

Syllabus

ENVS 305: Environmental History and Ethics

HUXLEY COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Western Washington University
Syllabus for ENVS 305 (CRN 13249), Winter 2013
ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AND ETHICS

Location: AW 304. Time: T, R 2:00pm-3:50pm
Instructor: Gene Myers, Ph.D.
Contact info: AH 224; Ph: 650-4775; Gene.Myers@wwu.edu; mailstop 9085; mailbox in AH217
Office Hours: Mon. 1:30-3:30; Thurs. 10:30-12:30: use sign up on office door. Or arrange appt.
TA: Mark Pederson, pedersm8@students.wwu.edu, AH 223: arrange meetings by email.
Electronic copy of syllabus will be linked to instructor's homepage, <http://faculty.wwu.edu/gmyers/>

This course aims to increase your understanding of how events and actors in the past gave rise to our current social-environmental dilemmas--and to our evolving environmental ethics. We will also pose questions and introduce concepts that frame environmental issues as ethical issues. We will probe into the sources that formed our attitudes and values toward nature, and consider alternative views of what indeed are “nature” and “the environment.” Along with that come questions about human beings... and questions about what it means to be a good or excellent person, especially regarding our interrelations with nature. The content of this course will seek to ask:

- How have ideas, attitudes, and institutions regarding nature changed over time, with special reference to the United States?
- How did conservation, preservation, environmentalism emerge?
- How has the idea of an environmental ethic arisen and developed?
- What are the larger implications of “ecology” (in its different versions) for human action and identity?
- What value questions, choices, and trade-offs underlie environmental conflicts?
- What enduring and changing cultural worldviews can be identified in present controversies?
- What coherent and reasonable ethical frameworks are useful in judging environmental choices?
- How do both other human interests and nature's separate interests (if it has them) figure into how we approach environmental dilemmas?

We will approach these questions through reading, discussion, lecture, film, guest speakers, activities and writing assignments. And always discussion. We will start with one local place-based case study, Lake Whatcom Reservoir management, which will help us think about history and ethics in a concrete community and career context. At the same time we will be looking at some ideas and institutions that have long shaped our attitudes toward nature. We then move toward considering two major thinkers of the 20th century who shaped environmental thinking and action profoundly: Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. We will conclude the course with a look at the ethics of climate change, whose human and ethical dimensions not surprisingly exceed (indeed, incorporate) its scientific and technical complexities. Interspersed, we will examine several other significant problems in environmental history and ethics.

The ideas and topics we will explore inevitably have both personal and professional significance. I want this course to provide you a special kind of opportunity or space for this exploration. While we often study the “what” and “how” of environmental issues, this course is a place to ask about the

fundamental “why.” Why care? Why do you value what you do in relation to our place on the planet, among its other inhabitants? The course may help you understand the biological, historical, cultural, societal and psychological forces that may have led you to hold the beliefs you do. It should also challenge these, presenting different perspectives and prompting you to continually examine (and re-examine) your convictions and how you came to them. It is important that you understand that it is not a goal of this course to make you change your beliefs or values, or to adopt any particular view. All ideas have an ‘equal opportunity’ to be re-examined because only in that atmosphere do you have the best chance to test different beliefs and adopt ones that you think have better justifications and reasons.

The course should help you use a historical perspective to increase your grasp of issues, and to see your judgments in context. It should also help you become sensitive to, and able to identify and define the values and ethical principles that underlie your own and other’s actions, understand where these came from, and help you consciously evaluate and consciously choose how you order your values and make decisions. Expect to be challenged, and to challenge others. Critical examination of *ideas* will be central to exploring these matters.

Why are you at Huxley? What kind of person are you becoming? What are your inner feelings and evaluations about your and humanity’s role now and in the future? Beyond requiring critical thinking, these questions require integrative and imaginative thinking. This course will try to provide for that, and this may feel different. How is our era different from times in the past, and what does that mean for our identity and choices? How do we respond to the difficult social issues raised by our ecological interconnections to other people? What about other life forms? What do we want our legacies to be and how do we move toward that, given divergent visions? How will you integrate your personal values with your future professional roles and responsibilities? Sometimes space to explore these questions is hard to even recognize, but it is within human capability to discern ways forward, and it is part of higher education to explore them. Expect to be supported, and to support others.

