



Rensselaer

FALL 2011 STSS/STSH 2310

CENTURY OF ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

TF 10:00AM-11:50AM

Sage 2704

Instructor

Dr. Abby Kinchy

Office Location: SAGE 5403

Office Hours: TF 1:00PM-2:00PM

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Course Description

This course examines the emergence of environmental consciousness in the United States over the past 100 years. The ideas articulated by scientists, philosophers, activists, political leaders, authors and artists have inspired diverse social movements addressing the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Such movements include conservation, preservationism, deep ecology, labor struggles, indigenous rights, sustainable development, environmental justice, anti-nuclear and anti-toxics campaigns, and consumer activism, among others. Students in this course will study the original writings of some of the most important thinkers and activists in the history of environmentalism. Lectures and class discussions will examine the cultural and political contexts for the emergence of these concerns and struggles and their distinct impacts.

Course Text(s)

TITLE:FIRST ALONG THE RIVER (P)

AUTHOR:KLINE

EDITION:4TH

COPYRIGHT YEAR:2011

PUBLISHER:ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHER

ISBN:9781442203990

NEW:\$19.95

USED:\$15.00

TITLE:AMERICAN EARTH (FWD GORE)

AUTHOR:MCKIBBEN

COPYRIGHT YEAR:2008

PUBLISHER:LIBRARY OF AMERICA

ISBN:9781598530209

NEW:\$40.00

USED:\$30.00

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the key ideas of important environmental writers of the past century, such as John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and Bill McKibben.
2. Compare and contrast different social movements addressing the relationship between humans and the natural environment, such as conservationism, preservationism, deep ecology, and environmental justice.
3. Analyze the influence of past thinkers and activists on environmental ideas and movements today.
4. Generate original ideas about society and the natural environment—including possible solutions to environmental problems.

Course Assessment Measures

Homework questions: Homework questions (responses to the readings) will be assigned weekly. The questions will be posted to the LMS site each Tuesday, and students must post answers before the start of class each Friday.

Exams: There are two in-class exams, which will contain a combination of multiple-choice, matching, short answer, and essay questions.

Essay: Choose one contemporary (post-1990) US environmental movement, advocacy organization, campaign, or thinker that interests you (with approval of the professor), and investigate it thoroughly. Write a final essay (7-12 pages in length) answering the following questions:

How does the movement (campaign, thinker, etc.) compare to the ideas, actions, and social role of earlier advocates for the environment? In what ways does it build on the work of earlier environmental thinkers, and in what ways does it break new ground? What does this comparison tell us about how struggles for environmental protection have changed in the last 100 years? What is your assessment of these changes?

The essay should be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman, with standard one-inch margins. References should be cited using APA style. Please print on both sides of the page if possible.

Grading Criteria

All assignments and exams will receive a letter grade. Letter grades have numerical equivalents on the 4-point scale (e.g. A = 4.0, B = 3.0). The relative value of each assignment, in relation to the final grade, is as follows:

Homework questions - 25%

Exam one – 25%

Exam two – 25%

Essay - 25%

Students are expected to attend class (see attendance policy). Each unexcused absence after the second unexcused absence will result in the reduction of a full letter grade.

Students will receive a final letter grade, based on the following scale:

A = 4.0
A- = 3.7
B+ = 3.3
B = 3.0
B- = 2.7
C+ = 2.3
C = 2.0
C- = 1.7
D+ = 1.3
D = 1.0
F = 0.0

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken. Two unexcused absences will be permitted. After the second unexcused absence, each unexcused absence will result in a reduction of a full letter grade. Documentation for excused absences is now processed by the Student Experience office (these were previously processed through the Dean of Students office). If you need an official excuse, contact the Student Experience office – 4th floor of Academy Hall, x8022, se@rpi.edu.

Other Course Policies

- All reading assignments must be completed before the class meeting on the date indicated.
- Assignments may change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes and adjustments to assignments will be announced in class. Be sure to ask the professor or a classmate about any changes if you miss class.
- Readings not in the textbooks will be distributed electronically on the LMS site.
- This class will primarily follow a discussion format. All students are expected to contribute regularly to class discussion. This includes asking and responding to questions, commenting on the readings, respectful listening to one another, and serious consideration of diverse viewpoints.
- Please avoid disruptions such as arriving late or packing your bag before the end of class. Turn off cell phones, do not use text messaging during class time, and do not use computers for activities not directly connected to the class.

