

# ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 110

## Environment & Society Fall 2020

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**Course Meeting Time:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:20pm

**Location:** This course is primarily held synchronously over Zoom.

**Instructor:** Andrea Rissing

**Contact:** arissing@wooster.edu

**Office Hours:** Virtual: Tues & Thurs 3:30-4:30pm & by appt.

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Understanding the complexity of humankind's interactions with the environment requires grasping the basic social, cultural, economic, and political forces that condition our relationships with and impacts on the natural world. This course introduces the core principles and concepts in the interdisciplinary field of environmental studies. The goal of the course is to help you develop the critical thinking skills and theoretical background to analyze and evaluate complex evidence, arguments, and competing claims about the environment and society. **This course fulfills the HSS liberal arts requirement as well as the “W” writing-intensive requirement at the College.**

### **COURSE GOALS**

**Overall course objectives:** *This course will...*

- 1) Introduce the central questions, key conceptual frameworks, methods and metrics, and longstanding debates within the field of Environmental Studies.
- 2) Give you tools and space to clarify your own past, current, and future relationship to the natural world.
- 3) Improve your written communication skills through guided revision processes and individual feedback on scaffolded writing assignments.

**Specific learning objectives:** *By the time you finish this course, you will be able to...*

- 1) *Articulate* the central questions about societies' relationships with their environments (including carrying capacity, overpopulation, resource management, tragedy of the commons, and environmental inequities and justice), *explain* competing approaches for addressing these questions, and *judge* the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- 2) *Recognize* human roles in sparking, exacerbating, curbing, and framing different environmental issues and *identify* the motivations of various actors.
- 3) *Summarize* classic issues from seminal EnvS literature and *determine* how these issues do and do not shift over time through connections to contemporary environmental debates.
- 4) *Demonstrate* improvement in your scholarly and persuasive written communication.
- 5) *Clarify* your own personal environmental values and *reflect* on how your values manifest in your life.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

There are two required texts for this course. The first is available for purchase at the college bookstore and the second is freely available through the college library as an e-book.

- 1) Schlottman, C., Jamieson, D., Jerolmack, C., & Rademacher, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Environment and Society: A reader*. New York: New York University Press.
- 2) Hoover, E. (2017). *The River Is in Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Additional readings and materials will be made available on Moodle.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

This course is primarily held synchronously over Zoom. The Zoom links for the class and for my online office hours live on the front page of our course's Moodle site (under the "Important links" tab). I hope to organize at least one class session to meet in-person, and on 10/13 we will be taking a socially distanced class walk together.

For most of the semester, Tuesdays will be dedicated to seminar and lecture over Zoom. On Thursdays, we will again meet together over Zoom, but most of class will be spent in 4-person break out groups. Depending on the week, you will be collaborating on a group project, book-clubbing a chapter from Hoover's ethnography, or peer-reviewing each other's papers. I will "float" between break-out groups.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC**

This semester is unusual in that there is an ongoing pandemic. To maximize our class' flexibility and minimize everyone's risk of exposure to COVID-19, this class is being remotely taught. This is a strange and unpredictable time for us all. What I've outlined in this syllabus is the current working plan, and I'm open to adapting the structure in response to changing conditions in Ohio, on campus, and our class' needs and preferences.

I want our classroom community to thrive no matter the delivery method or your individual methods of participating in class. I cannot guarantee an experience that is identical to pre-pandemic semesters, but my goal is to treat all students equitably and to ensure grading is transparent, consistent, and fair.

Due to the nature of the semester, **communication is vitally important**. Email is the best way to contact me, and I commit to responding to emails within 48 hours, and my intention is to respond faster than that most of the time. I will likely be slower on weekends. Likewise, if your situation changes regarding health, housing, or in any other regard with respect to your ability to participate in the class, please contact the appropriate College of Wooster student support organization first and then me as soon as feasible. **It is easier for me to address your needs if I know about them as soon as they arise**. This does not mean I can successfully respond to every request for consideration, but I emphasize that my goal is to treat you all equitably and do what I can to help you succeed in this course.