Clearly none of the larger questions in this course have simple answers. Indeed no one has the answers, at least not in an absolute way. We are all seekers, if we choose to embark on the search. We will need humility, self-reflection, charity towards others, acceptance of uncertainty and limited vision, an open heart as well as mind, willingness to listen and to speak, tolerance, respect and compassion.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Short answers to daily quizzes on readings. On most class days I will give three or four questions based on the readings listed for that day. In general, you will be able to miss one of the four questions and still receive quiz credit. You *cannot* make up the reading quizzes; however, you will be allowed to miss two quizzes before you begin to lose quiz credit. Moreover, you will not be given quiz credit unless you attend the whole class period (unless other prior arrangements have been made). 25 points

Lake Whatcom ethics essay. A 2- to 3-page essay on a personal and professional ethical issue (or issues) you imagine yourself encountering when in a position to influence decisions about the watershed. See description and pages with ideas relevant to specific disciplines. 10 points.

Lake Whatcom history essay. Using examples from the history and management of Lake Whatcom, illustrate how key origins of Western environmental attitudes, as explained in the historical essays we have read for the class, continue to influence the present. Two to three (2-3) pages. 10 points.

Two take-home essays based on the other major segments of the course. Leopold essay, 4 to 6 pages, will be worth 20 points. Final essay will have two parts, totaling 25 points. Due as indicated on the schedule. Detailed instructions will be distributed before due dates.

Notes on papers:

- Use Chicago (preferred) or MLA citation and reference style). Be sure to cite all your sources.
- All papers should be turned in electronically AND on paper. For the electronic copy, put your name, the class and assignment in the filename (ie, "Myers.ENVS305.Lk What ethics.docx").
- Please use a commonly available file format (.doc; .odt, but *not* .wps or .pdf).

Beyond the classroom

Earn up to 10 points by any combination of the following. For each activity, submit a 1 to 2 page description and response / reflection (emphasis on the latter 2, *relating to course content*). ("Tours" have different write up format.) In your conduct outside class, be safe, inquiring, and respectful.

1. Attend the World Issues Forum noted below for Jan. 16. 1 point.
2. Attend two films listed in the note below for Feb. 24 from the Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival. 2 points (2 films).
3. Civics involvement: choose a current local issue that is of concern to you and attend a public hearing, council meeting, discussion or other governmental or civic live open-forum event. *Get instructor approval first*. Participate if you wish and are prepared. 2 points, repeatable to 4.
4. Service Learning: Identify a significant service learning opportunity related to your interests in this course, *get instructor approval first*, and participate in it. 2 points, repeatable to 4.
5. View two exhibits at the Whatcom Museum Old City Hall & Photo Archives on Prospect St.: "Romantically Modern: PNW Landscapes" and "At the Park". Open noon to 5 Thurs-Sun, \$8 with student ID. 2 points (two exhibits).
6. Give yourself a tour of the Lake Whatcom Watershed by foot, paddle, bike, bus and /or car (it may be done in segments). Study the issues surrounding the lake and visit specific locations or areas of relevance to watershed management issues. Talk to people along the way about what you are observing and thinking. Submit a watershed map (available at the COB watershed management website) annotated with at least 6 locations visited, accompanied by a short paragraph about each site including why it is relevant and how it relates to class. 4 points.
7. Give yourself a walking, biking and/or bus (not car) tour of Bellingham, observing the city, its immediate and significant environmental problems, the benefits of a city, and how the problems might be solved, at what cost. Talk to people along the way about what you are observing and thinking. Submit a city map showing your tour, annotated with at least 6 locations visited or problems identified, accompanied by a the write up of your observation addressing the concerns just listed, and how it relates to ideas from class. 4 points.

EVALUATION:

- Essay papers will be evaluated according to the rubric at end of syllabus.
- Late assignments: In the interest of fairness, I will take off 1 pt for same day after in-class due time, and -1 pt for each day after the due date. Exceptions follow university policy for Medical Leave of Absence (via Student Health Center), and Emergency Non-Medical Leave of Absence (via Office of Student Life), or if late submission is pre-arranged with a substantial and verifiable reason. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.
- Grading breakdown: A = 100% - 93 %, A - = 92 - 90, B+ = 89 - 87, B = 86 - 83, B- = 82 - 80, C+ = 79 - 77, C = 76 - 73, C- = 72 - 70, D+ = 69 - 67, D = 66 - 63, D- = 62 - 60, F < 60

TEXTS:

- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1949.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin Publishers, 1962.

