

EVPP 336: HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Spring 2021

Dr Susan A Crate



M 4:30-7:10pm

ZOOM

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INTRODUCTION

We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources... It is time for us now as a nation to exercise the same reasonable foresight in dealing with our great natural resources that would be shown by any prudent man in conserving and widely using the property which contains the assurance of well-being for himself and his children.

Theodore Roosevelt, 1908,

in: The Essential Theodore Roosevelt, J. Hunt (ed.), Gramercy Books, 1994

As hard as we may try on a company by company level, we cannot fully succeed until the institutions surrounding commerce are redesigned ... We must design a system where... doing good is like falling off a log, where natural, everyday acts of work and life accumulate into a better world as a matter of course, not a matter of conscious altruism.

Paul Hawken, Ecology of Commerce, Harper Collins, 1994

From a survival standpoint we are at a critical juncture on planet earth. We are facing complex environmental problems that increasingly threaten the balance necessary to sustain the earth's diverse ecosystems. We continue to and have already lost many plant and animal species that are vital to the biodiversity that is the foundation for ecosystem health. We continue to destroy habitat and to generate far more waste, in solid, liquid and gaseous forms, than our planet is able to neutralize. Toxins, disease epidemics, contamination of water, air and land, species extinctions, ecosystem decline, loss of human cultures, global warming, over-consumption, starvation, population pressure, the list goes on and on. How do we strike a balance between the reality of our many ecological crises and our personal, professional and collective response? What is the difference between being environmentally aware and being environmentally literate? How can we be part of the solution and not part of the problem?

In this course we will grapple with these questions and focus on positive change. We will explore our own environmental values, develop our environmental literacy and a capacity for place-based ecology, and investigate various ways that our fellow humans are involved in "The Great Turning," the transition from the Industrial Growth Society to a Life-Sustaining Society. We will develop a biospheric perspective, an awareness of our planet's terrestrial system— including air, land and water— in which life develops. In tandem, we will also develop an understanding of the ethnosphere, the full complexity and compliment of human potential as brought about by culture and adaptation since the dawn of consciousness.

Three key assumptions underlie this course: (1) All life on earth is faced with complex and unprecedented environmental issues that threaten its survival; (2) *Homo sapiens* (humans) have been and are the main agent of these life-threatening environmental issues; (3) Humans have a unique creative capacity that can turn things around if they can become environmentally literate and take action now.

Addendum for Online class: Class sessions, activities and assignments in this course will always use ZOOM web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate / Zoom) available via the Blackboard learning system at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. **Please note:** Classes will not be video recorded since this is not an online course by my (the instructor's) choice but rather an in-class course that had to go online due to the pandemic.

In addition to the above details of attendance and participation, in this online class, all students are required to:

- be online on either laptop or desktop;
- have their video turned on and to be physically present throughout each class, except when we take breaks;
- have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher;
- have a device with a functional camera and microphone.

If you have any specific issues, concerns or considerations that I need to know, please email me to set up a meeting.

Addendum for Mason Impact + CECL course: In 2019, EVPP 336 was designated as a Mason Impact and CECL course. These designations align with the ongoing objectives of this course (below) which you will complete via your participation, completion of weekly readings, and fulfillment of all assignments:

1. **Understand knowledge creation:** Students will understand how knowledge is generated and communicated, and how it can be used to address questions or problems in disciplines and in society.
2. **Engage multiple perspectives:** Students will identify and negotiate multiple perspectives, work collaboratively within and across multiple social and environmental contexts, and engage ethically with their subject and with others.
3. **Investigate a meaningful question:** Students will articulate a question; engage in an inquiry process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results within a broader context.
4. **Complete a project:** Students will design and carry out an individual or collaborative project that explores an original question, seeks a creative solution to a problem, applies knowledge to a professional challenge, or offers a unique perspective. Students will engage deeply in this original work.
5. **Communicate and share outcomes:** Students will communicate knowledge from their project through presentation, publication, performance, exhibition, screening, or broadcast to an audience beyond the classroom.

