

Syllabus

ENVS 381: Introduction to Environmental Education

Huxley College of the Environment, Western Washington University
Syllabus for ENVS 381 (CRN 43599), Aut. 2012
Introduction to Environmental Education

Location: ES 413; Mon. & Weds. 12:00-1:50
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Office Hours: Tues., Weds., Thurs 2-3:30. Or, arrange with me.
Course webpage URL: <http://faculty.wwu.edu/gmyers/ENVS381.html>

How can we help individuals effect change to attain broad-based social and ecological sustainability? *Environmental education* (EE) offers a central route to that goal and is at the heart of any attempt to solve environmental problems. Scientific, policy, and even economic solutions all rely on public knowledge and attitudes to succeed. And for long-run enduring change, arguably education is the only route. But *what* is it? And--whatever it is--exactly *why* is it so important? *Education* is always a complex phenomenon. You have personal experience with it—including probably some positive examples. To become a good educator requires knowledge (about what to teach, and about learners), as well as practical skills...but also a deeper sense of understanding and inspiration that informs an often uncertain process. It is not a simple thing! To be sure, it is an art, but one founded on careful thinking and sound information. What is the nature of human beings? How can you encounter and help a person to learn? What is learning? Development? How can institutions best support these human capacities? These questions are both small (particular cases) and large (philosophical). The personal answers you develop towards them may determine if you have the attitudes that are essential to being a good educator. *Environmental* adds more specificity (and new breadth) to term “education.” Is it just a new subject matter? In what ways might it be more? What traditions in education does it most directly build upon? How does it depart? What different ways of understanding it seem best to you, upon critical reflection? How does it suggest we change our current thinking about our quest for “sustainability”? Invoking “environment” brings with it layers of social, cultural, and motivational complexity too. Environmental education is simultaneously immediate and hands-on, and as deep as any question asked by the philosophical mind.

This course can help you answer some of these questions and gain a beginning orientation to this profession. It will introduce you to the nature, theories and justifications of environmental education. What is EE? Why do it? This course should help you:

- Reflect on education and increase your ability to consciously direct your own learning
 - Characterize EE via its history, definitions, rationale, and principles.
 - Critically analyze different approaches to environmental education.
 - Relate EE to different approaches to solving environmental issues.
 - Gain a first-hand feel of the profession from some professional educators.
 - Increase your knowledge of local ecosystems and the behaviors that sustain and protect them.
 - Analyze what makes for high quality EE, including research bases and professional standards.
 - Create and deliver presentations related to EE and natural history.
 - Evaluate how you feel and think about different EE approaches, and
 - Critically reflect on and articulate your own ideas about EE.

In all of the above, our focus is putting the EE map and compass in your hands, if you choose to take this course. So, the “assignments,” if accomplished well, will move you along to new horizons. The course requires significant independent work, and group work, so expect to devote a full measure of time to the course beginning early in the term.

Coming together:

This course aims to combine direct experience, personal reflection, intellectual rigor, and community-building in the pursuit of starting you off on a path of real contribution as an environmental educator. You can't do this alone; you will succeed best if you:

- * Strive to be a strong, interdependent, well-integrated learning community.
- * Invite, listen to, and try to understand points of view different than your own.
- * Identify and articulate your own thoughts, even if they are vague or if it makes you uncomfortable. Ask questions whenever you don't understand. Help make this a safe environment for this.
- * Strive for professionalism in all your EE work.
- * Learn: "To grow, your reach must continue to exceed your grasp." - Sally Bryan

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Attendance, participation & in-class activities:

This class is about you the roles you play, and the relationships you build!! Class sessions will be a combination of several kinds of possibly non-substitutable activity – problem-solving, writing, peer-response, lectures, activities, readings, excursions, in which everyone's full participation is vital. In a group of interdependent learners, well-prepared attendance is not an elective choice, but rather a community responsibility. Some in-class assignments cannot be made up.

Please note: *Come prepared every day to spend at least part of the time outside.* This doesn't mean we *will* go outside each day, just that *we may at any time*. If you are late and we have left, our likely destination will be left on the board, but if we are moving or you don't know the area, you may not be able to find us!

Sehome Hill natural history interpretive presentation. Sign up for Oct 15, 17, 22, or 24.

Here you will be teaching each other – in a key part of the course: knowing local natural systems and their residents, and *understanding and feeling connected* to them. In the spirit of great natural historians who have discovered the universe in their back yards, we will focus exclusively on phenomena you can directly observe on Sehome Hill. You will pick a topic and present to other class members, and provide a 1/2 page fact sheet with a picture. After your presentation you will receive immediate feedback from peers. The outcome of this requirement will be that everyone in the class will be conversant with our special arboretum, and be prepared to share it with a real audience visiting campus this term. See additional information on J drive.

Environmental education program profile and observation: Presentations Oct. 29, 31; write up Oct. 31.

This assignment will take you into the programming and inner workings of one EE provider. Working in a small group, you will also have a chance to visit the partner's operation, review a curriculum and observe live instruction. Finally you will report what you've learned to the group. This will call for a high degree of professionalism on your part, but will be an unusual chance to get a fuller and closer look at real-life EE. See additional information on J drive.

Socio-environmental issue activities: sign up for Nov 26, 28 or Dec 3.

With other class members you will design and lead the rest of the class in an environmental issue investigation and simulation activity. The goal of this is to learn about the issue, and to create an environmental education activity for your peers that will promote their environmental citizenship skills and understanding. See additional information on J drive.