- Other readings provided by link on syllabus, on the J drive, or occasionally by attachment. To find the J Drive readings: log onto a university computer, find the drive called: “data1 on 'hux-raptor' (J:)”, open it, then open “Saldata” then “ENVS-305” to find these readings.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

You should be aware of scholarly ethics, and specifically of WWU's policies on academic dishonesty and plagiarism and understand the potentially severe consequences if you violate them. See <http://www.acadweb.wvu.edu/senate/ACC/accPlagiarism.htm> and the recently revised official policy App. D of the WWU Catalog <http://catalog.wvu.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=1014>

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION:

Any student with a disability that may affect his or her performance in this course is encouraged to speak to the instructor in the first two weeks, or to the Office of Student Life (360-3083) to arrange for suitable accommodation.

You are responsible for the information in this syllabus. Changes may be made in the syllabus during the term. I will be sure you know about them ahead of time.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change with advance notice):

Week 1

8 Jan *Course introduction*

10 Jan *Historical context. Introduction to Lake Whatcom case study.*

- Hughes, J. Donald. “The Ancient Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.” In *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations*, pp. 147-56. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975. (J drive)
- “Stewardship of Lake Whatcom”
<http://www.cob.org/documents/pw/environment/stewardship-of-lake-whatcom.pdf>

Week 2

15 Jan *Historical context, cont. Lake Whatcom history, issues, views, values, ethics.*

- White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *Science* 155 (Mar. 1967): 1203-1207. (J drive)
- Read more background on Lake Whatcom from:
<http://www.lakewhatcom.whatcomcounty.org/home>

16 Jan Extra credit opportunity: World Issues Forum, 12-1:20, Fairhaven College Auditorium, “A line in the sand: Cherry Point, Power Past Coal, Community Resistance.” Performers/ speakers: Dana Lyons, Matt Krogh.

17 Jan *Guest: Dick Whitmore, Lake Whatcom issues. Historical context, cont.*

- Lk Whatcom FEIS pp 5-16 – lists Watershed forestry plan objectives (lm_lkwa_feis.pdf on J: drive, or http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/lm_lkwa_feis.pdf.)
 - Optional : review annual reports and plans at :
http://www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/StateTrustLandsForestManagement/Pages/lm_lake_whatcom.aspx
- McShane, D., “Lake Whatcom Reconveyance,” June 2, 2012.
<http://washingtonlandscape.blogspot.com/2012/06/lake-whatcom-reconveyance.html>

- Stark, D., “County Council: Lake Whatcom Land Transfer Needs More Study,” *Bellingham Herald*, Sept. 13, 2012. <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2012/09/13/2687678/county-council-lake-whatcom-land.html>
- Opie, John. "Renaissance Origins of the Environmental Crisis." *Environmental Review* (Spr. 1987): 3-17. (J drive)

Week 3

22 Jan *Lake Whatcom: Ethical dilemmas and frameworks. Historical context, cont.*

- Hargrove, Eugene C. “Anglo-American Land Use Attitudes.” *Environmental Ethics* 2, (1980): 121-48. (J drive)

24 Jan *Emergence of environmental concern in the U.S.*

- Thoreau, Henry David. “Walking.” In *Excursions*, 1862. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/consrv:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28amrvrvr01div10%29%29>
- Marsh, George Perkins. “Destructiveness of Man.” In *Man and nature; or, Physical geography as modified by human action*, 1864. Read pages (text or images) 35-41 at: <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/consrv:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28amrvvgv07div19%29%29>

Week 4

29 Jan *Conservation and Preservation*

- Pinchot, Gifford. “The present battle” (Ch. 7). In *The Fight for Conservation*, 1910. (browse other sections) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11238/11238-h/11238-h.htm#2HCH14>
- Muir, John. “Hetch Hetchy Valley” (Ch. 16). In *The Yosemite*, 1912. (browse other sections) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7091/7091-h/7091-h.htm#chap16>
- **DUE: Lake Whatcom ethics essay and Lake Whatcom history essay.**

31 Jan *Ecology, Wilderness, Leopold, and the Land Ethic*

- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949. Read pp. vii-ix; 3-92 (Forward & all months of Almanac section)

Week 5

5 Feb *Ecology, Wilderness, Leopold, and the Land Ethic, cont.*

- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 95-162 (“Wisconsin” through “Manitoba”)

7 Feb *Ecology, Wilderness, Leopold, and the Land Ethic, cont.*

- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 165-200 (“Conservation Esthetic” through “Wilderness”)

Week 6

12 Feb *Ecology, Wilderness, Leopold, and the Land Ethic, cont.*

- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*, pp. 201-226 (“The Land Ethic”)