Additionally, you will be able to submit your term project to the undergraduate education office, at which point, you will receive an additional line on their transcripts that highlights the name of your specific project, similar to a master's thesis notation. In order to facilitate this, you must submit your project to the undergraduate education office. The link to complete the submission can be found at masonimpact.gmu.edu under "student". You must first submit your project on the final class day (as is noted on the syllabus) to receive a grade for your group and to verify that all your members participated fully. Once that is done, you may submit it individually. The deadline for submissions is the last day of the finals period, which is Monday, May 10th.

REQUIRED READING

Bollier, David. 2014. *Think like a commoner: a short introduction to the life of the commons*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada : New Society Publishers.

Diamond, Jared. 2005. *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed*. New York: Penguin.

Klein, Naomi. 2014. *This changes everything: capitalism vs. the climate*. New York : Simon & Schuster.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2014. *The sixth extinction: an unnatural history*. New York : Henry Holt and Company.

Schlottmann, Christopher, et al. 2017. *Environment and society: a reader*. NYU Press.

Additional readings supplied by instructor and posted on the course Blackboard site.

RECOMMENDED WEB SOURCES OF LOCAL/REGIONAL NEWS CAN BE USEFUL IN CLASS:

-GMU Office of Sustainability: <http://green.gmu.edu/>

-Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN): <http://www.chesapeakeclimate.org/>

-Green News Update, <http://greennewsupdate.com/>

-National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Campus Ecology <http://www.nwf.org/campus-ecology.aspx>

GRADES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your point total is based on:

20%	Attendance/ participation
10%	Diamond chapter summary
20%	Student-led presentation/ discussion
20%	Reflexive Compositions: 2 Documentaries
30%	Term-Long Team Project

Attendance/ participation: This class is a student-based learning experience. Discussions of readings and themes, and student presentations, make up most of the sessions. You will be graded on your informed participation, and that requires careful, timely preparation and regular attendance. ‘Participation’ is two-fold: 1) Attendance is required. Your and your classmates’ success depends on everyone’s regular attendance and on thorough preparation for and active participation in each class. Since you have registered for this class, I assume you will be able to attend every class. If you have an emergency (which constitutes an excused absence), involving life and death circumstances beyond your control that prevent your attendance, please contact me immediately to discuss your situation. **Otherwise, you forfeit 2 points for every unexcused absence.** 2) Preparation is required. This course requires a substantial amount of reading. Before coming to class, complete and think critically about that class’s readings. Please come to class prepared to participate. Sessions will include mini-lectures, general discussions, documentary films, student-led presentation/discussions, and guest lectures.

Diamond chapter summary: We will read Jared Diamond’s *Collapse* as a class. You will be assigned a chapter (and most of you will share a chapter) and be expected to submit a written **précis** and give a 5-8 minute presentation/discussion of the chapter (see ‘*Precis* instructions’ on blackboard). If you are sharing a chapter, as most of you are, refer to list to know if you are 1) submitting the **précis** OR giving the 5-minute presentation.

Student-led presentation/ discussion: Giving short and effective talks is an important skill as a student and in your future. For this assignment you will present a concise and well rehearsed 10-15 minute talk to give your take on the most important issues in your class readings for your day. Take as innovative and provocative a tack on your materials as you can. Your grade is partly dependent on style. You need to learn to outline talks, find supplemental sources, prepare visual aids, and rehearse to fit the 10-15 minute time frame. Your grade will partly depend on substance. Feel free to do some outside reading and, if appropriate to your talk, plan to provide the class with supplemental sources. (see fuller description on blackboard).

Reflexive Composition –Documentaries: We will view a documentary film weekly as an educational medium in this class. Documentary films differ from other films in that their intent is to be factual or non-fictional. However, creators of documentaries have specific objectives for creating these films. The documentaries we will be viewing have to do with the learning objectives of this course. We will take time to discuss each film. Additionally, you are expected to

write a reflexive composition (minimum 2-pages, double-spaced, 600-700 words) for EACH of two of the documentaries we see in class, using the Film Viewing Guide (on blackboard).

