

ENV 6935: Graduate Environmental Seminar

Overview:

This course is intended to provide the student with the skills to identify a research area of interest, collect and assimilate information, analyze findings, and present his/her work in a seminar format. Earlier students merely attended seminar presentations by others and summarized the salient findings, so that the primary purpose of the seminar class was to test both student attentiveness and technical writing proficiency. This semester we shall change the format. You will need to identify some area within the broad field of environmental engineering/science and then prepare a class presentation and report on that topic.

Catalog Course Description:

The course consists of oral presentations made by students, guests, and faculty members on current topics and research in environmental systems.

Instructor:

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Office hours: Tuesdays 1400 – 1600, Thursdays 1400 – 1700, and by appointment.

Location and Timing:

Room: EC 2440
Fridays 1400–1450

Textbook

There is no prescribed text book for this class. You will be pursuing your individual research efforts reading technical journal articles, on-line reports, as well as relevant texts. However, I can suggest several books that you might enjoy reading (for the betterment of your souls!) These include:

Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Broadway Books, 2003.
Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us*, St Martin's Press, 2007.
Peter Pringle, *Food, Inc.: Mendel to Monsanto – The Promises and Perils of the Biotech Harvest*, Simon and Schuster, 2003.

Grade Distribution (Total 100 points):

Attendance	40
Assignments	10
Research Report	20
Presentation	30

Preliminary/Incomplete Class Schedule:

Date	Topic
8/28	1 Overview: Your assignment is to listen to the three TED presentations (on plastics in the Pacific, the changing world demographics, and the story about re-planting tropical rainforests) whose links are posted both on WebCT, as well as at my homepage (www.fiu.edu/~lahas). I then want you to summarize each presentation separately in about 500 words! The assignment (HW-1) will be due on September 18, 2009.
9/4	2 Full Moon. Instead of meeting for class, you could enjoy a longer Labor Day weekend and consider one of the following for your second assignment (HW-2): <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Attending the South Florida Hydrologic Society's presentation on Aquifer Storage and Recovery on Wednesday, September 9, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. at Gatsbys (Davie), 1805 S University Drive, Davie, FL 33324(b) Reading the article "Talking Rubbish" from <i>The Economist</i> and writing a 1000-word report on municipal solid waste management.
9/11	3 Decide on your research topics and let us settle the presentation dates
9/18	4 Discuss the TED lectures, the solid waste dilemma, our terrible consumption patterns, etc. Also for anyone interested Weisman's book <i>The World Without Us</i> not only looks at our effect on the planet by imagining the world without human beings, but also suggests that a <i>much</i> lower world human population is desirable and sustainable, e.g., about 1.7 billion (as opposed to the current 6.7 billion)
9/25	5
10/2	6 Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday – World Peace Day
10/9	7
10/16	8
10/23	9
10/30	10
11/6	11
11/13	12
11/20	13
11/27	Thanksgiving – no class
12/4	14 Last day of class – farewells!
