

Welcome to UNIV 170: Introduction to Environmental Science Seminar!

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Course Description: Nearly every day, scientists report more and more bad news for the life-sustaining ecosystems on Earth. For example, the NASA recently reported that 2020 tied with 2016 as the hottest year on record. Additionally, 2010 – 2019 was the hottest decade on record. And there is more: fires are raging (California, Australia); drinking water is contaminated (Flint, MI, is just one of dozens of cities in the US alone); species are going extinct (~two dozen species are thought to have gone extinct in 2019). Things look bad, and the kicker is, environmental change is happening so fast, scientists don't even know what the collective long-term consequences will be.

In human terms, the current environmental crisis isn't new. In 1964, biologist Rachel Carson famously warned of a *Silent Spring* because of the birds killed from toxic chemicals, and she was hardly the first in the modern era to express concern. Thanks to the work of Carson and countless other scientists, scholars, and citizens, numerous environmental policies have been developed in the US and virtually every other nation on the planet. Further, environmental education and awareness is improving, and many people engage in environmentally-friendly behaviors like recycling, reducing energy consumption, and fair-trade foods. But it's not enough – it will never be enough until society fundamentally shifts our collective values to focus on sustainability.

Sustainability describes the simultaneous pursuit of social justice and ecological health in order to promote equity among people and harmony with nature. This semester, we will be using the United Nation's 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to improve your understanding of how and when science can be used to explain and address the environmental problems that are threatening life on Earth. Importantly, the SDG blend knowledge and methods from science and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. While the focus of this class is science, it is important for scientists and non-scientists to have a shared vocabulary, understanding, and respect for each other to prevent or at least diminish the devastating consequences of environmental collapse.

This course will also help you improve your writing through a series of informal and formal writing assignments. Specifically, you will learn:

- to think about writing assignments as a series of tasks that including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing, and acknowledging appropriate primary and secondary sources;
- how reading and writing support learning, thinking, and communicating in both academic and non-academic settings
- flexible strategies for generating ideas, revising, editing, and proof-reading;
- the ways readers perceive and respond to different forms of writing so that you can choose your style accordingly.

Course Design: This course is designed to be highly interactive and the success of the class will require *your* perspectives and *your* experiences. Therefore, the schedule for the semester is not yet set, but will be developed after our first week of conversations. Although it may feel unusual – or perhaps even intimidating – for a class material to be designed through democratic consensus, I assure you that this can be a very effective way to keep the class engaged..

For each class you will complete readings, online responses, and other assignments and come to class ready to share perspectives, questions, and thoughts about what you have read, watched, or heard. Initially, I will provide some questions to consider while reading, but eventually, I want these questions to come from you. Participation in class discussions will be essential for a successful seminar. We can't really have good discussions if people are absent or non-talkative, so attendance is required and participation will be graded (not *what* you say but that you *contribute* in a productive manner). In addition to in-class time, asynchronous, out-of-class discussions and writing assignments will further enable you to follow your curiosity, share perspectives, and learn from your peers as you develop your critical thinking and writing skills.

Because this is a “W Class,” you *will* be doing a lot of writing in this course! However, it is important for you to realize that writing is not just a goal unto itself but is also a useful way to learn material. Therefore, we will be doing a number of different types of writing, from free responses to structured essays. Also, we will take time in class to discuss the process of writing, and I will share a number of resources with you to help you improve this important skill.

Assignments: As described below and on Moodle, you will complete five formal papers during the course of the semester as well as a series of low-stakes writing assignments online. Additionally, in lieu of a final exam, you will complete a Course Portfolio due **Monday, May 17 at 4pm**. All out-of-class assignments, including the final portfolio, are described on Moodle. Finally, your active participation in class and in our online discussion forum will be evaluated each week and your cumulative average will also contribute to your final grade.

The weights of the assignments are as follows:

Formal papers, including pre-writing assignments:	50% total
Weekly Discussion Forum:	20% total
Final Portfolio:	15%
Class Engagement:	10% assessed weekly
Daily Writing:	5% assessed weekly

Grading & W Certification: The expectations for all assignments (including class participation and information writing) will be discussed in class and posted to Moodle. In general, assignments that meet the expectations of the assignments will receive a score in the B range. Assignments that exceed expectations will receive a score in the A range. Assignments that demonstrate some comprehension and understanding of the material but fall short of expectations will receive a grade in the C range. Papers that have significant writing flaws and fall well short of expectations will receive a score in the D range, or an F, depending on the level of severity.

To receive a W for this course, you must:

- complete all information writing assignments
- receive a B- or better on all formal writing assignments
- complete an end of semester writing reflection
- receive a C- or better or a “P” (pass) as a final class grade

Role of our Writing Associate (WA): We are fortunate to have Sophia Featherstone as a writing associate for our class. Although she will not be able to attend classes discussions, Sophia will engage with in our online forum discussions and will also be available to help you as you develop your papers.

Course Policies: This class will follow the policies and procedures described in the DePauw University Student Handbook; there is a link to the online version of this resource on our Moodle site. In particular, please note the following:

- ⇒ Excessive absences, even if they are excused, will seriously compromise your learning in this class. Therefore, **you may be dropped from the course if you miss six or more sessions.**
- ⇒ ****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.
- ⇒ The DePauw University Student Handbook defines **plagiarism** as “using the words or idea of another writer without attribution, so that they seem as if they are your own. Plagiarism ranges from copying someone else’s work word for word, to rewriting someone else’s work with only minimal word changes (mosaic plagiarism), to summarizing work without acknowledging the source.”
- ⇒ It is the policy and practice of DePauw University to provide reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification from Student Disability Services is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please contact Student Disability Services. Allow one week advance notice to ensure enough time for reasonable accommodations to be made. Otherwise, it is not guaranteed that the accommodation can be provided in a timely manner. Accommodations are not retroactive. Students who have questions about Student Disability Services or who have, or think they may have, a disability (psychiatric, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical, medical, etc.) are invited to contact Student Disability Services for a confidential discussion in Union Building Suite 200 or by phone at 658-6267.

In addition to the university policies, I want to share the following about this class:

What I expect from you:

- ⇒ Come to class ready to learn, actively engage in all class activities, and contribute to group projects;
- ⇒ Contribute to a collaborative classroom environment;
- ⇒ Contact me if something happens that will cause you to miss class; illness, university-sponsored activities, and family emergencies will all be considered excused absences *if* you contact me beforehand or within 24 after a missed class;
- ⇒ Ask questions - in class, in private conversations, or in emails; questions are one of the best ways to understand new concepts;
- ⇒ Let me know if you are struggling with anything that affects your ability to do your best work; this could be related specifically to concepts or assignments in this class or issues outside of it
- ⇒ Take your work seriously, be curious, and keep an open mind!

What you can expect from me:

- ⇒ I love science generally and environmental science (including geology) specifically; I am delighted by the opportunity to share my joy and passion with you;
- ⇒ I am genuinely and personally invested in your success - nothing makes me happier than seeing students develop new understandings of class material - and I really want to help you develop skills that will help you in your future;
- ⇒ I will be available for you - in addition to morning office hours, I have extended time available for student appointments M - H afternoons (see "Google Calendar" link)
- ⇒ I will reply to your email within a timely manner; this usually means that you'll hear from me within 24 hours of your sending it, though probably not on the weekends.

I'm looking forward to a great semester!!!