IS 340 Human Values and the Environment (3 Credits)  
(Online--Writing Intensive)  
Spring 2014  
Syllabus

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Course Description
In this course, we examine nature-culture dynamic over a range of contexts which include ideas of nature, ecological degradation, sustainability, systems ecology, eco-feminism, political ecology, and environmental justice. We will frame our exploration within the broader debates currently taking place among environmental thinkers regarding our ethical responsibility to other persons, to future generations, to other animals, and to ecosystems and the Earth itself. A primary goal of the course will be to break through the traditional disciplinary boundaries in order to articulate new possibilities for understanding the human place in nature and to encourage creative, re-visioned thinking for active engagement in environmental problem-solving.

The course is divided into three units. In Unit I, students read about different cultural perspectives of human relationship with nature which have an impact on how people relate to it. In addition, they read two books, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring which is an in-depth analysis of the indiscriminate use of pesticides in the 1960s in the US and resulting pollution of the land, the streams and the air. They also read Michael Pollan’s Omnivore’s Dilemma which is a fascinating journey through the industrial agribusiness industry and the small-scale bio-diverse and industrial organic food industry. In Unit II, students are introduced to different ethical perspectives and their relevance for environmental decision-making. In Unit III, students briefly get an overview of ethics and economics as they explore economic production from the perspective of consumption in order to come up with new ideas related to sustainability issues.

Contemporary ethical issues are fully integrated into the main course material and will constitute at least 30% of the content. More than 9 hours of class time will be spent discussing environmental ethics. Since ethics is closely related to values, students will also explore how values play an important role in shaping people’s ethical perspectives. Through the use of lectures, discussions and assignments, students will develop basic competency in recognizing and analyzing ethical issues; responsibly deliberating on ethical issues; and making ethically determined judgments.

IS 340 is a Writing Intensive course. You must adequately complete all writing assignments to pass the course with D grade or better. Students who do not complete all writing assignments will get a D minus or an F and will not earn W Focus credit. In addition to two papers, you are required to post your response to the readings on a weekly basis. Each response must be accompanied by at least two questions. The questions could either deal with the difficulties you had with the ideas you came across in your readings or these could be exploratory in nature for engaging your classmates into a discussion regarding connections and relationships of ideas to your experiences. For coming up with good questions, it is important that you complete the reading assignments on a regular basis. A substantial percentage of the final grade is based on your weekly postings to the discussion board.
Student Learning Outcomes

- To acquire knowledge and understanding of environmental issues over a range of contexts, for example, sustainability, systems ecology, eco-feminism, political ecology, and environmental justice.
- To develop an ability to follow problems across disciplinary boundaries
- To develop critical thinking skills by learning to compare, contrast, and synthesize a variety of perspectives
- To develop the ability to communicate clearly in writing
- To develop a basic competency in recognizing and analyzing ethical issues, responsibly deliberating on ethical issues, and making ethically determined judgments.

Required Texts
1. A Reader with xeroxed articles from various sources

Course Management System

IS 340 is a completely online course. The course will be taught using Laulima course management system. In order to access it, you need to be connected to the Internet. No software for student computers is required.

Course Requirements

1. **Weekly Response** (at least 300 words). Each student will be required to post a response to the reading assignments with two questions posted to the discussion board by the assigned deadline on a weekly basis. At the end of the week I will post a common response to provide you feedback on your responses. In my common response, I will occasionally identify good pieces of student writing. In the fifth week of the semester, I will provide all of you detailed individual feedback on responses and tell you how to improve your weekly responses.

2. **One Short Paper** (Mid-Term Report) (1500 words) I will give you detailed feedback on how to improve your essay and encourage you to revise it if needed, and thus learn how to write a good essay.

3. **Final Research Paper** (3000 words) You will submit an outline of the final paper before you write the final paper. I will provide you critical feedback regarding the organization of your material and the coherence of the arguments that you are trying to make in the essay. You need to keep this feedback in mind as you write your final essay.

4. **Online Discussion**: At least two Postings per week responding to the questions posed by your classmates (Optional length--usually 200 or more words). In the fifth week of the semester, I will provide you detailed individual feedback on discussion postings.

Grading Policies

**Weekly Response**: 20%
Mid-term Essay: (1500 words) 25%
Final Essay: (3000 words) 40%
Online Discussion: 15%

Unit I: Ideas of Nature

Week I: Jan 13-21
From the IS 340 Course Reader (Available from Professional Image)

Due Dates
Response: Jan 21; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week II: Jan 22-28
From the IS 340 Course Reader (Available from Professional Image)
1. Candace Slater, Uncommon Ground. "Amazonia as Edenic Narrative"

Due Dates
Response: Jan 28; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week III Jan 29-Feb 4

Due Dates
Response: Feb 4; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week IV: Feb 5-11

Due Dates
Response: Feb 11; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week V: Feb 12-18
Michael Pollan. Ominivore’s Dilemma. pp. 1-109

Due Dates
Response: Feb 18 ; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week VI: Feb 19-25
Michael Pollan. Ominivore’s Dilemma. 123-262

Due Dates
Response: Feb 25 ; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Unit II: Value in Nature and the Nature of Value

Week VII: Feb 26 -Mar 4

From the Reader:

Read:

Read: From Markkula Center of Applied Ethics website
http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/
"What is Ethics” ; “The Utilitarian Approach,” & “The Rights Approach”

Optional Background Reading: Browse Robert Traer, *Doing Environmental Ethics*, “Moral Philosophy- An Adventure in Reasoning”

Due Dates
Response: Mar 4 ; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week VIII: Mar 5-11

From the Reader:

Read: From Markkula Center of Applied Ethics http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/
What is Ethics?, “ The Common Good Approach,” “ The Virtue Approach”

Due Dates
Response: March 11 ; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Week IX: Mar 12 -18

From the Reader:

Background Reading: Browse. Robert Traer, *Doing Environmental Ethics*. “Ethics and Science: Moral Consideration”

Due Dates
Response: March 18 ; Discussion Postings: Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

Unit III Political Ecology
**Week X: March 19-24**

*From the Reader:*
Robert Traer, *Doing Environmental Ethics* “Ethics and Economics”
Vandana Shiva. *Stolen Harvest.* “Stolen Harvest of Seed” & “Genetic Engineering”

**Due Dates**

*Response:* March 31 ; *Discussion Postings:* Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

**Spring Recess: Mar 24-28**

**Week XI: April 1-8**

*From the Reader:*
Vandana Shiva. *Earth Democracy.* “Living Economies”

**Due Dates**

*Response:* April 8 ; *Discussion Postings:* Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

**Week XII: April 9-15**

*Confronting Consumption.* “The Consumption Angle” (Chaps 1, 2, 3, 4)

**Due Dates**

*Response:* April 15 ; *Discussion Postings:* Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

**Week XIII: April 16-22**

*Confronting Consumption:* “Chains of Consumption” (Chaps 5, 6, 7, 8)

**Due Dates**

*Response:* April 22 ; *Discussion Postings:* Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

**Week XIV: April 23-29**

*Confronting Consumption:* “Confronting Consumption” (Chaps 9, 10, 11, 14)

**Due Dates**

*Response:* April 29 ; *Discussion Postings:* Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week

**Week XV : April 30-May 7**

*From the Reader:*

**Due Dates**

*Response:* May 6 ; *Discussion Postings:* Beginning, Middle and The End of the Week