

IDS 101.606
Values, Culture, and the Environment
Course Policy and Syllabus
TuTh 8am SO 108

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“We’re all downstream.”

-Ecologist’s motto

“Whoever does not study rhetoric will become a victim of it.”

-Ancient Greek wall inscription

Texts:

- Aaron, Jane; *LB Brief*, 2nd ed.
- Bass, Rick; *The Book of Yaak*
- Berry, Wendell; *Another Turn of the Crank*
- Brower, Michael and Warren Leon; *The Consumer’s Guide to Effective Environmental Choices*
- Kunstler, Howard; *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-Made Landscape*
- *Literature and the Environment: A Reader on Nature and Culture*; Eds. Anderson, Slovic, and O’Grady

Materials:

Writing instruments, paper, a college dictionary, a typewriter or computer (available for use in the College Writing Center), access to the internet, and appropriate supplies

Course Description:

Values, Culture, and the Environment is a course that could be loosely defined as an environmental studies course. By exploring various environmental issues and perspectives on the “environment” (whether “wild”/rural or urban, local or global, Western or Non-Western), students will learn how different cultures, societies, and individuals perceive, value, and argue about environmental issues and concerns. To reach these goals, the course will demand active participation through strong analytical reading, thoughtful discussion of readings, an individual presentation one’s service-learning experience, exploratory and focused journals, and a few expository essays. In addition to thinking and writing about environmental issues, students will also explore environmental issues through a service-learning volunteer experience, which requires at least 10 volunteer hours outside of the classroom.

Another way to describe this course is to call it, as Donald L. Finkel posits in *Teaching With Your Mouth Shut*, an “inquiry-centered” course (51). The class is structured for each individual and the class as a whole to inquire, question, and reflect on important questions such as these: What is the “environment”? How should we relate to flora and fauna in the world? How should we live? How has my experience and culture influenced the way I perceive the environment? How and why do people value or not value aspects of our environment? How do values frame certain debates about environmental issues? What are ways by which we can build a more sustainable America and planet? How do specific consumer decisions affect the environment? Are humans truly, as E.O. Wilson argues, “biophilic,” possessing an innate love of biodiversity and nature?

Those are just a sampling of some of the questions the course explores.

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Compare and contrast historical and cultural ethical perspectives and belief systems
- Utilize cultural, behavioral and historical knowledge to recognize, clarify and continue to develop a personal value system
- Recognize the ramifications of one's value decisions on self and others
- Recognize conflicts within and between value systems
- Analyze ethical issues as they arise in a variety of contexts
- Consider multiple perspectives, recognize biases, deal with ambiguity
- Reflect on how society influences individual beliefs, attitudes, choices and actions
- Grow as independent thinkers and writers
- Show the ability to read and write critically

Success in this course includes (1) finding your own creative ways to make topics and assignments personally interesting--especially if your first instinct is to label them “boring” or “too hard,” (2) believing that you have something worthwhile to say, and (3) expressing it after you’ve debated/ pondered/ listened/ read/ explored beyond the surface.

Course Requirements:

Class consists of discussions of assigned works, in-class writing activities, short writing assignments (journals), informal and formal presentations, expository essays, and you can count on at least one pop quiz each week. There will be approximately twelve journals and three larger writing assignments. I also have a Participation grade. Active and constructive class participation can make a tremendous positive impact on your overall grade.

Class Conduct:

“The road to mediocrity is paved by excuses and whining.”
--Anonymous

I expect students to act in a “mature and collegial” manner. You should come to class having read the material, eager to participate, and ready to write (Also see “Student Responsibilities”). Here are some examples that are not mature or collegial behavior:

- A student talks while another student or the instructor “has the floor” in discussion
- A student exhibits general rudeness and disrespect to others
- A pair of students have a conversation about their weekend plans while they’re supposed to be working in groups
- A student gets up in the middle of class to get a drink of water, to throw away something, or to go to the bathroom
- A pair of students pull the junior high school move of writing notes to one another
- A student interrupts another person because he doesn’t agree with what he’s saying
- During the middle of class, a student’s cellular phone rings
- While students are supposed to be writing in class, a student doesn’t write anything
- A student doesn’t actively try to help his classmate during peer review

Papers and Journals:

I do not accept late assignments. You cannot make up quizzes or in-class work.

