

Spring 2010

ASC 400 – Section C

Values Seminar – Environmental Ethics

Lecture: MWF 11:00 am – 11:50 am

Room: LC 1

Dr. Loyd D. Bastin

Office: Kirkbride 469A

Office Hours: M 3-3:50pm; W 4-5pm;

Th 12-1pm; F 9-10am & 4-5pm

Phone: (610) 499 – 4022

E-mail: lbastin@widener.edu

*“UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s NOT.”
(Dr. Seuss’ The Lorax)*

“The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom” (Isaac Asimov)

Dr. John Serembus

Office: 2nd floor, 528 E. 14th Street

Office Hours: M, W, F 10-10:50am, 1-1:45pm

Th, 10-11:00

Phone: (610) 499-4356

E-mail: jhserembus@mail.widener.edu

Course Website http://www.science.widener.edu/~bastin/Widener/ASC_400.html

Required Texts There is no formal textbook for this course.

Prerequisite Completion of six credits in each of the three areas of the College of Arts and Sciences (Science, Humanities, and Social Sciences) and Junior or Senior Status.

Course Description This course is part of the Values Seminar program at Widener. The wider purpose of the program as a whole is to improve your skills in ethical reasoning and evidence-based judgment. This seminar is on the topic of environmental ethics, which is

“a systematic account of the moral relations between human beings and their natural environment. Environmental ethics assumes that moral norms can and do govern human behavior toward the natural world. A theory of environmental ethics, then, must go on to explain what these norms are, to whom or to what humans have responsibilities, and how those responsibilities are justified” (DesJardins. 2006. Environmental Ethics).

Environmental ethics provides framework to define our roles and responsibilities as global citizens. This framework guides our use of ecological and ethical knowledge in personal and societal decisions that determine how we interact with each other and with our environment. This affects our individual actions (consumer and disposer decisions) and our participation in those sociopolitical and economic hegemonies that mediate human-environmental interaction on regional and global scales. Such knowledge should inform our interactions and understanding of the world and our place in it, which would be the basis for environmental literacy and citizenship:



- Course Objectives**
- To improve your skills at ethical reasoning and evidence-based judgment in environmental decision-making by investigating important, current, and controversial environmental issues that affect us all.
 - To improve your analytic skills at critiquing and assessing the credibility and validity of ethical and scientific arguments in order to make better judgments, perceive deeper questions, and comprehend underlying concerns.
 - To improve your oral and written communication skills as a way of knowing.

Course Structure, Requirements, and Assessment

Since the goals of this course involve your being able to make reasonable and informed decisions about major environmental issues of our time, the principal method of teaching these skills will be “learning by doing” in class. Thus, our curriculum is a problem-based case-study approach using current events to catalyze learning.

Course Structure

We will be using several sources as our “textbook” in this course.

We will use The New York Times as curriculum. The NYT is written in accessible, non-technical language, and represents the mainstream corporate media. Free print copies of the NY Times can be picked up in the University Center, Kirkbride first floor lobby, the Library, and other locations across campus. In addition, you should create a free account and read online by logging on at (<http://www.nytimes.com>) and following the directions.

We will use the newspaper to stimulate discussion and generate ideas for paper topics. Reading articles in the paper every day that are relevant to this course and bringing the paper in its entirety to each class meeting are required, and we will be using frequent in-class assessments to help you to remember to do this homework.

There are also excerpts from several sources that will be used to stimulate discussion throughout the course.

If you want more background information about this course topic, there are a large number of outstanding internet resources on ethics and environmental ethics, and used books of these titles are cheaply and readily available online (www.half.com is especially good).

Class Attendance and Participation

Class will be run as a discussion seminar. Therefore, your attendance and participation are required. Participation in the discussions requires completion of the readings before the designated class meeting. A significant portion of your final grade is based on your class participation, which we view as a demonstration of your engagement in the course readings, thoughtful analysis of those readings, and your questions and responses during our discussions.

Since many activities occur at the beginning of class, you must arrive on time to each class. You should not assume that in-class assignments can be made up.

We will be enforcing the University-wide class attendance policy as described in the Student Handbook. Students who are absent without a valid excuse (as defined in the Handbook) four, five, or six times will receive a full letter grade reduction, and more than six unexcused absences will result in an F. According to the Handbook, if you know you will be absent (e.g. due to a prior commitment or lengthy illness) you should notify us in advance to schedule make-up work.

Grading

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|
| Research Paper | 50% | |
| In-Class writings | } | 50% |
| Group presentations | | |
| Research presentations | | |

The course will be graded on the +/- system using the above distribution.

Writings

All writing assignments will be submitted via CampusCruiser. There are 2 types of writing assignments in this course.

In-Class Writing Assignments

In-class writings are intended to follow-up on class discussions and/or stimulate debate and discussion.

