Canvas reading assignment
May 2	Solutions: Drawdown	Discussion	Read <i>Drawdown</i> , as assigned in class/check Canvas; Canvas reading assignment
May 7	Solutions: Drawdown	Discussion & Campus Tour	Read: "Net Zero Buildings (pp. 84-85), "Walkable Cities" (pp. 86-87), "Tropical Forests" (pp. 114-116), "Silvopasture" (pp. 50-51), "Regenerative Agriculture" (pp. 54-55) and "Temperate Forests" (pp. 128-129) from <i>Drawdown</i> Canvas reading assignment
May 9	Solutions: Drawdown	Discussion & Presentation Prep	Read "Women and Girls," (pp. 75-82) from <i>Drawdown</i> ; Canvas reading assignment
May 14	Solutions: Drawdown	Presentations	No Reading; <i>Drawdown</i> Presentations
May 16	Questions & Answers	Discussion	No Reading; Final Reflection Due (required)