Term-Long Team Project: FINDINGS SOLUTIONS: You will collaborate in a group of students and research one of the eight project themes: 1) sustainable food systems; 2) the water crisis; 3) clean air; 4) shelter for all; 5) anthropogenic climate change; 6) human population; 7) over-consumption; 8) social equity/post-growth economy. Written requirement: a GROUP paper (minimum 12-pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt font, approx. 3000 words, divided evenly between group members for one paper per group). Presentation requirement: A 20-min group presentation of research and findings to the class during the final class period; with each group member participating equally. This term-long team project assignment will be considered the course final project AND final exam. In order to accommodate the **Mason Impact** objective to ‘communicate knowledge from their project through presentation, publication, performance, exhibition, screening, or broadcast to an audience beyond the classroom, you are also required to bring attendees from your specific case study to attend your group presentation (see fuller description on blackboard).

A Note about the GMU Honor Code

All GMU students and faculty are responsible for understanding and abiding by the provisions of the GMU Honor Code. For example, substantial paraphrasing of others' work without indicating a direct quote may constitute plagiarism, even if the source document is cited. If you are not familiar with the Honor Code, please take some time to review: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>

In addition, please respect the following class standards:

1. Please do not come late to class: *Late arrivals disrupt the attention of students and the instructor. Please be conscientious of your fellow students and arrive to class on time. Consistent late arrivals are always noticed and may make the difference between borderline grades.*

2. Please refrain from talking / texting during lecture: *Again, talking disrupts the educational experience. And instructors ALWAYS know (really, it is that obvious). If you have a question or are confused about the material being covered in lecture please feel free to interrupt the lecture by asking a question to me, not your neighbor. We will be having open discussions and interactions daily- everyone's ideas are welcomed and valued.*

3. NO CELL PHONES IN CLASS! This also means no text messaging, beeping, buzzing, ringing, or flashing lights! You WILL be asked to leave class for using cell phones in class.

4. Computers in class are for notes and being on Zoom and not for shopping, gaming, social networking, you tube, or otherwise. *It is highly disruptive to your classmates when you use your computer for anything other than taking notes. If computer use becomes disruptive on a large scale at any point in the semester, the instructor has the discretion to make the class computer free.*

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the GMU Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Link: <https://ds.gmu.edu/>

Links to the **University Catalog and the University Policies** website for all other university academic and non- academic policies:

University Catalog: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/>

University Policies: <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>

Other important resources for this course:

For help with writing: GMU writing center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

For help researching and finding sources: GMU library: <http://library.gmu.edu/>

For help with life issues: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

<i>Date</i>	<i>EVPP 336: Topics & Reading Assignments</i>	<i>Due</i>
25-Jan	<p>Introductions and Course Overview READ: 1-Schlottmann et al. pp 1-2 2-Ripple et al, 2017. World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice. <i>BioScience</i>, Volume 67, Issue 12, 1 December 2017, Pages 1026–1028 https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/67/12/1026/4605229</p> <p><i>Assign:</i> 1) 1, 2, 3 choices Student-led 2) 1, 2, 3 choices Group Project theme 3) Diamond Chapter (due next class)</p>	<p>Send via Blackboard message system no later than 12 noon this Friday 29-Jan:</p> <p>-Team Project 1, 2, 3 choices -Student-led 1, 2, 3 choices</p>
1-Feb	<p>Past & Present Societies</p> <p>-Student Reports on Diamond’s chapters</p> <p>-Announce Student-Leds and Term-Long Teams</p> <p>Meet in Term-Long Team groups: Initial Team Project Meeting</p> <p><i>(will also meet in class in these groups as time allows)</i></p>	<p>Send via Blackboard message system no later than 12 noon TODAY: -Diamond chapter <i>précis</i></p> <p>Come to class prepared to present: -Diamond Chapter summary</p>
8-Feb	<p>Environmentalism and Environmental Movements READ: Schlottmann et al. pp 71-121</p> <p>1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 71-96</p> <p>2- Schlottmann et al.: pp 97-120</p> <p>Meet in Term-Long Team groups: Second Team Project Meeting</p> <p><i>(will also meet in class in these groups as time allows)</i></p>	<p>Student-Led 1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led 2. _____</p>