Unless otherwise indicated, all class work (drafts, journals, and other assignments) will be typed. If an assignment isn’t typed, I will not accept it. When the larger papers are turned in, they will be submitted in a two-pocket folder that holds all pre-writing, outlines, drafts, peer review comments, etc. Essays will use

Times New Roman--12 font, have double-spacing, and have one-inch margins. Modern Language Association (MLA) format will be used on citations and works cited pages.

Each essay or journal needs to have a clear purpose with ample detail to support this purpose. It should have a beginning that generates interest, an ending that provides a sense of closure, and the parts in between should be arranged in a logical and rhetorically effective sequence. Essays should demonstrate stylistic maturity and mastery of editorial conventions (grammatical correctness).

Unless otherwise indicated, journals should be a full page or more. Journals should demonstrate an accurate reading, display an appropriate response, or present a valid rhetorical purpose. Journals should also demonstrate stylistic maturity and mastery of editorial conventions (grammatical correctness).

Revision of Essays:

Students can revise the first two essays. Time allotted for revision is approximately one week from the day they are ready to be passed back in class. Revisions are due a week from that day and will be submitted in-class unless otherwise noted. Revisions will not be graded unless the original graded essay is submitted in the folder. If you choose to revise, it should help your overall grade. However, I expect **Deep Revision**, not just surface editing.

Assessment:

St. Louis Community College is committed to improving student learning. To this end, we use a variety of strategies to assess classes, courses, and programs. Assessment strategies measure the learning process; they do not affect student grades. When you participate in the assessment process, you will be helping us better help you, our students, and our community. We appreciate your cooperation and involvement in this effort.

Breakdown of the Overall Grade

(actual point totals of participation, va, and journals are tentative)

Participation	70 points
Discussion, in-class writing, small group work	
The Writing Process	30
10 points available for each Peer Review session	
Service-Learning experience presentation (Final)	50
Various assignments	130
Quizzes and other assignments	
Journals (12 @ 10 pts. each)	120
6 Directed Reading journals	
6 Service-Learning journals	
Formal Essays	300
Response essay	100
Informative (Context of a Debate) essay	100
Environmental Ethic essay	100
	<hr/>
	700 points possible

Grading Scale for Formal Essays:

100-99% = A+	89-88 = B+	79-78 = C+	69-68 = D+
98-92 = A	87-82 = B	77-72 = C	67-62 = D
91-90 = A-	81-80 = B-	71-70 = C-	61-60 = D-

Difficulties in Focusing on Environmental Issues:

- Instructor/Student prejudices about how the world should be.
- Not enough readings endorsing pro-development, pro-industry, and pro-business positions.
- Preferences for ready-made, media-simplified, or overwhelmingly large issues: global warming, deforestation, recycling on a large scale, pollution, “Save the _____!”
- The tendency for polarization on every issue: jobs vs. the environment, reality vs. idealism, now vs. future, status quo vs. radical change. There are rarely just two sides to an issue.

Guidelines in Focusing on Environmental Issues:

- Recognize that environmental considerations are important aspects of a decision.
- Avoid ready-made issues provided by the media—“environmental health vs. economic health,” among many others
- Concentrate on the assumptions, attitudes, and reasoning that have led to positions held.
- Be aware of global issues, but keep in mind that local problems are the ones that affect you the most directly.

Some Assumptions about Environmental Issues:

- Environmental issues are health issues. (Allergies, headaches, respiratory failure, cancer, et al, often come from environmental degradation)
- Environmental issues are resource issues. (The earth at any time has a limited, set amount of land, air, water, trees, minerals, and oil. Who gets them, how much, and when?)
- Environmental issues are social issues.
- Environmental issues affect everyone who breathes air, uses water, or eats. We always depend on our environment.
- Technology is neither good nor bad. How we use technology can be good or bad.
- There are no “right” or “wrong” answers in this course. Our interest is in defining the questions, searching for answers, and investigating as many answers as possible.
- Environmental problems are interrelated and interdisciplinary.
- There are no easy solutions.
- Awareness is a necessary first step to action and creating positive change. (Writing and discussion heightens awareness)

Reading Strategies:

1. Read when your concentration is at a peak level, not when tired or distracted. Stay focused.
2. Read for pleasure. Try to appreciate the way writers present their works, but also try to figure out how the reading goes beyond the obvious.
3. Read actively and reread for understanding. Stop occasionally and make sure you understand what the author is expressing. Stop and think what the writer's message means. Ask questions such as these. How does the writer make her/his points? What type of language and style does the author use? Are there any contradictions or paradoxes? What choices does the writer make and why? Are the writer's arguments persuasive and well supported?
4. Take notes and underline important passages. Underline memorable passages that you find interesting or troubling. Write marginal comments that provide a written record of your thoughts and impressions. Write down your thoughts about the reading that you might otherwise lose.