Your philosophy of environmental education. Due Dec. 14

Throughout this course, there will be many chances to develop your thinking about all that is entailed in environmental education. Our readings will contribute to this particularly, and short in-class reading responses or other writings that you share. You will be each others' audience and sounding board as you develop your thinking. See additional information on J drive.

Evaluation:

See assignment sheets on J drive for criteria specific to each assignment. Peer evaluations of your contributions to group products will be collected. Here is the grading breakdown:

Attendance and participation in discussion & in-class written responses -- 15%

Sehome Hill natural history presentation -- 10%

Environmental ed program profile -- 25%

Environmental issue activity --20%

EE philosophy essay -- 30%

A = 100% - 93 %; A - = 92 - 90; B+ = 89 - 87; B = 86 - 83; B- = 82 - 80; C+ = 79 - 77; C = 76 - 73; C- = 72 - 70; 60-69; D; below 60; F

Academic integrity:

You should make yourself familiar with WWU's policies on academic honesty such as citation of sources and plagiarism, and understand the potential consequences.

Disability accommodations:

Any student with a disability that may affect their performance in this class is encouraged to speak to the instructor by Oct. 3, or to the Office of Student Life (360-3083) to arrange for suitable accommodation.

TEXTS

- Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods. Second edition.* Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books. (bookstore)
- Sobel, D. (2005). *Place-based education.* Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society. (bookstore)
- Coyle, K. (2005). *Environmental Literacy in America.* Washington, DC: NEETF. (on-line)
- Other readings on-line, some only via a university computer. Download these to a usb device on campus. Files may be found on J-drive, or some by link on electronic syllabus.

You are responsible for knowing all the information in this syllabus and supplementary assignment sheets. Please retain them and refer to them as needed. In order to enhance your learning experiences, changes may be made in the syllabus during the term. I will tell you in class if this is necessary.

AGENDA OF TOPICS, READINGS & PROJECTS -- SUBJECT TO REVISION:

Week 1
Sept. 26

Introductions, course overview; environmental challenges and honest hope

Week 2
Oct. 1

Leopold, The land ethic & systems perspective

- Sign up Sehome Hill natural history topics
- Sign up for EE organizations to profile
- Read: • [Leopold, The Land Ethic](#) (chapter from *A Sand County Almanac*)

Oct. 3

History of Environmental Education

- Read: • [Disinger, John. \(1983\). Environmental education's definitional problem](#)
- [Belgrade Charter, 1975](#)
- [Tbilisi Declaration, 1977](#)
- [Thessaloniki Declaration, 1997](#)
- [Events that have influenced EE in the U.S.](#)

Week 3
Oct. 8

Contemporary EE practice; Environmental education professional standards

- Read: • *Excellence in EE: Guidelines For preK-12*
<http://eelinked.naaee.net/n/guidelines/topics/Excellence-in-EE-Guidelines-for-Learning-K-12>
(find "Learner guidelines (Complete publication)" near bottom of page)
- *EE Materials: Guidelines for Excellence*
<http://eelinked.naaee.net/n/guidelines/topics/EE-Materials-Guidelines-for-Excellence> (find link to download)
- *Nonformal EE Programs: Guidelines for Excellence.*
<http://eelinked.naaee.net/n/guidelines/topics/Nonformal-EE-Programs-Guidelines-for-Excellence>

Oct. 10

Children and nature; nature and child development

- Read: • Louv, Intro & Parts I and II

Week 4

Oct. 15

Children and nature

-Read: • Louv, Parts III and IV

Sehome Hill natural history presentations

Oct. 17

Children and nature

-Read: • Louv, two chapters of your choice, ch's 16-23

Sehome Hill natural history presentations

Week 5

Oct. 22

Environmental literacy

-Read: • [Coyle, K. \(2005\). Environmental Literacy in America. Washington, DC: NEETF](#)
Summary through chapter 4.

Sehome Hill natural history presentations

Oct. 24

Environmental literacy

-Read: • [Coyle, K. \(2005\). Environmental Literacy in America. Washington, DC: NEETF](#).
Chapters 5, 6, 7.

Sehome Hill natural history presentations

Week 6

Oct 29

EE Program profile talks

Oct. 31

EE Program profile talks

-Assignment: ****EE Program profile & observation due.****

Week 7

Nov. 5

Comparison of approaches to EE

-Read: • [Comparison table](#)

And... Environmental citizenship & Issue-based EE

-Read: • Hammond (1994). [The Monday group](#).

• Monroe, M. [Action matrix](#)

Nov. 7

Place-based EE

-Read: • Sobel

Week 8

Nov. 12

No class – Veterans Day

Nov. 14

Community-Based EE; CBSM & Education for Sustainable Development & International context

-Read: • Preface, Introduction, Barriers (more optional) chapters from McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2010). *Community-based social marketing*. Available at: <http://www.cbsm.com/> Sign up, log in, (free, no strings), find tab near top for "Book."

Week 9

Nov. 19

Program development, curriculum, research and evaluation on effects of EE

• [Program cycle diagram](#)

Nov. 21

No class - Thanksgiving

Week 10

Nov. 26

Environmental issue activities, write-ups due before session for scheduled groups.

Nov. 28

Environmental issue activities, write-ups due before session for scheduled groups.

Week 11

Dec. 3

Environmental issue activities, write-ups due before session for scheduled groups.

Dec. 5

Summing up, reflecting, looking forward

Dec. 14

Finals day - NO final, but, due by 5pm electronically:

-Assignment: **** EE Philosophy Paper due ****