

ENVS 300 INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES Fall 2009
ASSISTANT PROF. GLENN FIELDMAN, INSTRUCTOR
OFFICE: HSS 330; (415) 405-2431; glenn@sfsu.edu
HOURS: MW 11:30-12; M 2-3; T 10-12
T.A. Ghesline Barnes, ghesline@yahoo.com

SYLLABUS

As the introductory course in S.F. State's interdisciplinary environmental studies program, this course has several objectives:

- 1) To explain and emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of environmental problems and solutions and the corresponding interdisciplinary nature of the ENVS program. This will be illustrated through both lectures and readings.
- 2) To explain the environmental impacts of the U.S. political/economic system as a system.
- 3) To acquaint students with the history, dynamics, and problems of, as well as opportunities for, environmentalism as a movement, especially in the United States but also globally.
- 4) To encourage students to become effective actors on behalf of the environment, and to understand the necessary, intimate connections between environmental defense and social justice in the 21st century, both in the U.S. and globally.

A final grade of C in this class is necessary to continue with the ENVS major.

SFSU budget cuts and faculty furloughs:

The state legislature and governor have balanced California's state budget by cutting about \$26 *billion* from state spending. All CSU campuses have been severely affected, with the CSU budget reduced by over half a billion dollars. All faculty and staff are required to take furlough days (days when we do not work); we are not paid for those furlough days. Our salaries have been reduced by about 10%. The SFSU administration has designated four of those furlough days during the fall semester; one of those days (Monday, October 26) will affect this class; the campus will be closed. In addition, ENVS faculty are taking furlough days during the week of October 12. We will not hold class meetings that week, for a total of three class meetings that will not be held. Additional faculty furlough days (a total of 9 for each faculty member over the semester) will be taken on days when this class does not meet, although be aware that at least one of my remaining furlough days will affect Tuesday office hours. You'll be notified by e-mail about this. The remaining furlough days will not affect you directly, although (if they are on a Friday or some other day when I'm not in class) I will not be grading papers that day, so your assignments may not be returned as promptly as you would like. Faculty have been asked to sign an agreement that we will not work on furlough days.

What the furloughs mean for you: While there will be fewer class sessions than usual this semester, this does not mean that the amount of material you need to learn is any less than it would otherwise be. It is up to your professors to find ways to ensure that your courses and eventually, your degrees are as meaningful as they always have been. So you will need to take more responsibility for learning outside the classroom. I have assigned out-of-class film viewing to compensate for some of the missing class time; you may also receive some additional reading assignments. You are expected to use the time you do not spend in class doing your reading and watching the assigned films.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM STUDENTS:

- 1) **Regular class attendance and participation.** You will not be graded on your attendance per se, but you will have a difficult time passing the class if you do not come. In the event you are on the borderline between an A- and a B+, for example, at the end of the semester, good attendance will help you. Please do not e-mail me asking "What did we cover in class last time?" or "Did we cover anything important in class?" If you absolutely must miss a class, it's your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. Any changes in exam schedule or assignment will be e-mailed to all students.
- 2) **Timely completion of the assigned readings/film viewing;** in addition to the textbooks, students are asked to follow current environmental events through regular newspaper reading and by seeking out environmental news on the internet. **Because classroom time has been reduced by the furloughs, we**

may not discuss all of the assigned material in class—but you *will* be tested or otherwise evaluated on it.

3) **Two exams** (each will include some essay questions), one at midterm, one final. Study questions will be provided prior to each exam. Exams will be 50% of final grade.

4) **Two papers, 3 single-spaced pages minimum *each*. Due dates below; each is 25% of grade.** More detailed description below.

PAPER ONE: Invasive plant species are an enormous threat to Bay Area biodiversity, and they will be the subject of this paper. You will need to visit an area threatened by invasive plant species—San Bruno Mountain, or Pacifica—with a guide, so that you can observe this problem yourself in a local context. T.A. Ghesline Barnes will help you to organize your visit. Doug Johnson, who will lead tours of San Bruno Mountain, has worked as an intern at San Bruno Mountain Watch and is familiar with the area and with the problem. Your paper should include the date and site of your visit, and a description of what you saw and learned. Your paper should also discuss the following issues: What are the ecological consequences of the plant invasions you looked at? (Invasive ivy kills trees, for example, which in turn causes other ecosystem consequences.) How are invasive species affecting biodiversity in general? How do invasive species arrive in the U.S.? (If you can find out how the particular invaders you looked at got to California, that's great—but I'm also looking for a broader discussion of the problem.) Finally, what connections can you draw between the problem of invasive species and a feature or features of our political/economic system—e.g., global trade and transport, global shopping, the notions of private property and private choices that are so central in the U.S.? In other words, see what you can do to locate this particular environmental problem in the larger political/economic system in which we live. *At least three appropriate sources are required. See Ghesline for help with sources and how to cite them.*

PAPER TWO (based on the Speth and Shabecoff books and at least 3 additional sources). Speth is quite critical of “mainstream” environmentalism, which includes groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense, Defenders of Wildlife, Audobon Society, and others, for several reasons that are described in his book. He also claims that the environment cannot be saved simply by narrowly-defined “environmentalism,” but only by a broader social movement that defends human rights and economic equity, among other things (this is a theme of the whole book, but you should look at Ch. 11 in particular). For this paper, you should look (be thorough!) at the websites of **two** “mainstream” environmental organizations (Natural Resources Defense Council, Audobon Society, Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, World Wildlife Fund) and any additional sources that will help you find out about what they are doing (the Shabecoff text also discusses mainstream environmentalism and should be used as a source here). Is Speth fair in his criticisms? Why or why not? Are there indications that the organizations you look at are seeking to redefine their missions and build a movement in the ways Speth recommends? Is Speth's argument about what a movement should be realistic, in your view? Using more sources than the minimum required is likely to result in a better paper.