## **OTHER CLASS REQUIREMENTS & COURSE RECORDINGS**

You must have access to reliable, high-speed internet and a computer to join our Zoom classroom.

Some of our classes and discussions, whether held online or face-to-face, will be recorded this semester. This allows students who must miss class to keep up with the course and may also be helpful to everyone for review purposes. Video and audio recordings and other course materials are to be used for educational purposes only and are meant only for students currently enrolled in the course. No one should distribute recordings, screenshots, or other class material. College classrooms are places to test out new ideas, challenge assumptions, and engage timely and sometimes sensitive issues. Students who enter this space should be able to do so with the assurance that their comments will not be shared beyond the classroom.

All recordings will be made available as password protected streaming videos, available only to class participants, for the duration of this class.

## **COMMITMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, AND POLICIES**

### **Learning Styles**

I want every student to succeed, and I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Any student needing academic accommodations should make an appointment with the [Learning Center in Apex](#) and communicate with me as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

Note that the Learning Center is designed to help all students improve their overall academic performance. Sessions are structured to promote principles of effective learning and academic management. Any student on campus may schedule sessions at the Learning Center, and I encourage you to make use of this resource.

### **Supports Available to You**

In addition to the Learning Center, the College provides numerous services that I hope everyone becomes familiar with and takes advantage of.

[The Wellness Center](#) provides comprehensive health services, including counseling.

This is a writing intensive course, and I strongly encourage everyone to make use of the College's excellent [Writing Center](#).

The College also understands that unexpected things happen. There are a couple of policies to guide us through those sticky situations. [The Policy Regarding Academic Conflicts](#) tells us to prioritize academic commitments and to share responsibility in resolving conflicts. [Final exams](#) are given only at [times scheduled by the Registrar](#); if you have three

final exams scheduled for the same day, you can [petition the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement for an exception](#). (note that there is no final exam for this course).

### **Time Management, Deadlines, Absences**

I understand that this course is just one component of everyone's busy lives. Nevertheless, time management is part of what we learn in college. Recognize due dates and plan ahead.

Attending and participating in class is a critical part of succeeding in this class, and I do expect everyone who is able to attend all class sessions. Generally speaking, more than one unexcused absence will negatively impact your participation grade, and assignment grades will be docked one letter grade for each day they are late.

That said, I recognize the unprecedented nature of Fall 2020 and am willing to be flexible with these policies if you communicate proactively. If you know you will need to miss class, such as for a religious holiday or medical appointment, please email me as soon as possible so that we can come up with an alternative together. Similarly, if you become sick or otherwise need to miss several classes, please email me as soon as possible so we can work together to keep you on track.

### **Email and Office Hours**

I want to hear from you! I will respond to emails conscientiously, but please allow up to 48 hours. Plan ahead and keep this in mind as deadlines approach. When asking questions about assignments, I expect that you are familiar with the information in the syllabus, on Moodle, and the content of the readings. I would love to see you during office hours to discuss your ideas, questions, or course progress. I do not discuss grades over email.

### **Virtual Classroom Conduct**

We'll go over Zoom etiquette on the first day, please also read over the [Rules of Zoom Engagement](#) for further advice.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As a member of the Wooster community, we are expected to uphold [the Wooster Ethic](#) through everything we do in this course. [The Scot's Key](#) describes the [Code of Academic Integrity](#), which provides a guide developing and exhibiting honesty in our academic work.

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

This course is graded out of 100:

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <i>Engaged</i> participation and attendance            | 15 %         |
| Module Essays (3 essays @ 10% each)                    | 30 %         |
| Personal reflection essay                              | 10 %         |
| Final paper  | 15 %         |
| Daily Moodle submissions                               | 10 %         |
| In-class group assignments (4 assignments @ 3pts each) | 12 %         |
| Other short written assignments                        | 8 %          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100 %</b> |

To determine your final grade, consult the grading scale below:

|    |        |    |       |    |             |    |       |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------------|----|-------|
| 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 | F  | 62 or lower |    |       |

### 1. **Engaged participation and attendance (15%)**

Class participation and attendance are essential. Your participation grade will be determined by regular class attendance, active listening to others' contributions, and contributing your own reactions to readings and class discussions. I expect you to complete the assigned readings on time and be prepared to discuss them in class.