14 Feb *Wilderness discourse and environmental social justice in the developing world*

Guest: Prof. James Loucky, WWU Dept. of Anthropology

- Sutter, Paul S. “When Environmental Traditions Collide: Ramachandra Guha’s *The Unquiet Woods* and U. S. Environmental History.” *Environmental History* 14, No. 3 (July 2009): 543-550. (J drive)

Week 7

19 Feb *Ecology, Health, Carson and the environmental movement*

- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. Read pp. 1-83 (“A Fable for Our Times” through “Earth’s Green Mantle”)
- **DUE: Leopold essay, details TBA**

21 Feb *Ecology, Health, Carson and the environmental movement, cont*

- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*, pp. 85-172 (“Needless Havoc” through “Indiscriminately from the Skies”)

24 Feb Extra credit opportunity: Attend env. themed films at the Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival. Sat Feb 24, FC Auditorium: 12, Ocean Frontiers; 1:15, On the Line; 2:45, The Majestic Plastic Bag Peace Out. Other days (check BHRFF schedule for time and place): Bidder 70; Heist; Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth; Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives; Trust.

Week 8

26 Feb *Ecology, Health, Carson and the environmental movement, cont*

- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*, pp. 173-261 (“Beyond the Dreams of the Borgias” through “Nature Fights Back”)

28 Feb *Ecology, Health, Carson and the environmental movement, cont*

- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*, pp. 265-297 & 357-363 (“The Rumbblings of an Avalanche,” “The Other Road” and Edward O. Wilson’s “Afterward”)

Week 9

5 Mar *The (post-) personal is ecological (and political): “Green” burial movement*

Guest: Nicole Jordan

- Harris, Mark. *Grave Matters* (Ch. 9) (J drive)
- http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2012006702_greencemetery02m.html

7 Mar *Ethical dimensions of climate change*

- Gardiner, Stephen M. *A Perfect Moral Storm*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press. (Excerpts, TBA) (J drive)

Week 10

12 Mar *Ethical dimensions of climate change*

- (Reading TBA) (J drive)

14 Mar *Ethical dimensions of climate change*

Finals week

19 Mar, 3pm *No final exam or class meeting*

- **DUE last essay (two parts), details TBA**

Criteria for evaluation of papers

	Excellent Paper	Satisfactory Paper	Inadequate Paper
Purpose/Thesis	Original, clear, significant conceptual issue or problem controls the entire paper. Purpose for writing is clear. Conclusions are informed and accurate.	Purpose clear, but lacks originality, or purpose is ambiguous. Thesis evident but does not consistently control paper.	No purpose, or only emerging thesis; lacks focus; topic not appropriate in terms of assignment
Conceptualization	Employs fresh, complex ideas that fully and logically support thesis. Demonstrates accurate grasp of all relevant theoretical & contextual issues. Critical examination of different perspectives	Attempts to explore significant issues, but analysis may be predictable or not sustained. Provides adequate context	Ideas that don't support the thesis. Questions the obvious or affirms the familiar. No application of theory. Depth, complexity, and validity of reasoning poor
Development and content	Explores ideas thoroughly and clearly. Evidence & examples are relevant, necessary, accurate, & complete. Evaluates sources as appropriate.	Development consistent but cursory; may be slightly at odds with thesis. Examples sometimes unclear or unconnected. Assumptions or sources not always examined.	Minimal development. Lack of support, or no connection with thesis. Only summarizes sources. Excessive quoting. Subject matter not mastered.
Organization	Structure is effective, clear to reader, and supports purpose. Logically ordered and smooth connections of parts lead reader through entire paper.	Orderly and mostly well-connected. Structure generally apparent with occasional lapses.	Lack of coherence and transitions. Logical lapses with inadequate connections in many places. A series of unrelated paragraphs.
Language	Vivid, vigorous, wide range of language choices. Uses specialized terms well, without pretension. Fine choice of words & varied sentences throughout.	Simple, clear, direct. May slip into wordiness or jargon, but shows generally appropriate word choice and varied sentences.	Lapses in clarity. Inappropriate or incorrect usage. Wordy, dull, or mechanical writing.
Voice/tone	Consistent; voice is appropriate to text, audience and purpose. Strong individual voice that shows astute engagement, perspective.	Generally good engagement, appropriate to topic.	May be inopportune to purpose, audience, text. Little sense of engagement.
Conventions	Shows near flawless editing for grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling. Cites references correctly; uses a standard form. Meticulous, creative display.	Generally good but either shows a pattern of errors or several problems. Sources sometimes incorrect or inadequately referenced. Some signs of careful crafting.	Mechanical errors distract reader and impede reading. Shows carelessness, lack of editing & proofreading.