

**College of Charleston**  
**Fall, 2013**

**ENVT 200: INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**  
**T/TR 12:15-1:30pm RSS 250**

**Instructor:** Dr. Todd LeVasseur

**Office:** RSS 116 (bottom of the old library, inside room 115)

**Office Hours:** T/TR 1:45pm-4:30pm

**Email:** [levasseur@cofc.edu](mailto:levasseur@cofc.edu) (I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, but expect longer on weekends)

**Phone:** 953-3095 (email works better, as I rarely am in the office)

\*\*\*Any student may email me for a copy of my teaching philosophy.\*\*\*

**Instructor:** Walter Blair:

**Office Hours:** Riley Center, 1<sup>st</sup> floor - Tues/Thurs 2-3pm

**Email:** [wdblair@cofc.edu](mailto:wdblair@cofc.edu)

**Credits:** 3 Semester Hours (fulfills core requirement for the Environmental Studies Minor)

**Prerequisite:** You must have attained at least sophomore standing for enrollment.

**Course Description and Instructional Format:** This course serves as an introduction to interdisciplinary environmental studies. The course will utilize approaches from the natural and applied sciences, humanities, and social sciences to investigate human-nature interactions, where the guiding context is recognition of the current ecocrisis and a desire for sustainability.

**Course Goals and Objectives:** Specific goals of the course are as follows:

1. To introduce the student to the emerging field of Environmental Studies, providing exposure to some of its methodologies, domains of investigation, and some of its key scholars
2. To develop critical thinking skills about human/nature-environment interactions
3. To understand how cultural values and ethics, politics, economics, media, and technology both mediate and influence how humans interact with their environments

**Specific objectives of the course are as follows:**

1. To gain a working understanding of biophysical climate change, and the ethical and political responses to it
2. To gain a working understanding of food and water issues, in their physical, ethical, and political manifestations
3. To gain a working understanding of basic ecological concepts such as carrying capacity, food chains, and various biogeochemical cycles
4. To systematically explore possible solutions to current and future environmental problems, and barriers to these successes
5. To develop interdisciplinary acumen in regards to understanding human-nature interactions
6. To develop comfort in working with small groups and in participating in class discussions by requiring active engagement in both forms of discussion during every class meeting

**Required Materials:**

1) All course materials will be made available on OAKS, with websites provided in the syllabus or emailed to the class

**Requirements, Expectations, and Resources:**

1) *Attendance:* Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each lecture. If you are repeatedly more than 5 minutes late to class, you will begin to be counted as absent for that day, as tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. Keep in mind that the instructor will not provide notes or discussion of class material that have already been covered; it is your responsibility to be present and to be to class on time. After 2 unexcused absences of any kind, your grade drops by 1/3 letter (i.e. A to A-, C- to D+, etc.) for each successive absence. After your 4th unexcused absence, you will receive a WA and be dropped from the course. An excused absence means that we receive an email from CofC saying your excuse was “documented,” if we receive an email (or no notice at all) saying your absence was “undocumented,” then it is unexcused. It is up to you to contact the Office of Student Affairs in order to find out what counts as a documented excuse. Please observe the totality of this attendance policy.

\*\*Lecture notes will not be shared and/or repeated after the day they are presented, so it is your responsibility to contact other students to receive copies of notes for classes you have missed. However, students are more than welcome to come to the office to view a copy of .ppt lectures if they were present the day of the lecture and were not able to fully capture all of the material during a lecture, or if there are questions about content covered that day in class.

\*\*A valid, documented excuse *must be received* in order for a test to be made up; missed quizzes and reading summaries are not able to be made up or turned in late—you must be present, or must clear *in advance* with the instructors that you will email your answers *before class begins* if you are unable to be in class. Reading quizzes turned in/emailed after class has begun will count as a “0.”

2) *Common Courtesy:* As stated by the Code of Conduct in the CofC Student Handbook, cell phones, personal computers, and other electronic devices must be turned off during the whole class period. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (i.e. whispering, reading a newspaper, surfing the web, texting messages, etc.) to leave the class. Be aware that if the professor observes that a student is often, and more so, continuously texting or using their computer for activities not directly related to the course, then the student’s class participation component of the overall grade will automatically lose points. The more often this behavior occurs, then the more points will be deducted. Please stay focused and on task if you have your computer open!