Research Paper

All sections of the Values Seminar require a major research paper. This paper will count for 50% of your final grade. The generation of paper topics and the composition and drafting of these projects will make up a significant portion of our work this semester. All stages of the assignment are required, and all pieces count towards the final grade on the paper. These pieces include:

- Freewritings and informal responses as you work through topics,
- A four to five page proposal, including annotated bibliography,
- Progress reports both written and oral,
- Group work-shopping of drafts,
- A preliminary 8-page draft,
- 10-12 page final draft.

You will receive more information in the future.

Writing Center

The Writing Center – in Old Main Annex, x4332 – is an invaluable resource. They will not write your papers for you, nor will they simply edit your papers, but they will assist you in any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to revision.

Presentations

You will give two different presentations in this course.

Group Presentation

During the first week of class, we will put you into groups of four or five. Each Friday, one group will be responsible for presenting a set of NY Times articles (one per group member) to focus upon, and lead a brief ethical discussion/debate. Each presentation of each article will consist of a 5-slide PowerPoint presentation of:

1. (1) article title slide [and full citation], a cover image, with the presenter's name and group #,
2. (2) summary of the main points of the article including quotes as needed,
3. (3 & 4) two additional information slides from additional sources with important background to the issue, and
4. (5) bulleted list of discussion questions.

The rest of the class will participate, concluding with a brief response writing.

Research Presentation

You will give a 10 minute individual PowerPoint presentation that summarizes your research paper.

Academic Fraud

Widener University regards dishonesty on the part of students as unacceptable behavior. This includes but is not limited to plagiarism, handing in another's (either a student's or a professional's) work as your own, or cheating.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. It is the unattributed use of another's work. In essence you are stealing someone else's thoughts or words. Every word you write must be your own. If you use someone else's ideas you must give that author credit through correct documentation. We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it in class. Unintentional plagiarism is just as bad as intentional plagiarism.

If plagiarism does occur, however, the university has policies to deal with it: The minimum penalty for individuals who have committed academic fraud will be failure in the course. For a second offense, the penalty will be failure in the course and expulsion from the university.

Grievance Procedure

Please refer to the student handout, the College of Arts & Science's office, or your instructors if you have a problem with the instructor(s) or another student(s).

**Syllabus
Modification**

We reserve the right to change/modify the syllabus throughout the semester if needed. All changes will be announced in class and you are responsible for those changes whether you are present or absent during those class time.

Required Readings

Articles and book excerpts available in the course's Shared Files folder of CampusCruiser:

Allen, A. "The 'Green' Hypocrisy: America's Corporate Environment Champions Pollute the World," *24/7 Wall St.*
[http://247wallst.com/209/04/02/the-\"green\"-hypocrisy-america's-corporate-environment-champions-pollute-the-world/](http://247wallst.com/209/04/02/the-\)

Cole, L.W. and Foster, S.R. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. NYU Press: New York, 2001: pages 34-53.

Du Pont, P. "Plus Ça (Climate) Change: The Earth was warming before global warming was cool," *Wall Street Journal Opinion*.
www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/pdupont/?id=110009693

"Global Warming 'Irreversible' For 1,000 Years," *Environ. News Service*. 1/1/2009, International Daily Newswire, www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jan2009/2009-01-27-01.asp

"Polluting Philly Drinking Water Costs Merck \$20 million," *Environ. News Service*. 12/13/2007, International Daily Newswire, www.ens-newswire.com/ens/dec2007/2007-12-13-092.asp

"Trace Amount of Drugs in Water Alarms Philadelphia Residents," *Rachel's Blog*. 3/11/2008, Environmental Research Foundation, www.rachel.org/en/node/6766/print

Hansen, J. "Why We Can't Wait: A 5-step plan for solving the global crisis," *The Nation*, May 7, 2007, pages 13-14.

Hansen, J. "Climate Catastrophe," *New Scientist*, July 28, 2007, pages 31-34.

Hogue, Cheryl. "Irreversible Effects," *Chemical and Engineering News*, February 2, 2009, page 11.

McNeill, J.R. *An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World: Something New Under the Sun*. W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2000: pages 118-148.

"Drugs in US Drinking Water," *Medical News Today*. March 10, 2008,
www.medicalnewstoday.com/printerfriendlynews.php?newsid=100038

Rind, D. "Do Variations in the Solar Cycle Affect Our Climate System?" *NASA Goddard Institute of Space Studies Science Briefs*, January 2009,
www.giss.nasa.gov/research/briefs/rind_03

Ritter, S.K. "Calling All Chemists: Chemists and Chemical Engineers Will Be Providing the Thousands of Technologies Needed to Achieve a More Sustainable World." *Chemical and Engineering News*, August 18, 2008, pages 59-68.