<i>Date</i>	<i>EVPP 336: Topics & Reading Assignments</i>	<i>Due</i>
15-Feb	<p>Population and Consumption</p> <p>READ: Schlottmann et al. pp 123-198</p> <p>1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 123-160</p> <p>2- Schlottmann et al.: pp 161-198</p>	<p>Student-Led</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led</p> <p>2. _____</p>
22-Feb	<p>Ideas of Nature & The Sixth Extinction</p> <p>READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 5-41</p> <p>2- Kolbert: pp 1-147</p> <p>1- Ideas of Nature: Schlottmann et al.: pp 5-41</p> <p>2- 6th Extinction: Kolbert: pp 1-91</p> <p>3- 6th Extinction: Kolbert: pp 92-147</p>	<p>Student-Led</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>Student-Led</p> <p>3. _____</p>
1-Mar	<p>Ideas of Nature & The Sixth Extinction</p> <p>READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 42-68</p> <p>2- Kolbert: pp 148-269</p> <p>1- Ideas of Nature: Schlottmann et al.: pp 42-68</p> <p>2- 2- 6th Extinction: Kolbert: pp 148-216</p> <p>3- 6th Extinction: Kolbert: pp 217-269</p>	<p>Student-Led</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>Student-Led</p> <p>3. _____</p>
8-Mar	<p>Public Goods, Collective Action & Thinking Like a Commoner</p> <p>READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 199-241</p> <p>2- Bollier pp 1-78</p> <p>1- Public Goods, Collective Action: Schlottmann: pp 199-241</p> <p>2- Think Like a Commoner: Bollier: pp 1-78</p>	<p>Student-Led</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led</p> <p>2. _____</p>

<i>Date</i>	<i>EVPP 336: Topics & Reading Assignments</i>	<i>Due</i>
15-Mar	<i>Dr Crate away, FILMS</i>	
22-Mar	<p>Public Goods, Collective Action & Thinking Like a Commoner</p> <p>READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 242-264 2- Bollier pp 79-174</p> <p>1- Public Goods, Collective Action: Schlottmann: pp 242-264 2- Think Like a Commoner: Bollier: pp 79-174</p>	<p>Student-Led 1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led 2. _____</p>
29-Mar	<p>Values & Justice: This Changes Everything</p> <p>READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 267-294 2- Klein: pp 1-187</p> <p>1- Values & Justice: Schlottmann et al.: pp 267-294 2- This Changes Everything: Klein: pp 1-95 3- This Changes Everything: Klein: pp 96-187</p>	<p>Student-Led 1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led 2. _____</p> <p>Student-Led 3. _____</p>
5-Apr	<p>Values & Justice: This Changes Everything</p> <p>READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 295-318 2- Klein: pp 189-290</p> <p>1- Values & Justice: Schlottmann et al.: pp 295-318 2- This Changes Everything: Klein: pp 189-229 3- This Changes Everything: Klein: pp 230-290</p>	<p>Student-Led 1. _____</p> <p>Student-Led 2. _____</p> <p>Student-Led 3. _____</p>

<i>Date</i>	<i>EVPP 336: Topics & Reading Assignments</i>	<i>Due</i>
12-Apr	<i>Dr Crate away, FILMS</i>	Send via Blackboard message system no later than 12 noon April 15: -Reflexive Composition (of two in-class documentaries)
19-Apr	Environmental Controversies: This Changes Everything READ: 1- Schlottmann et al.: pp 353-379 2- Klein: pp 291-466 1- Environmental Controversies: Schlottmann et al.: pp 353-379 2- This Changes Everything: Klein: pp 291-387 3- This Changes Everything: Klein: pp 388-466	Student-Led 1. _____ Student-Led 2. _____ Student-Led 3. _____
26-Apr	GROUP PRESENTATIONS	Send via Blackboard message system no later than 12 noon April 26: -Final Group Papers

Important: Instructor has right to change and modify this syllabus if need arises.