



Independent Learning

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 317r

READINGS IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Syllabus Preview

Instructor: Richard Mayer
Credits: 1- 6 Quarter Credits
Lessons: 1- 6 Assignments
Exams: No Exam
Format: Self-paced independent learning with instructor guidance

The following pages are an excerpt from the full course syllabus. Western Washington University reserves the right to cancel courses and change instructors, course requirements and textbooks at any time. Check with the Independent Learning office regarding course availability.

Independent Learning

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 317R

READINGS IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

THE COURSE:

Environmental Studies 317r is a variable credit, directed independent study course allowing interested students to earn from 1 to 6 academic credits through their own personal study of environmental topics. Students may choose to receive a letter grade (A-F) or a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) grade for this course. The purpose of the course is to foster independent thought and learning in the field of environmental studies placing most of the responsibility for learning on the student. While this may seem at first to be a daunting experience, it is actually very rewarding because learning on your own is what most of life is all about.

The purposes of this course include:

- To encourage students to set aside and commit time for the pursuit of new knowledge and understanding in the field of environmental studies,
- To help develop study skills that lend perspective to what is being learned,
- To critically examine data, information, and viewpoints used to support a writer's point of view or to "prove" a particular point. Students are encouraged to look for biases and assumptions on the part of investigators and authors, and
- To write one or more synopses of what has been studied - that is, carefully thought-out reviews of significant data and information presented by an author or authors, and critical analyses of a book chapter.

As you will see, this course is based on the book *State of the World*, an annual publication of WorldWatch Institute. You may choose to work with any recent edition of *State of the World*.

The book's several chapters deal with important, current issues reflecting views held by different authors. The course requires reading, studying, and writing papers - each paper focusing on one of the book's chapters **or** one of the principal topics covered in that chapter. Academic credit up to six credits is earned as follows: one credit for each chapter studied and each paper written.

THE TEXT:

State of the World – any recent edition – WorldWatch Institute, Washington, D.C. Published by W. W. Norton & Company, New York and London. www.worldwatch.org

Each edition of this book is an excellent collection of in-depth articles covering a wide variety of environmental topics. One of the reasons I like this book is that it reflects the views of many different outstanding writers, not simply those of a single author.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The key requirement of 317r is the development and writing of one or more, well-conceived, critical papers focusing on one or more chapters in *State of the World*. Each paper written, accepted, and graded earns one academic credit. As mentioned above, students choose whether to receive an S/U or letter grade. Your choice may depend on the need to fulfill certain academic requirements for earning a degree. **Be sure to decide how many credits you want at the time of enrollment, as this figure cannot be changed after registration.**

In developing and writing your papers for this course, I want to encourage you to feel free to express your own ideas, thoughts, and conclusions based on your studies. Your thoughts might not agree with views you have read and that's ok. You will be graded on how well you support your opinions, how reasonably you deal with data and information, and how carefully you write your paper in terms of proper use of the English language.

Before writing your paper, consult a minimum of three additional sources addressing the topic of your chosen chapter. These may be books/texts, journal articles, Internet articles, and similar items. List each in the bibliography you create for your paper.

WRITING AND SUBMITTING PAPERS FOR THIS COURSE:

You should plan to read/study one book chapter of your choice for each credit to be earned – from one to six credits. When you write your paper, you may choose to focus on the entire chapter or one topic within that chapter. I suggest that you develop a study schedule aimed at completing all course requirements so that I will receive your last paper at least ten days before you need to receive a final grade.

You should plan to write one paper for each academic credit. Each paper you submit must be at least three pages single-spaced or six pages double-spaced in length and must *in addition* include a bibliography (at least three bibliographic citations). Your paper(s) should be typed, word processed, or composed for submission by e-mail.

Each 317r paper should be composed of the following elements:

Part I - A brief but carefully written synopsis of one of the book's chapters **or** one of the principal topics discussed in that chapter. What are the key elements or concepts addressed?

Part II – In your own words, what is the environmental significance or importance of the subject you have decided to focus on? What are the most important ideas or theories set forth and what data or information strongly supports these ideas or theories?

Part III – Why is this topic of interest to you? What is it that led you to choose this topic? What are your own views on this topic? Do they differ from the author(s)?

Part IV – Given the time and perhaps the means to work on this issue (or problem), how would you go about making a difference?

Part V – Bibliography: at least three references. If you are uncertain about how to format items in your bibliography, there are several sources available for guidance. Common source books include the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers by Joseph Gibaldi, The Gregg Reference Manual by William A. Sabin, and the Chicago Manual of Style printed by the University of Chicago Press. Western's library contains pertinent information online at <http://www.library.wvu.edu/ref/Refhome/citn.htm>.

Please note that in-depth study and excellence in writing is stressed in this course. Papers reflecting superficial study or sloppy writing (including poor spelling, grammar, or writing style) will be returned to the student to be rewritten. You should submit your papers (typed, word-processed, or e-mail) directly to the Independent Learning program at Western Washington University.

GRADING:

I prefer assigning letter grades to your work: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, and F. You will most likely never see a grade below C because I will not accept a poorly written or poorly conceived paper. I will simply return it to you with comments on how to improve it. However, if you wish, I will agree to grade each paper S or U for satisfactory or unsatisfactory work. Again, you will most likely never see a U for the same reasons I have already given.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

The course instructor, J. Richard Mayer, received his B.S. in Chemistry degree from Union College in Schenectady, New York, an M.A. from Columbia University in New York City, and a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

“My main interests early in my career were organic chemistry applied to the development of new pharmaceutical drugs. I worked eight years as a research chemist for Sterling Drug

Company in Albany, New York. I then decided to engage in science administration by working with the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C. Ten years later, I left federal government work and became Director of the Environmental Resources Center at State University of New York and helped develop programs of research and education aimed at understanding and solving regional environmental problems in western New York State.

Here at Western Washington University, I have served as the Dean of Huxley College, the University's environmental college, and as a member of the faculty teaching courses in introductory environmental studies, disturbed environmental systems, water chemistry, and environmental chemistry. Now, as professor emeritus, I am becoming increasingly involved in the University's independent learning program working with interested students here at Western and at distant locations across the United States and Canada."