### 2. **Module Essays (10% x 3)**

Three times during the semester, you will write a 1000-1200 word essay that integrates and synthesizes key ideas from class. Specific prompts will be provided to you in each case. A few important parameters include:

- You must include the word count at the end of the essay.
- You must include at least two citations from the unit readings in each essay, at least one of which must be a direct quote.
- Please upload all papers to Moodle as Word documents: 12pt font, 1-inch margins, and double spaced. You can use whichever citation system you prefer, but please be consistent.
- The grading rubric for all papers is the last page of this syllabus.

### 3. **Personal Reflection Essay (10%)**

At the beginning of the class, you will take the [long-form Ecotypes survey](#) and write a brief paragraph responding to and reflecting upon the results. Towards the end of the semester, you will retake the quiz. Your personal reflection essay is a space for you to analyze any changes that occurred (or not) in your scores and reflect on your own evolving relationship with the environment and nature.

### 4. **Final Paper (15%)**

For the final paper, you will choose one of the three unit essays (item 2 above) and revise and expand it. "Revise" means that you revise the existing essay, incorporating the feedback I gave you on the original draft. "Expand" means that you increase its length to 1600-1800 words, and that you incorporate references to at least two additional writings. This paper will be due at the end of our final exam period.

### 5. **Daily Moodle submissions (10%)**

Before class every day, submit a short assignment on Moodle listing what you think are the three main points of the assigned material. *\*\*Not all days have assigned readings, you don't need to do pre-class submissions on those days. Refer to the "Daily Moodle submissions" tab.*

After class every day, submit a short assignment on Moodle naming one thing that you will remember from class and one question you still have.

## **6. In-class group assignments (4 assignments @ 3% each)**

Most Thursdays will be conducted in break out groups on Zoom. Some of these will be book club or peer review days, but four times, the break out group will be dedicated to completing a mini-group project. I encourage you to get these submitted within the allotted class time, but they will not be due until Friday at midnight in case you need a little bit of extra time.

## **7. Other short written assignments (8%)**

At times, I will assign other short written homework. This will include a short response to your initial Ecotypes quiz result and may also include researching and responding to current events, answering specific questions about the readings, or other prompts as assigned.

## COURSE OUTLINE

*You are responsible for completing all readings and assignments before coming to the class next to which they are listed. For example, please come to class on August 25 having already completed the Leopold and Muir readings.*

*Specifics are subject to change.*

| TOPIC  | DATE               | READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS   |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Course introduction & Class Commitments  | Thursday<br>Aug 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Syllabus. Come prepared with any questions.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>MODULE 1: WHERE DID WE COME FROM?</b><br><i>History of EnvS and environmental problems</i>      |                    |  |
| History of EnVs<br><br>Where did this field come from? How do we know what we know?                | Tuesday<br>Aug 25  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading: Leopold, "Excerpts from The Land Ethic" #7 in Reader</li> <li>Reading: Muir, "Hetch Hetchy Valley" #8 in Reader</li> </ul> <p><i>Introduce <a href="#">Ecotypes</a> essay assignment</i></p> |
| What does EnVs care about today?<br><br>Affluence & Consumption                                    | Thursday<br>Aug 27 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading: "<a href="#">Pulling Down Our Monuments</a>" Sierra Club Statement</li> <li>Reading: "We made plastic...now we're drowning in it" Moodle</li> </ul>  |
| What science do we have to know to understand these issues?  | Tuesday<br>Sep 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading: Textbook excerpt on biogeochemical cycles Moodle</li> <li><b>DUE: Short Ecotypes reflection due 1:59pm on Moodle</b></li> </ul>  |
|  | Thursday<br>Sep 3  | <b>Break out groups:</b> Project on Ecotypes results   |
| <b>MODULE 2: ANTHROPOCENE</b><br><i>Human-environment relationships: Past, Present, and Future</i> |                    |  |
| Introducing the Anthropocene   | Tuesday<br>Sep 8   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading: Steffen et al "The Anthropocene" #2 in Reader</li> </ul>   |

