Special Topics in Environment

Environment 299

Section: D100

Term: 2011 Fall

Instructor: D. Burns, J. Clague, V. Williams, D. Zandvliet

Discussion Topics: This course is about environmental controversy and how controversy can inform our thinking about complex socio-scientific issues.   In our teaching we will use experiential, issues-based,and problem based forms of education to deeply consider three environmental controversies that we present as socio-scientific issues (SSI). Topics are examined in their scientific, social, environmental. cultural, ethical, legal, and personal context. The nature of socio-scientific issues;

\x09\x09\x09-have a basis in science
\x09\x09\x09-involve forming opinions
\x09\x09\x09-deal with incomplete information due to the nature of science
\x09\x09\x09-address local, national, and global dimensions of society and politics
\x09\x09\x09-involve cost-benefits analyses in which risks interact with values
\x09\x09\x09-involve values and ethical reasoning
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Socio-scientific issues can be described as, ill-defined, multidisciplinary, value-laden, and constrained by missing knowledge as opposed to more traditional issues that are based on approaches using disciplinary knowledge, are objectively oriented, engage the right procedures, and often result in a single right/wrong answer.
SSI is also a pedagogical strategy with clearly defined goals: it aims to stimulate and promote individual intellectual development in morality and ethics, as well as awareness of the interdependence between science and society.

Grading: The final letter grade will be based on the following weights:

Individual assignment 50% (position paper)
Final group assignment 30% (problem dissection)
Seminar / Fieldtrip and Tutorial participation 20% (journal)

Information re: assignments will be discussed in the first class.

Required Texts: n/a

Recommended Texts: n/a

Materials/Supplies: n/a

Prerequisite/Corequisite: 15 units and CGPA of 2.75

Notes: Mandatory participation in field experiences. The course will involve
Panel presentations, guest lectures and project-based group work.