Class Discussion Strategies:

1. Bring your textbook and notes to class. Duh!
2. Present your "take" on the reading and respect other viewpoints. All readers bring their own experiences to a text, along with their own strengths, weaknesses, insights, and blind spots. Be confident in sharing your viewpoint and be respectful of other perspectives.
3. Listen to others. Try to understand different points of view. Listen, comprehend, and respond thoughtfully, even if you may disagree with someone.
4. Be ready to explain yourself. Provide information and support to explain your reaction to a reading.
5. Let others speak. Class can become boring when the instructor or certain students dominate discussion. Class discussion works best when everyone gets involved and no one dominates.

Strategies for Successful Essays:

1. Write about topics that are interesting to you. Successful essays typically capture the excitement, passion, and intellectual commitment of a writer. Good writing has energy, clarity, and liveliness of mind because authors care about what they are writing about.
2. Time and effort. Time is necessary to think, read, reflect, get started, draft, revise, edit, and proofread. Hard work and effort is also necessary to create an essay that persuades and enlightens an audience.
3. Have a main point. Most good essays have a central conclusion or major insight that conveys a new or enjoyable perspective to an audience. At times, writers don't know their main point/s until they have actually written an essay, and then they have to go back and revamp the structure of the essay. Writers sometimes arrive at their main point through the composing process.
4. Specificity and Complexity. Essays should have something specific to express, but they should also exhibit a complexity of thought that shows an audience that these specific points have been thoughtfully developed.
5. Examples and Illustrations. Strong essays incorporate illustrations and examples to show a reader how certain assertions or generalizations are supported.
6. Coherence. Essays exhibit a structure and organization that makes sense and seems well planned without being cumbersome.
7. Style. People enjoy reading an essay that expresses a personal commitment and investment from a writer. Style consists of a writer's individual perspective, word choice, sentence construction, phrasing, paragraphs, organization, and so on. Word and sentence variety helps tremendously. Avoid "thesaurus abuse," which is when a writer uses ten dollar words for familiar words that do the same job without sounding overly pretentious. Generally, use active and descriptive verbs, and don't overuse on various forms of the verb "to be."

*Strategies are taken/adapted from *Literature and the Environment's* Appendix (pp. 504-518)

Syllabus

(all dates and readings are tentative)

* indicates a handout

Week 1	Introduction to the course Reading selections from <i>Literature and the Environment</i> Service-Learning experience logistics (Th)
Week 2	Reading selections from <i>Literature and the Environment</i> Directed Reading Journal due
Week 3	Reading selections from <i>Literature and the Environment</i> Directed Reading Journal due
Week 4	Reading selections from <i>Literature and the Environment</i> Service-Learning Journal 1: Agency Description due
Week 5	<i>The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape</i> Introduce Writing Assignment 1: Response essay Directed Reading Journal due
Week 6	<i>The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape</i> Service-Learning Journal 2: Analysis of Text from the Agency—Values and Assumptions due
Week 7	Reading selections from <i>Literature and the Environment</i> Peer Review of Response essay
Week 8	Essay 1 due Introduce Writing Assignment 2: Analysis (Context of a Debate) essay <i>Another Turn of the Crank</i>
Week 9	<i>Another Turn of the Crank</i> <i>The Book of Yaak</i> Service-Learning Journal 3: Interview-based due Directed Reading Journal due
Week 10	<i>The Book of Yaak</i> Directed Reading Journal due
Week 11	Service-Learning Journal 4: Analysis of a Problem due Peer Review of Analysis essay
Week 12	Essay 2 due Introduce Writing Assignment 3: Environmental Ethic essay <i>The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices</i>
Week 13	<i>The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices</i> Service-Learning Journal 5: Reflective—Connection to Text due

- Week 14 *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices*
Peer Review of Environmental Ethic essay
- Week 15 *Leopold's "The Land Ethic," *E.O. Wilson's "The Environmental Ethic"
 Reading selections from *Literature and the Environment*
 Service-Learning Journal 6: Reflective due
- Week 16 **Essay 3 due**
 Evaluation memorandum due
 Service-Learning Experience presentations
- Final exam time: Service-Learning Experience presentations

The Environmental Ethic Essay

Peer Review:

Due:

minimum page requirement: 4 pages, Times New Roman--12

Your task:

In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold establishes his vision of a "land ethic." Following the lead of Leopold, articulate your own personal "environmental ethic" and support it by providing personal examples and anecdotes, along with integrating others' ideas (texts we've read, important persons in your life, people you've learned from through your service-learning volunteer experience). If you use someone else's work, just make sure to properly integrate the information and provide a Works Cited. Your environmental ethic should present how you choose to live in the world (generally) and how you expect to cope with a threatened environment in the future. You can also talk about how you think things *should* change and/or stay the same.

