Swarthmore College

Environmental Studies Capstone Seminar, 1996: Environmental Visions and Environmentalism

Wednesday, 1:15-4:00 p.m. Pearson 210

Coordinator: Donald K.Swearer

Purpose: The purpose of the course is to integrate humanistic, social science, and science perspectives on the environment. In particular, the course will study examples of writings on nature and on the environment by humanists, and examine selected economic, political, and technical issues in the literature on environmentalism, namely, conservation, pollution, sustainability, and development. In a broad sense the seminar will expose students to different ways of seeing, constructing, and acting in relationship to the natural environment and its human and animal inhabitants. In the process you will be introduced to examples of the wide variety of literature in the broad field of environmental studies, e.g. the prose essay, the philosophical essay, poetry, analytical articles in the fields of political science, economics, and science.

A Collaborative Project: The seminar is the outcome of collaboration among several professors at Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr and Haverford as well as teachers in environmental studies at other institutions, in particular, John Elder, of the Environmental Studies Program At Middlebury College. In addition, funding from the Cooper Endowment will bring several speakers to the campus during the semester who will give public lectures in the series, “Earth in Mind: Humanistic Perspectives on the Environment.” They will also meet with the class.

Fieldwork: The seminar will have a fieldwork requirement. The course is part of a five college and university experiment connected with the Environmental Studies Program at Middlebury College and the Orion Society funded by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. Students in the class will be divided among four elementary or middle school classrooms in the area to work on environmental awareness/action projects. A $500 stipend will be allotted for each classroom which may be used to cover field trips, materials, and other expenses related to the project. The fieldwork portion of the class will be coordinated by Wes Shumar who teaches environmental education in the Program in Education at the College. This summer students will be invited to attend an expense paid conference on environmental education at the Breadloaf Conference Center, Middlebury, VT.

Requirements: (1) Attendance at all Wednesday seminar meetings unless excused by the instructor, (2) The fieldwork project, (3) Report on the fieldwork project the last day of class, (4) A term paper (approximately 10 double-space pages) on one of the weekly syllabus topics or an eco-philosophy paper based in the course readings.

All readings are on reserve. Two copies of readings with an asterisk are in E.S. 91 binders.

Books for Purchase:

- Henry David Thoreau, Walden
- Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac
- Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain
- Lester R. Brown, Christopher Flavin, Sandra Postel, Saving the Planet
- Hans Oberdiek and Mary Ties, Living in a Technological Culture
- E.O. Wilson, The Diversity of Life
- Joseph Bruchac, Dawn Land Lou Guzzo & Dixy L. Ray, Trashing the Planet
- Sandra Pastel, Christopher Flavin, Lester R. Brown, Saving the Planet
- Willa Cather, O Pioneers!

Course Outline: The course will divided into four sections for the purpose of organizing diverse materials into a reasonably coherent structure.

I. Environmental Imagination and Environmentalism

An examination of the imaginative visions of selected American nature writers; speciﬁc attention to the issue of nature as "construction." Issues: pollution and environmental protection.

Wk. 1. 1/24. Thoreau and Beyond

Professor Donald K. Swearer, Department of Religion, Swarthmore College and Professor Lawrence Buell, Department of English Literature, Harvard University

Theory:

- D.W. Meining, "The Beholding Eye," in The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes
- Barry Lopez, "Landscape and Narrative," in Crossing Open Ground, 61-71

(Literary) Practice:

http://www.swarthmore.edu/NetSci/es/ESCS96.html
Wk. 2. (De)constructing Nature

Professor Donald Swearer and Professor Greg Kershner, Dept. of German, Bryn Mawr College

- John Elder, *Imagining the Earth* (Illinois, 1985), ch. 1
- Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (Harvard, 1995), ch. 1
- Bill McKibben, *The Age of Missing Information*, (Plume, 1993), "Daybreak"
- Martin Heidegger, "The Turning" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (Garland, 1977)