3) *Honor Code:* On all work submitted for credit by students at CofC, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The legal code of the College specifically prohibits plagiarism, cheating, bribing, conspiracy, misrepresentation, and fabrication. If it is proven that any student has committed any of the above infractions of the honor code, then that student will automatically fail the course with an XF. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration (working together

without permission) is a form of cheating. For more information about plagiarism, please visit the sites below:

<http://tutorials.library.cofc.edu/research/plagiarism/index.html>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#plagiarized>

<http://plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/types-of-plagiarism>

<http://www.csub.edu/ssricrem/howto/plagiarism.htm>

4) *Accommodation for Disabilities*: To request classroom accommodation, you must first register with the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. This office will provide you with documentation that you will then provide to us when you request accommodation. For more information, please see <http://www.cof.cedu/~cds/index.htm>

5) Counseling Resources, a writing lab, and a career resource center are all available to CofC students and are staffed with trained professionals. I urge you to pay special attention to the Center for Student Learning, and I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843)953-5635.

6) *Assignments*: Your grade will be determined based on the performance you exhibit for the following:

1. Class participation—this includes attendance, the ability to contribute to class discussions, and active participation in in-class team-based activities, and not surfing the web/working on other school work if your computer is open. Also included in this grade is a group application for an on-campus Green Fee project. **15% of grade**

2. Reading quizzes—4 reading quizzes will be posted in advance on OAKS; students should complete these and upload them to the appropriate Dropbox before the start of class for which they are due. Students are to work on their own work, without collaboration with other students, on these quizzes; if evidence suggests students collaborated on these quizzes, then all students in question will automatically receive a “0” for the quiz. **10 quizzes at 1.2% each; total 12% of grade.**

3. Movie summaries—3 movies, listed in the syllabus, are to be viewed, with a 350 word summary written, that captures the entirety of the plot/movie, and relates the entirety of the movie to course goals, objectives, and content. The summary should specifically include key points, a summary of the argument, connections to readings and discussions from class, and a reflection. **3 movies at 4% each; total 12% of grade.**

4. Term exams—there will be a mid-term and a quasi-comprehensive final exam. Study guides will be provided prior to the exams. Exams will be a mix of multiple choice, lists, matching, short answer, and essay questions. **20% each for 40% of grade.**

5. Research paper—each student is required to write a 1,600 to 1,750 word research paper on a current environmental issue of their choosing. Specifics of this paper will be discussed in class and the due date is in the syllabus. Late papers turned in during any part of

each successive 24-hour period will result in a 10 point deduction for each 24-hour period.

**Topic, outline, and list of sources 3%; paper itself 15%; total 18% of grade**

6. Site Visit: TBA (Charleston Recycling Center or campus tour). **3% of grade, based on attendance, completion of surveys, and post-trip discussion.**

7. Extra Credit—students will be able to attend guest lectures or a film series and write a one-page summary of the event. Events will discussed in class as they become available. **Each event is worth .5 points, for a possible 2.5 points added to the final grade. Any student with perfect attendance will receive an additional .5 points on their final grade.**

### Grading Scale

|        |    |       |    |
|--------|----|-------|----|
| 93-100 | A  | 73-76 | C  |
| 90-92  | A- | 70-72 | C- |
| 87-89  | B+ | 67-69 | D+ |
| 83-86  | B  | 63-66 | D  |
| 80-82  | B- | 60-62 | D- |
| 77-79  | C+ | 0-59  | F  |

### Course Schedule (subject to change):

As you read, it will help your studying and your ability to master the course goals and objectives if you pay attention to and take notes on the following:

(a) What is the key argument? (i.e. Be able to summarize the key argument/s in two to three sentences using your own words.)

(b) What evidence is presented by the author/s to make this argument?

(c) Why does this argument matter to the author/s?

(d) How is the argument and evidence related to other readings? What body of knowledge is being developed, or what argument is being developed by readings?

\*\*\*It is **the student's responsibility** to approach the professors if a reading is not clear or if there are unanswered questions about the reading. The same is true for content covered in class. As much of what we read and discuss will be new material, there will most likely be difficulties; if this is your experience, then please see us.

