

Course Syllabus: The Ecology of Personal Life

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Please check the online course for the most up-to-date version of course materials and assignments.

If the online materials differ from this print study guide, the online materials take precedence.

Course Information

Course Description

“Global warming” is much in the news these days. But what is the importance of a temperature rise? Can't we just turn up our air conditioners? Because climate and weather systems are tightly connected, the scientifically correct term is “global climate change.” Every week, we learn of typhoons or landslides, floods or hurricanes. In Alaska, glaciers are melting, and so are the famous snows of Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro. In Europe, the magnificent city of Venice is threatened by rising seawater. What is going on? And more importantly, can we do anything about it?

Yes, we can. Most scientists now agree that the major cause of climate shift is human energy use. Our cars, our furnaces, and our manufacturing plants—all interact with the natural environment to cause the problems we now face. And because we humans are the cause of the problem, only we can solve it. This class offers you a chance to explore your own energy use patterns. Energy costs money, so saving energy saves your household budget. It's a win-win situation. This class helps you examine how you can help save the world by saving money.

A little over a century ago, a Chicago scientist invented the word “ecology” by combining Greek words that translate as “earth household.” Part of earth's household is your own, with its various systems (water, heat, waste disposal) that echo the planet's larger systems. While the focus of this class is the individual household, that phrase is understood in the broadest sense; thus one's car is part of the household, as is a pet or a potted plant.

Today, global climate change is threatening human society. Sometimes incorrectly called “global warming,” these shifts in the earth's weather systems have been tied to the burning of fossil fuels in industrialized countries like the United States. But we have to drive to work, don't we? We need to heat our homes, don't we? Besides, what difference does one person make? This course considers the way that human life is connected to the world around us. It also provides an opportunity to see how you might make changes in response to growing concern over global climate change. The course does not propound one solution over another. Rather, it encourages you to become aware of ecological issues and to determine your own answers to the questions they raise. In this class, you will learn to assess the effect of personal choices on the earth and be introduced to other possible choices.

Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the interconnection between human life, nonhuman life, and the

physical processes of the earth and demonstrate it by articulating such interconnections in your own locale.

- Analyze consumption patterns and their likely ecological effects and explain those effects in short essays.
- Research ecological patterns and discuss in short essays how personal consumer choices have impact on such patterns.

Course Resources

To buy your books, go to <http://www.mbsdirect.net>.

Hint: type "DePaul" for name of the school.

Required Text Books:

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit, by Daniel Quinn, any edition.

Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things (New Report, No. 4), by John C. Ryan, Alan Durning, and Don Baker (1997) Northwest Environment.

Course Competences

In this course, you will develop the following competences:

Competence	Competence Statement
S-4	Can describe and explain connections among diverse aspects of nature.
S-1-C	Can explain personal interactions with the physical environment using scientific principles.
S-3-C	Can understand the scientific and social dimensions of an environmental issue.
F-X	Can apply ecological thinking to business or industrial issues

Relationship of this course to the competence statements

S-4: Can describe and explain connections among diverse aspects of nature.

Seemingly disparate parts of nature (clouds and animal waste, for instance) are connected, because all of earth's systems are interconnected. This class explores the ways in which physical and biological systems, including humans, are connected to each other.

S-1-C: Can explain personal interactions with the physical environment using scientific principles.

Everyone interacts with the environment continually. Breathing, eating, drinking, and every other human action involves an interaction with one or more of the earth's systems. This course explores such interactions, as well as the mutual effects of the earth's systems and the human body on each other.

S-3-C Can understand the scientific and social dimensions of an environmental issue.

The main environmental issue considered in this class is global climate change, but related issues such as glacial retreat, the greenhouse effect, loss of rainforest terrain, and similar issues, are considered in terms of both their ecological and human effects. Students will address this as part of their group work.

Students explore institutions, businesses and other resources in their community in order

to gain knowledge concerning the scientific and social dimensions of an environmental issue.

F-X Can apply ecological thinking to business or industrial issues.

Most environmental damage comes through business or industrial practices, and much environmental progress has similarly come through enlightened business practices. Through this competence, students will explore the effects of natural and manufactured processes as part of their work in groups.

Assessment Criteria for each Competence

The following are criteria for receiving a passing grade. The criteria for passing require that:

You participate consistently and constructively by completing activities, the readings and assignments by their due dates.

You submit your final paper by the due date. *Note that a first submission and a revised submission are required. The first submission is considered a draft that has been re-written and revised by the student before it is handed in. It is not considered an initial draft.

You consistently, actively, and in a timely fashion participate in the online discussions. You will receive a weekly note from the instructor, if your participation is estimated as outstanding, sufficient or insufficient. In any case you will have the opportunity to comment on the opinion of the instructor.

Course Structure

This course consists of 10 modules. The estimated time to complete each module is 1 week.

To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.

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Assessment

Assessment Criteria for Reading and Writing Assignments

Your participation and advance in terms of concepts and competencies will be assessed in the weekly discussion forums submissions to your instructor in the assignment area of the course.

Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

In the online discussions you clearly and consistently link what you are learning in the course to your real life experiences.

Specifically, in order to receive credit for your participation in the online discussion parts of the course it is important that:

- You are able to contribute to the online discussions in a collegial fashion. Especially you may begin your contributions with addressing your peer students, may maintain a kind and collegial tone and close with your signature.
- You regularly demonstrate good “listening” skills and active inquiry skills in the online discussions. This means that you pay attention with openness to the commentary of others and you offer constructive and interested commentary, whether in the form of questions or statements.

- You contribute your own original ideas to the online discussion in ways that facilitated learning for other people.

Course Grading Scale

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	INC

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a “Pass” represents a grade of “A” for purposes of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must let their instructor know before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.

Online Participation Guidelines

The following guidelines may encourage you to be active and critical in your participation, only together we will make this course a significant and pleasant learning experience:

- Participation is essential, so please connect to the course every day or at least every second day.
- Post your response to the discussion assignments in the first part of the week, in the second part of the week post comments to the other students.
- Discuss critically, give support to your peers, provide own ideas and experiences, challenge ideas of others or just make a comment that you read the posting.
- The role of the instructor, to make it easy for you to interact, to promote significant discussion, to give feed back on your postings and offer help where needed.
- This is not an independent study course, but a paced online group learning experience. This study guide indicates 6 to 11 hours per week of your time to be spent on this course of ten weeks.
- Please accept the challenge to work with others, to construct knowledge in negotiation with others. Working individually on the assignments and just posting them might not lead to significant knowledge and skills.

Some difficulties at the beginning of an online course are quite normal; solving them is part of every distance learning experience.

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Policies

Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university

officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

Incomplete Grades

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve “interactions”—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as “research” with “human subjects” and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning’s Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no “harm”—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
 - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an “informed consent” document. For information on creating an “informed consent document” see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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Course Expectations

Time Management and Attendance

SNL’s online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than “face to face” courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour “face to face” course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

Your Instructor’s Role

Your instructor’s role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums

on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate “office hours” when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

Your Role as a Student

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor’s role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

Credits

This course was designed and produced by Patricia Monaghan, Ph.D., and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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