Wk. 3. 2/7. Pollution and Environmental Protection

Professor Art McGarity, Dept. of Engineering, Swarthmore College

- Lester R. Brown, Christopher Flavin, & Sandra Postel, *Saving the Planet* (Norton, 1991), Chapt. 1-7 (pp. 17-150)
- Dixy Lee Ray with Lou Guzzo, *Trashing the Planet* (Harper, 1990) Preface, Chapt. 1-7 (pp. 3-91), Chapt. 12 (pp. 150-172)
- Martin W. Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Duke, 1992) Intro. (pp. 1-28), Chapt. 4, "Technophobia & Its Discontents," (pp. 117-149), Chapt. 5, "The Capitalist Imperative (pp. 150-190), Conclusion, (pp. 242-251)

II. Sustainability and Biodiversity

Mainstream nature writings and the issues of conservation and sustainability.

Wk. 4. 2/14. Preservation and Conservation

Professor John Elder, Department of English Literature and Environmental Studies, Middlebury College


Wk. 5.2/21. E.O. Wilson and Biological Diversity

Professor Jacob Weiner, Dept. of Biology, Swarthmore College

- E.O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*, Chapt. 4 (The Fundamental Unit), 6 (The Forces of Evolution), 11 (The Life & Death of Species), 12 (Biodiversity Threatened)

Wk. 6. 2/28. The Economics and Politics of Conservation and Sustainability

Dr. Leah Smith, Economist and Consultant

- Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Knopf, 1995), "Woods" (Skim for how people actually used the woods, not just as an imagined arcadia and poetic inspiration but for subsistence wood-gathering, pig farming & hunting, recreational hunting, lumbering.)

Optional:


Criticism of mainstream environmentalism and examination of more radical visions of nature and the environment. Technology and the Rights of Nature

Wk. 7/36. Ecofeminism

Professor Stephanie Kaza, Environmental Studies, University of Vermont

- Val Plumwood, *Feminism & the Mastery of Nature* (Routledge, 1993), Intro. & Chaps. 1-2, (pp. 1-68)

Mid-Semester Vacation

Wk. 8. 3/20. From Deep Ecology to Environmental Justice

Donald K. Swearner, Swarthmore College and Mark Wallace, Department of Religion, Swarthmore College

- Mark L. Wallace, "Environmental Justice, Neopreservationism, and Sustainable Spirituality" (manuscript)


Professor Hans Oberdiek, Dept. of Philosophy, Swarthmore College

- Hans Oberdiek and Mary Ties, *Living in a Technological Culture* (Routledge, 1995) esp. Chaps. 1, 2, 8

IV. Other Visions, Other Voices. Development and the "Third World"

Cross-cultural perspectives on the environment focusing on Native Americans, Thailand, and the biology and economics of the Green Revolution.

Wk 10. 4/3. Thailand and Peru Culture and the Environment

Donald K. Swearner, Dept. of Religion, Swarthmore College, and Pedro Valdiviezo agricultural consultant to University of Cajamarca, FAO and EEG.


http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/es/SCS96.html
Wk. 11. 4/10. Development and the Green Revolution

Professor Lois Banta, Dept. of Biology, Haverford College

Professor Richard Ball, Dept. of Economics, Haverford College

- Robert Walge, Miracle or Menace: Biotechnology and the Third World (The Panos Institute, 1990), Chapt. 5, "Three Crops: Cocoa, Cassava Trees"

Wk. 12. 4/17. The American Plains: Cultural Constructions of An Environment

Professor James Ransom, Department of English Literature, Haverford College

- Willa Cather, O Pioneers!
- N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain
- N. Scott Momaday, "The Man Made of Words," in Indian Voices: The First Convocation of Indian Scholars, pp 48-84

Wk. 13. 4/24. Native American Visions of the Environment

Joseph Bruchac, Abenaki Native American Writer, Poet, and Story teller

- Joseph Bruchac, Dawn Land

Wk. 14. 5/1. Reports on student projects

Professor Wes Shumar, Program in Education, Swarthmore College and seminar students