

# Modern Environmental Problems

## Modern Environmental Problems



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### Course Description:

In a finite world, the needs of our ever-growing population strain the resources of the earth and threaten the environment. Although advances in technologies have helped solve some problems, technology has more often than not created unforeseen consequences that caused harm in other areas. Whether the subject is energy, water quality, or land-use practices, the environmental issues we will face in the 21st century have no easy answers.

This seminar will investigate the complex and subtle nature of modern environmental problems. We will focus on the science behind such issues as water pollution and global warming, but we will also consider the social and economic consequences humanity faces when trying to address these issues.

Additionally, all first year seminars at DePauw incorporate writing into the structure of class, regardless of topic. Writing is an important skill that will help you develop your thoughts and effectively communicate them to other people. It is also a process that takes practice to develop over time. Therefore, you will be writing *a lot*, both formally and informally. Though it is not specifically required for this course, I encourage you to keep a journal in which you write every day to develop and refine your style.

There will not be time in the semester to learn about *all* environmental problems, but we will dedicate a portion of class time each week to consider relevant current events. I encourage you to make this class your own by bringing in news articles or stories that interest you. I'm excited about this seminar, and I hope that you will be too!

### Course Goals:

In this course, you will:

- think critically about environmental issues by considering questions like "what are the connections between different problems" and "how does action or inaction in one area affect others";
- learn how to investigate environmental problems (e.g. where to find references and data);
- explore the science behind environmental topics through readings, discussions, and presentations;
- effectively communicate your ideas through articulate writing and speaking;
- become an informed citizen who can make wise, environmentally sound choices.

### Grades:

There will be no tests or homework problem sets in this class. Instead, you will be graded on your preparation for class, your contributions to discussion, group presentations, and your writing assignments. More details about the group presentations and the papers will come later.

Discussion & Participation:	15%
Reading Responses:	10%
Summary Essays (3):	30% total
Class Project	45% total

## Modern Environmental Problems - Class Expectations

Discussion: This class is based on the active participation of *everyone!* Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A Range: You attend every class, show evidence of having read and thought about the reading [assignment](#) ahead of time, listen well to others, and help focus our discussions with thoughtful comments and questions about the broader impacts of the reading.
- B Range: You participate at times and are always in class. You occasionally help to direct the discussion.
- C Range: You attend class regularly, but rarely offer a contribution. The contributions that are made may not show active thinking about the topic or readings.
- D Range: You attend class but do not show evidence of having done the reading or are not engaged, you are regularly late to class, or you have excessive absences (even if excused).
- F: You have three or more unexcused absences.

Reading assignments: Prior to each class, I will assign reading from one of our books or papers. This will be the basis of class discussion for the day. Please make sure that you have read the text and noted important points or passages prior to the start of class. I also encourage you to look for connections between the current text and other material that you have read, either for this class or another one. The schedule of reading assignments is posted to Moodle in the "Class Information and Schedule" section.

Reading responses: For almost all reading assignment, you will respond to a question about the material via Moodle. These responses will both demonstrate your understanding of the sub-topic and help organize your thoughts for the discussion. Any questions that you have about the articles should be listed at the end. Your work **must** be posted to Moodle **by noon on class days** for you to get credit. Grades will be awarded on a scale of 0 (did not complete on time) [to](#) 3 points (demonstrate strong understanding of the reading and are prepared to engage in discussion).

Summary Essays (3 total): Each week leading up to fall break, I will pose a question or topic that will serve as the basis for an essay covering the material that we have read that week. Essays will be graded based on your clarity, organization, and idea development. Papers are due by **midnight on Sunday** and should be submitted via Moodle. You must respond to at least three of the seven prompts. Although rewrites will not be allowed, you may replace your lowest scores if you complete more than the required amount.

Class Project: During the second half of the semester, we will focus on sustainability and ways to address the world's modern environmental problems. In addition to readings and research on this project, you will work in groups to develop an academic poster that you will present in a public viewing on the last day of class. Additional information, including deadlines and expectations related to this project, will be distributed right after fall break.

## Modern Environmental Problems - Class Policies

-  We will be using a web program called Moodle through out the course for assignment posting (including readings) and announcements. Our daily schedule, including reading and other assignments, will be posted there. All out of class work *must* be submitted through Moodle unless otherwise indicated in class.
-  Your attendance and active participation in class are essential for you to learn the material and therefore, **attendance is required**. If you need to miss a class because of sickness or personal emergency (see student handbook), please try to let me know ahead of time so we can arrange a time for you to make up the material. If I do not hear from you within 24 hours of a missed class, your absence will be considered unexcused. Unexcused absences will affect your participation grade.
-  In class, we will occasionally use your laptop computers to research information and/or prepare presentations. These occasions will be announced ahead of time. However, I ask that you **do NOT email, text, or surf the web during class**. Unauthorized internet/email use will negatively affect your participation grade.
-  Information and tips for your writing and speaking assignments are available at the Academic Resource Center (ARC), which is located on the first floor of Asbury Hall. You can also find helpful suggestions on the Writing Center's Webpage:  
<http://www.depauw.edu/admin/arc/W-center/whandouts.asp>
-  Writing and Speaking & Listening Center Tutors are available to help you with your papers and presentations for this class. I **highly** recommend that you use their services! Appointments are available M – F from 1:00pm – 5:00pm and S – H 7:00 – 10:00pm. You can schedule an appointment by calling (765) 658 – 4039.
-  **\*\*Academic Integrity\*\*** Any activity which gives one student an unfair advantage over other students will be handled in accordance with established University procedures as described in the Student Handbook.
-  If you have a condition or disability that will affect your ability to participate in any class activity, please make an appointment with Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Academic Success and Student Disability Services is located on the second floor of the Union Building and the phone number is 765-658-6267.
-  My office hours for this semester are Wednesday from 4 – 5 PM and Tuesday and Thursday from 2 – 3:30 PM. If you can't come to office hours, please feel free to make an appointment or stop by at your convenience. I use Google Calendar for my appointments; you are welcome to check there to see if I am likely to be free.
-  I am looking forward to a productive and informative semester! Please come see me at any time if you have questions or concerns about this course.