#### UNIT 1: Sustainability and Population Dynamics

*T 8/20:* Introduction, receive syllabus, LeVasseur lecture

*TR 8/22:* LeVasseur--read Ayers "History of a Cup of Coffee;" Whitty "The 13<sup>th</sup> Tipping Point;" selection on Entropy, and selection shift from stage 1 to stage 2 (these readings help clarify possibly confusing content from Todd's first lecture)

**\*\*\*Quiz 1 on OAKS—answer: What are the 13 tipping points? What are your thoughts on the Cup of Coffee reading? On the "hockey sticks?"**

*T 8/27:* LeVasseur--read Toadvine "Six Myths of Interdisciplinarity" and Tucker "Preface"

- Complete on-line Ecofootprint calculator, bring results to discuss in groups
- Discuss applying for Green Fee projects in groups

*TR 8/29:* Blair- overview of environmental challenges; **overview of term paper assignment** read "Article 1 – "Grand Challenges" and Article 2 – "Securing Natural Capital" to prepare for lecture

**\*\*\*Quiz 2 on OAKS**

*T 9/3:* Blair- Human population growth; Read Article 3 – "The Outlook for Population Growth" to prepare for lecture

TR 9/5: Blair- Read Article 4 – “Will Malthus continue to be wrong?” and Article 5 – “7 Billion and counting” to prepare for lecture

T 9/10: LeVasseur-ethics; Peterson, “Ethical Concepts;” “Deep Ecology;” “Ecofeminism;” “Environmental Justice”

**\*\*\*Quiz 3 on OAKS**

### Unit 2: Energy Use

TR 9/12: Blair- Energy consumption patterns and projections; Read Article 6 – “Energetic Limits to Economic Growth” to prepare for lecture

- **Green Fee applications due**

T 9/17: Blair—Transportation: past, present and future. Read Article 7 – “Energy and transportation” to prepare for lecture

**\*\*\*Quiz 4 on OAKS**

TR 9/19: LeVasseur—lecture on Ecological Economics; “Cassandra/Cornucopian Debate;” Schwartz, “Flourishing and Its Enemies;” “Income Inequality Charts”—glance through these

**\*\*\*Quiz 5 on OAKS**

T 9/24 and TR 9/26: Movie “Gasland” <http://www.gaslandthemovie.com/whats-fracking/>

T 10/1: discussion, prepare for mid-term

**TR 10/ 3: Mid-Term Exam (due Dropbox Sunday, 10/6 by 12pm)**

### Unit 3: Production and Consumption

T 10/8: : Blair- Agriculture: green revolution, the obesity epidemic and the collapse of the global food supply. Read Article 8 - “Solutions for a cultivated planet” and Article 9 - “Social Justice and Food Systems”to prepare for lecture

**\*summary and bibliography of papers due**

TR 10/10: Blair- Are GMOs the solution? Read: Article 10 – “Human Health Risks Editorial”, Article 11 – “GMO Labeling Opinion”, and Article 12 – “Rethinking Agriculture for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” to prepare for lecture

**\*\*\*Quiz 6 on OAKS**

**FALL BREAK—go outside, have fun, reduce entropy!**

TR 10/17 Blair—Water resources. Read Article 13 – “Water Wealth of Nations” to prepare for lecture

**\*\*\*Quiz 7 on OAKS**

T 10/22: LeVasseur—commons issues and commons game; selections from *Green Planet Blues*: Hardin, Ophuls, et al.

TR 10/24: LeVasseur—media and coercion; Schor, “Tackling Turbo Consumption”; video: The Story of Stuff

### Unit 4: Climate Change/Destabilization

T 10/29: Blair- Climate Change. **\*\*\*movie review DUE: *The Great Global Warming Swindle* (<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/great-global-warming-swindle/>).**

TR 10/31: Blair— Climate Change cont’d; Air & water pollution;

**\*\*\*term paper DUE by start of class on OAKS Dropbox**

T 11/5: LeVasseur—Framing and public perception; Anderegg, “Diagnosis Earth;” “If Only Gay Sex Caused Global Warming”

**\*\*\*Quiz 8 on OAKS and carbon footprint calculator**

TR 11/7: LeVasseur—ethics of climate change; Taylor “Gaian Earth Religion”

**\*\*\*movie review DUE: *If a Tree Falls***

T 11/12: LeVasseur—documentary on Thomas Berry

TR 11/14: Blair—Environmental change and human health; Read Article 14 - “Climate Change and Human Health” (<http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMp058079>) to prepare for lecture

**\*\*\*Quiz 9 on OAKS**

Unit 5: What is Sustainability?

T 11/19: Field Trip: Charleston County Recycling Center

- Complete pre- and post-survey

TR 11/21: LeVasseur—tipping points, resilience, adaptation, success; Prugh, “What is Sustainability?”

**\*\*\*Quiz 10 on OAKS**

T 11/26: Wrap-up, share success stories

**\*\*\*movie review DUE: *Fixing the Future* (Netflix) or *Green Gold* ([www.topdocumentaryfilms.com](http://www.topdocumentaryfilms.com))**

FINAL EXAM (quasi-cumulative)