If you need general help with your writing, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (drop in at HSS 348, call (415) 338-1993, or e-mail lac@sfsu.edu.)

Plagiarism—the use of material drawn from articles, books or any other source without citing and/or using quotation marks when appropriate—is a serious offense and may result in ZERO credit for the assignment, depending on how much of the assignment is plagiarized. **DON'T DO IT! (It's easier to detect than you may think.)** We will discuss citations briefly in class, but if you are still not sure how or when to do it, see me during office hours.

If you have a disability and need accommodation, please contact me. The Disability Programs and Resource Center is available to facilitate reasonable accommodations. The DPRC, located in SSB 110, can be reached by telephone at 338-2724 (voice/TTY) or by e-mail at dprc@sfsu.edu.

Notes on e-mail. You should have an ACTIVE SFSU e-mail account that will enable you to receive e-mail messages from me. Please do not ask me to e-mail you at a non-SFSU e-mail address. If you prefer to use another e-mail address, arrange to forward messages automatically from your SFSU account to your

preferred account. When you contact me by e-mail, please identify yourself with your full name and refer to this class (I teach several classes so it's helpful to know which one you're referring to), and allow 36 hours for a response, although I usually respond more quickly except on weekends.

REQUIRED READING

Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire*

John Bellamy Foster, *The Vulnerable Planet*

James Gustav Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*

Required internet readings shown with topics below

Newspaper (the San Francisco Chronicle is fine) at least 3x per week

RECOMMENDED: "Living on Earth" radio show, KQED (88.5 FM) Saturdays, 4 p.m.

APPROXIMATE SCHEDULE:

- 8/26-9/2** Introduction to course; the state of the world. Speth, Intro, Ch. 1. Films on environmental problems/biodiversity loss: Access "Films on Demand" via the SFSU library website for online viewing.
1) "Sixth Extinction: The Human Role," #33721
2) "Aliens from Planet Earth," #30068
3) "Can We Save Planet Earth," #39357
- 9/7** **Labor day; no class**
9/8 **All-campus furlough day. (No Tuesday office hours this week)**
9/11 **Last day to drop.**
- 9/9-14** Why ENVIS is interdisciplinary. Science and social structure. Speth Ch. 2, 3. Spray & McGlothlin (all).
- 9/16-9/21** Indigenous Americans and Europeans: ways of life, ways of thought. Read Bellamy Foster, 1, Shabecoff, 1, and "Introduction to Indigenous Traditions," by John Grim, Yale University. Website: Forum on Religion and Ecology (locate with a Google search)
- 9/22** **Last day to add with a permit.**
- 9/23-30** European conquest of the Western hemisphere; Enlightenment thinking and nature. Read Shabecoff, 2, and Foster, 2.
- 10/5-7** Capitalism as a social structure: Economy, politics, culture. Speth, 4-7.
- 10/12-14** **Furloughs. No classes; no office hours. Campus activities re: budget. You should use this week to catch up on reading/films, and visit San Bruno Mountain if you have not already done so. Begin working on your first paper. And please watch the films "Redefining Success" from Films on Demand, and "The Story of Stuff," online at <http://www.storyofstuff.com/downloads.html>. (The full film is downloadable underneath the "teasers" on this page.) Be prepared to discuss consumer culture when classroom sessions resume.**
- 10/19-21** Capitalism as social structure, continued. Read Shabecoff, 3-4, Foster, 3-5. Review "Economics" section in McGlothlin.
- 10/26** **Campus closed (furloughs) due to state budget. Work on paper; review for exam.**
10/28 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- 11/4** **PAPER NUMBER ONE DUE**

- 11/2-4** 19th century American capitalism and its environmental consequences. The limits to consumer sovereignty. Shabecoff, 5-8; finish Bellamy-Foster. Watch film “Ghana, digital dumping ground,” available online at <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/ghana804/>
- 11/9** Responses to environmental degradation: Preservation, conservationism, the public health movement, the Progressive Era. Finish Shabecoff.
- 11/11** **Veterans’ Day holiday. Campus closed.**
- 11/16-18** Responses to environmental degradation, continued.
- 11/23-27** **Thanksgiving break. Campus closed.**
- 12/9** **PAPER NUMBER TWO DUE WEDNESDAY, DEC. 9.
LATE PAPERS WILL BE PENALIZED; NONE WILL BE ACCEPTED
LATER THAN MONDAY, DEC. 14.**
- 11/30-12/14** Towards a new environmentalism.
- 12/21, MON.** **FINAL EXAM, 8:30-10:30 A.M.**