Rosenzweig, C. "Warming Climate is Changing Life on Global Scale," *NASA Goddard Institute of Space Studies Science Briefs*, December 2008,
www.giss.nasa.gov/research/briefs/rosenzweig_02

Steiner, C. "Gray Is the New Green," *Forbes.com*, September 15, 2008.
www.forbes.com/forbes/2008/0915/054_print.html

United Nations Environmental Programme. *Environmental Pollution and Impacts on Public Health: Implications of the Dandora Municipal Dumping Site in Nairobi, Kenya*.

Class Schedule

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Readings</u> |
|-------------|--|---|
| Mon, 1/11 | Introduction to the Course Class Survey, The Lorax | |
| Wed, 1/13 | Introduction to Ethical Thinking | |
| Fri, 1/15 | Ethical Thinking | |
| Mon, 1/18 | <i>NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i> | |
| Wed, 1/20 | Video: “Laid to Waste” | |
| Fri, 1/22 | Video: “Laid to Waste” | |
| Mon, 1/25 | Environmental Racism | Cole & Foster (pp. 34-53) |
| Wed, 1/27 | Environmental Racism | |
| Fri, 1/29 | <i>Current Events 1 (Micah Thomas, Samuel Brouson, Drew Lagomarsino, Jessica Fratto)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 2/1 | DVD: “An Inconvenient Truth” | |
| Wed, 2/3 | DVD: “An Inconvenient Truth” | |
| Fri, 2/5 | <i>Current Events 2 (Tim Rudolph, Jared Barket, Joe Brach, Steve McSweeney)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 2/8 | Global Climate Change | WSJ DuPont Article Rosenzweig Article Rind Article |
| Wed, 2/10 | Global Climate Change | Hansen-New Scientist Article |
| Fri, 2/12 | <i>Current Events 3 (Dominic D’Angelo, Stuart Johnson, Riva Manocha, Amy Thomson)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 2/15 | Videos: CO ₂ Commercials Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂) | Casten-Forbes Article |
| Wed, 2/17 | Reversing Global Climate Change | Env. News Service-Solomon C&E News (pp. 11) Hansen-The Nation Article |
| Fri, 2/19 | <i>Current Events 4 (Michelle Martelli, Jen Brandon, Matt Sharkey)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 2/22 | Water Pollution | McNeill (pp. 118-148) |
| Wed, 2/24 | Water Pollution and Health | Dandora Report |
| Fri, 2/26 | <i>Current Events 5 (Jillian Kwarta, Kendall Concini)</i> Preliminary Course Project Proposals Due | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 3/1 | <i>NO CLASS – Spring Break</i> | <i>Enjoy!</i> |
| Wed, 3/3 | <i>NO CLASS – Spring Break</i> | <i>Enjoy!</i> |
| Fri, 3/5 | <i>NO CLASS – Spring Break</i> | <i>Enjoy!</i> |
| Mon, 3/8 | Water Pollution and Health | Env. News Service-Merck Medical News Today Rachel’s Blog |
| Wed, 3/10 | DVD: “King Corn” – part 1 | |
| Fri, 3/12 | <i>Current Events 6 (Andrew Parkin, Robert Przemysli, Caitlin McKenna, Ashley Donn)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 3/15 | DVD: “King Corn” – part 2 | |
| Wed, 3/17 | Our Food Supply | |
| Fri, 3/19 | <i>Current Events 7 (Brittany Guille, Liz Loney, Sam Spinelli, Kevin Rider)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 3/22 | Biofuels | |
| Wed, 3/24 | “Going Green” Course Project Proposals Due | |
| Fri, 3/26 | <i>Current Events 8 (Kenneth Raines, Alan Pagán, Michael Fung, Adam Szewczyk)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 3/29 | Green Washing | 24/7 Wall St Article |
| Wed, 3/31 | Course Project Work Day | |

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| Fri, 4/2 | <i>NO CLASS – Spring Holiday</i> | <i>Enjoy!</i> |
| Mon, 4/5 | Green Chemistry and Engineering | C&E News (pp. 59-68) |
| Wed, 4/7 | Course Paper First Draft Due | |
| Fri, 4/9 | <i>Current Events 9 (Travis Desilva, Tony Cellini, Amy Naylor, Rachel Beatrice)</i> | <i>NY Times</i> |
| Mon, 4/12 | TBA | |
| Wed, 4/14 | Course Project Work Day | |
| Fri, 4/16 | <i>NO CLASS – Project's Day</i> | <i>Attend Presentations!</i> |
| Mon, 4/19 | Research Presentations | N/A |
| Wed, 4/21 | Research Presentations | N/A |
| Fri, 4/23 | Research Presentations | N/A |
| Mon, 4/26 | Research Presentations | N/A |
| Wed, 4/28 | Final Course Discussion and Evaluation | |
| Mon, 5/3 | Final Draft of Research Paper Due | |