Academic Integrity

Student-teacher relationships are built on trust. Students must trust that teachers have made appropriate decisions about the structure and content of courses they teach, and teachers must trust that assignments that students turn in are their own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational process. Any acts of plagiarism will have grave consequences. The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities defines various forms of academic dishonesty and you should make yourself familiar with these.

In this class, all individual assignments that are turned in for a grade must represent the student's own work. Any instances of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment. Repeated instances of academic dishonesty will be grounds for failing the course.

Plagiarism includes purchasing term papers; copying or handing in the writing of another student (current or former); using sentences verbatim from a published source without appropriate referencing (when in doubt, cite the source); and presenting as one's own the detailed argument of a published source. "Recycling" papers written in other courses is also forbidden.

If you have any question concerning this policy before submitting an assignment, please ask for clarification.

Course Calendar

Date	Topic	Readings
Aug. 30, 2011	Introduction	
Sep. 2, 2011	Pre-environmentalist thought in the US	First Along the River, chapters 1 and 2
Sep. 6, 2011	Thoreau and his contemporaries	First Along the River, chapter 3, American Earth, pp. 9-25
Sep. 9, 2011	Preservation	First Along the River, chapter 4, American Earth, pp. 71-80, 85-97
Sep. 13, 2011	Conservation	First Along the River, chapter 5 (up to p. 60), American Earth, pp. 104-112, 129-133, 172-180
Sep. 16, 2011	Predators and the Ecosystem Concept	Donald Worster, "The Value of a Varmint," American Earth, pp. 274-283
Sep. 20, 2011	Urban Environments	Carolyn Merchant, "Urban Environments, 1850-1960," American Earth, pp. 120-125, 186-191, 245-250
Sep. 23, 2011	Indigenous Peoples and the Land	Carolyn Merchant, "Indian Land Policy, 1800-1990," Black Elk, except from Black Elk Speaks, American Earth, pp. 37-45, 570-581
Sep. 27, 2011	Dust Bowl, Great Depression, and New Deal	First Along the River, pp. 60-67, American Earth, pp. 239-244, 254-259, Hugh Hammond Bennett, "Soil," Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Civilian Conservation Corps"
Sep. 30, 2011	The "Land Ethic"	American Earth pp. 265-294
Oct. 4, 2011	Film: <i>John Muir in the New World</i>	
Oct. 7, 2011	EXAM ONE	
Oct. 14, 2011	Nuclear Critics	Barry Commoner, "Fundamental Causes of the Environmental Crisis," Paul Ehrlich, "Nuclear Winter"
Oct. 18, 2011	Silent Spring	Rachel Carson, excerpts from Silent Spring, First Along the River, chapter 6
Oct. 21, 2011	Spaceship Earth	American Earth, pp. 399-404, 464-468, 550-553
Oct. 25, 2011	Population Threat	American Earth, pp. 434-450, 469-472, Bill McKibben, "A Special Moment in History"
Oct. 28, 2011	Earth Day	American Earth pp. 480-492, Council on Environmental Quality, "The State of the Environment," Other Earth Day reading/activity TBA
Nov. 1, 2011	Endangered Species	E.O. Wilson, "Species Extinction," American Earth, pp. 760-769, 790-792, 874-897
Nov. 4, 2011	Sustainable Development	World Commission on Environment and Development, excerpt from Our Common Future

Date	Topic	Readings
Nov. 8, 2011	Sustainable Agriculture	American Earth, pp. 318-322, 507-516, 595-608, Michael Pollan, "The Animals" from <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i>
Nov. 11, 2011	Christianity and the Environment	American Earth, pp. 405-412, 919-928, Wendell Berry, "Religion and the Environment"
Nov. 15, 2011	Deep Ecology	Murray Bookchin, "Shortcomings of Environmentalism," Edward Abbey and Dave Foreman, "Monkeywrenching," George Sessions and Bill Devall, "Deep Ecology"
Nov. 18, 2011	Film: <i>Earth Days</i>	
Nov. 22, 2011	EXAM TWO	
Nov. 29, 2011	Toxins in Our Bodies	American Earth, pp. 609-621, 690-695, 929-938
Dec. 2, 2011	Environmental Justice	American Earth, pp. 725-736, Excerpt from <i>Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007</i>
Dec. 6, 2011	Energy, Consumption, and Climate Change	American Earth, pp. 559-569, 770-780, 855-859, Possible other reading on climate change TBA
Dec. 9, 2011	Wrap-up	ESSAYS DUE