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|  | Thursday<br>Sep 10 | <b>Break out groups:</b> “20 questions” project   |
| Reconsidering the Anthropocene   | Tuesday<br>Sep 15  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Download the <a href="#">free e-book “Anthropocene Unseen”</a> and read the following:</li> <li>• #66 “Shit” by Nicholas C. Kawa</li> <li>• #30 “Flatulence” by Radhika Govindrajan</li> <li>• One other entry of your choosing</li> </ul> <p><i>In-class Nick Kawa guest lecture</i></p> |
|  | Thursday<br>Sep 17 | <b>Break out groups:</b> Book club!<br>“The River Is In Us” Intro   |
| <b>MODULE 3: MALTHUS’ SPECTER</b><br><i>Carrying capacity, population growth</i> |                    |   |
| Introduction to population growth  | Tuesday<br>Sep 22  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Malthus “Excerpts from An Essay on the Principle of Population” #15 in Reader</li> <li>• Reading: Ehrlich “Too Many People” Moodle</li> </ul>   |
|  | Thursday<br>Sep 24 | <b>Break out groups:</b> Peer review of Anthropocene essays   |
| Carrying capacity  | Tuesday<br>Sep 29  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Cohen “Human carrying capacity” Moodle</li> <li>• <b>DUE: Anthropocene essay due on Moodle 1:59pm</b></li> </ul>  |
|  | Thursday<br>Oct 1  | <b>Break out groups:</b> Book club!<br>“The River Is In Us” Ch. 1   |
| Malthusianism today  | Tuesday<br>Oct 6   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Ojeda, Sasser, &amp; Lunstrum. “Malthus’s specter and the anthropocene.” Moodle.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Thursday<br>Oct 8  | <b>Break out groups:</b> Book club!<br>“The River Is In Us” Ch. 2   |
| <b>INTERLUDE: RACHEL CARSON AND GETTING OUTSIDE</b>                              |                    |   |
| Our own relationships with nature & a class walk                                 | Tuesday<br>Oct 13  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Braverman “Post-nature Writing” Moodle</li> </ul>   |



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|  | Thursday<br>Oct 15 | <b>Break out groups:</b> Book club AND peer review.<br>"The River Is In Us" Ch. 3  |
| Rachel Carson's legacy   | Tuesday<br>Oct 20  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Carson "Excerpts from Silent Spring." #9 in Reader</li> <li>• <b>DUE: Malthus essay due on Moodle 1:59pm</b></li> </ul>                          |
| <b>MODULE 4: TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS</b><br><i>Resource management, cooperation, institutions</i>                       |                    |  |
| Introducing "Tragedy of the Commons"   | Thursday<br>Oct 22 | <b>Break out groups:</b> Tragedy of the Commons game.  |
| Tragedy of the Commons – the seminal text  | Tuesday<br>Oct 27  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Hardin "Excerpts from The Tragedy of the Commons." #22 in Reader</li> </ul>  |
|  | Thursday<br>Oct 29 | <b>Break out groups:</b> Book club Hoover Ch. 5  |
| Tragedy of the Commons – the seminal follow-up   | Tuesday<br>Nov 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Ostrom et al "Revisiting the Commons" #23 in Reader</li> <li>• Reading: Van Vugt "Averting the Tragedy of the Commons." #25 in Reader</li> </ul> |
|  | Thursday<br>Nov 5  | <b>Break out groups:</b> Environmental organizations group project.  |
| Continuing the conversation  | Tuesday<br>Nov 10  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Adler "Excerpts from About Free-Market Environmentalism." #27 in Reader</li> </ul>   |
| <b>MODULE 5: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</b><br><i>The movement's beginnings and the movement today, inequitable burdens</i> |                    |  |
| What is environmental justice?   | Thursday<br>Nov 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Bullard "Excerpts from Environmentalism and Social Justice" #10 in Reader</li> <li>• <b>DUE: TOC essay due on Moodle 1:59pm</b></li> </ul>       |