Your audience:

Address your paper to peer-scholars who might be interested in your subject and could be interested in your analysis and/or findings. But also imagine your audience as somewhat informed but undecided people who might take an opposing viewpoint from your own.

Evaluation:

Your essay needs to have a clear purpose with ample detail to support this purpose, and it needs to have an assertive thesis at least by the end of the third paragraph. The essay should have a beginning that generates interest, an ending that provides a sense of closure, and the parts in between should be arranged in a logical and rhetorically effective sequence. The essay should demonstrate stylistic maturity and mastery of editorial conventions (grammatical correctness).

Also note Grading Criteria and Strategies for Successful Essays of the course policy.

Service-Learning Journals

All journals should be at least a full page, and they need to use Times New Roman--12 font, have double-spacing and one-inch margins. Journals should display an appropriate response and present a valid rhetorical purpose. Each journal needs to have a clear purpose with ample detail to support this purpose. They also have to demonstrate stylistic maturity and mastery of editorial conventions (grammatical correctness).

Journal 1 Agency Description

In this journal describe the nature of your service-learning partner with specific, concrete, and vivid detail. Here are questions that should help you generate description: What is the agency's stated purpose? What type of "environmental issues" do they work with? After your initial contact and early work with the agency, what is your overall impression of agency and their values and how do they perceive the environment? How exactly do you agree with their purpose?

Journal 2 Analysis of Text from the Agency—Values and Assumptions

In this journal you need to seek out texts (pamphlets, the organization's website, fliers, et al.) to analyze. Using a text or texts, discuss how the agency's written communication provides a certain *ethos* (the organization's character or ethical "angle of vision"). Within the text/s, what are important values and assumptions about the environment and the way the world should be? Do you agree with these values and assumptions—why /why not?

Journal 3 Interview-based

In this journal you need to set up a short interview with an important member of your S-L organization. Ask him or her important questions to see his or her values, beliefs, and assumptions about "environmental issues" and the organization's role in creating a better world. Questions (but not limited to these) such as these may help focus your interview: What environmental problems do you see as the most troubling and why? What got you interested in the "environment"? What depresses you about environmental issues? What gives you hope? What needs to be done? You can interview a long time volunteer at the agency or a Coordinator/Director. If a number of you are interviewing the same person, make it a group interview.

Journal 4 Analysis of a Problem

Non-profit agencies typically focus on specific problems. In this journal detail the important problems that your agency is addressing and trying to change. How do the agency's values correspond with that organization's civic engagement with these problems? Do you see these as serious issues—why/why not? Does the agency's role, arguments, and motivation relate to or reinforce any of our readings? If so, how exactly?

Journal 5 Reflective—Connection to Text

Drawing from your S-L experience and our extensive reading in the course, what about your experience with the agency connects and/or complicates your reading

of a certain article, book, or essay we read for the course? How exactly does it connect and/or complicate the text's message? Be specific and provide strong details.

Journal 6

Reflective

This journal's purpose is for you to reflect on your experiences with the agency at which you volunteered and express what you learned, what made you "see things differently," what confused you, what frustrated you, and how this experience informs your understanding of the ideas within the course, "Values, Culture, and the Environment." After doing this volunteer experience, now what? What will you do in the future as a result of this experience?

Texts synonyms, Texts pronunciation, Texts translation, English dictionary definition of Texts. n. 1. a. The original words of something written or printed, as opposed to a paraphrase, translation, revision, or condensation. b. The words of a speech... text - the words of something written; "there were more than a thousand words of text"; "they handed out the printed text of the mayor's speech"; "he wants to reconstruct the original text". textual matter. Pronunciation as /tɛks/ comes about due to difficulty pronouncing the cluster /ksts/. Some people have enough difficulty with this word that it comes out as /tɛksəs/, homophonous with Texas. texts. plural of text. texts. Third-person singular simple present indicative form of text. textos. (Balearic, Central, Valencian) IPA(key): /tɛˈtɛsts/.