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|-----------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Continuing the conversation | Tuesday<br>Nov 17    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Schlosberg “Excerpts from Theorising Environmental Justice” #32 <i>in Reader</i></li> <li>• Reading: Thomas <a href="#">Why every environmentalist should be anti-racist</a> <i>Moodle</i></li> <li>• Listen: <a href="#">NPR high school podcast winner</a></li> <li>• Listen: <a href="#">NPR interview with the winners</a></li> </ul> |
| Case studies: Farmworkers   | Thursday<br>Nov 19   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: TBD</li> <li>• <b>DUE: Plan for revising final paper due on Moodle 1:59pm</b></li> </ul>  |
| Course Wrap Up              | Tuesday<br>Nov 24    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DUE: Personal reflection essay due on Moodle 1:59pm</b></li> </ul>  |
|                             | Thursday<br>Nov 26   | Happy Thanksgiving!   |
|                             | Friday<br>December 4 | <b>DUE: Final revised paper due 5pm on Moodle</b>   |

## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 110

### Paper Assessments

There are three key criteria for all papers. Each criterion is evaluated based on the following rubric:

| <b>Criterion</b>  | <b>Excellent (90-100%)</b>  | <b>Good (80-89%)</b>   | <b>Satisfactory (70-79%)</b>  | <b>Unsatisfactory (&lt;69%)</b>   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Relevance</b><br>Address all assignment requirements<br>Connections to course<br>Using appropriate vocabulary<br>Relevant facts        | Addressed all requirements of exercise<br>Made explicit connections to course materials<br>Used appropriate vocabulary<br>Presented relevant facts                          | Addressed the majority of requirements<br>Made some connections to course materials<br>Used some appropriate vocabulary<br>Presented some relevant facts       | Addressed at least half of the requirements<br>Made very few connections to course materials<br>Used limited course vocabulary<br>Used few relevant facts                     | Addressed less than half of the requirements<br>Made no connections to course material<br>Used no course vocabulary<br>Used no relevant facts<br>(Or misinterpreted/misused vocabulary, facts etc.)         |
| <b>Analysis &amp; Synthesis</b><br>Argument is original, logical and well supported<br>Synthesis of readings<br>Connections to real world | Argument is original (rather than text summary), logically presented, and supported by facts<br>Makes clear, fluid connections between ideas and/or between different texts | Argument is simple, somewhat original, somewhat difficult to follow, and supported by some facts<br>Makes few connections between ideas and/or different texts | Argument is difficult to follow and/or summary of a source, few or inappropriate facts are used to support it<br>Presents few connections between ideas and/or different text | Argument is difficult to follow or not presented, no facts (or wrong facts) are used to support it<br>Text is a summary rather than synthesis or analysis<br>Connections are non-existent or misinterpreted |
| <b>Presentation</b><br>Clearly & well written/presented   | Paper is well written. Minimal, non-distracting grammatical errors.<br>Correct citations.<br>Writing is fresh, flowing, and creative where appropriate                      | Paper is written relatively clearly.<br>Correct citations.<br>Few grammatical errors.<br>Writing is at times engaging.   | Some parts of the paper are written clearly.<br>Some citation errors.<br>Numerous grammatical errors and/or poor word choice.<br>Text is at times laborious to read.          | Paper is difficult to follow<br>Many citation errors, or missing citations.<br>Grammatical errors are abundant<br>Poor word choices.<br>Text is laborious or nonsensical.                                   |

