UEP 101  
Environment and Society  
Fall 2011  
Tuesday & Thursday 10:00 – 11:25 am (Section 1)  
Tuesday & Thursday 3:00 – 4:25 pm (Section 2)  

Students are expected to have read and understood the contents of this syllabus.  

Prof. Victor Polanco (Section 1)  
Class meets in Rangeview 242  
Office hours (at the Cooler):  
Tue and Thu 10:00 – 11:25 pm  
email: polanco@oxy.edu  

Prof. Victor Polanco (Section 2)  
Class meets in Fowler 112  
Office hours (at the Cooler):  
Tue and Thu 3:00 – 4:25 pm  
email: polanco@oxy.edu  

Course Background and Objectives  
Environment and Society is an introductory course on the environment. It is designed for students with an interest in environmental issues who might want to pursue further studies in Urban and Environmental Policy as well as for those interested in the topic even though they may be pursuing another major. As an introductory class the course provides students with an overview of contemporary environmental issues and public policy debates.  

The class will examine a broad range of environmental issues. Readings, discussions, presentations, class exercises and writing assignments will allow students to engage with the course material from a variety of perspectives and should provide a broad framework for linking the environment and society.  

The course will be organized around five broad topic areas: Climate Change; Pollution & Toxics; the Built Environment; Nature in the City; and Food & Health. Through lectures, presentations, films and speakers students will critically examine a broad range of environmental issues and their relationship to society. Students will work individually and in small groups to deepen their understanding of their selected topic area and issue. Students will also attend at least two events outside of class.  

Through the course, students will:  
• critically examine a broad range of contemporary environmental issues and policy debates;  
• develop analytic skills to make connections between the environment and economic development, neighborhood and regional planning, community health, labor and workforce development, organizing and advocacy, and public policy;  
• gain insight about the nature of environmental problems and their possible solutions;  
• gain understanding of the environmental conditions and policy debates in Los Angeles by talking with environmental activists, planners and policy makers in the classroom and also in the field.
Course Structure

The course will include an introductory section and five topic areas that encompass different ways to understand and frame environmental issues. These areas include:

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE. How do our development and lifestyle practices relate to greenhouse emissions and the impact of climate change on the environment? What are the individual and policy responses and alternatives to address climate change?

POLLUTION, TOXICS AND WASTE. Understanding the sources and impacts of pollution; air quality concerns; pollution prevention versus pollution control versus market strategies; precautionary principles, and environmental justice.

TRANSPORTATION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT. How does transportation affect land use and choices about the built environment? What is the connection between sprawl and the environment? How have cars and freeways become part of our culture and ways of viewing the world? What alternative transportation strategies are available, even in (or especially in) a place like Los Angeles?

NATURE IN THE CITY. How have we controlled nature to build cities? Can cities become more sustainable? More livable? More ecological? Is the concept “Nature in the City” an oxymoron?

FOOD, HEALTH, AND THE ENVIRONMENT. Where does our food come from? How is it manufactured? Where is it bought, and how is it consumed? We will also discuss fast food culture and alternative food strategies.

Course Website

All course readings and correspondence will be posted on the course website:

https://moodle.oxy.edu/course/view.php?id=6899

You need to be registered to access the website. All reading responses, essays and research paper will be uploaded to the appropriate section of the Moodle website.

Between class updates will be posted to the “News forum” section, at the top of the website. To schedule a time slot for office hours, see the “Office hours” section of the website.

Requirements and Grading

Students are required to attend class and complete all assignments and class exercises, including the two out of class events described below. Grades will be based on the following:
1. PARTICIPATION (35% of grade)

Participation and active engagement in class discussions, exercises, assignments, and out of class events are a critical component of the course.

A. Reading responses (15% of grade)
You are responsible for completing all readings listed in the schedule below, and submitting a written reading response by midnight the night before every class. Readings listed for each class on the schedule below are to be done before that class (i.e. the readings listed for Jan 24 are the readings we will discuss in that class). Reading responses are meant to prepare you for the class discussions, therefore they must be submitted on time to receive credit. They are graded pass/fail. Students are expected to cite at least 2 readings in your response. Throughout the course, we will use the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) author-date system for citations – see CITATIONS FORMAT below.

Reading responses are NOT a summary of the readings nor a commentary about whether or not you liked the reading, but rather a critique, assessment, opinion, protest about the author’s key arguments, or any combination of these. They may also highlight issues that are unclear to you or that you wish to discuss further in class. Reading responses should be about 200-250 words and must be posted to the appropriate forum (by date) on the class Moodle website – make sure you post your response to the correct section – Section 1 (10:00 – 11:25am) or Section 2 (3:00 - 4:25 pm).

B. Attendance & Class Participation (15% of grade)
Class attendance and active participation in class is essential to the class. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of class, so please be on time (it is your responsibility to ensure that you have signed the attendance sheet to get credit).

C. Out-of-Class Events (5% of grade)
Students are required to attend at least 2 of 3 out-of-class events (dates and times to be announced in class):

1. Toxics Tour
2. CicLAvia
3. LA River Tour

2. ASSIGNMENTS (30% of grade)

Assignments will consist of 3 essays and 1 group presentation.

A. Essays (20% of grade)
Students will write three formal essays, one on your environmental footprint and two on the different topic areas covered in class. Essays should use proper citations – see CITATION FORMAT below. Grading for all essays will be based on your ability to state
a clear and compelling argument, provide some evidence to back up this/these claim(s), organize your paper logically, cite references properly, use proper grammar and spelling, and be professionally presented (typed, double-spaced, 12-pt font, have a title, your name and date on the first page, etc). The use of graphic evidence (photos, tables, maps, charts, etc) to strengthen your points is also encouraged (not included in 3-4 page limit). Essays should have page numbers. Essays are expected to be 3 to 4 pages (800 to 1000 words).

**Essay #1: Ecological Footprint Essay** (required for all students)


Your essay should address the following:

- What are the implications regarding the number of “earths” it would take to sustain everyone at your lifestyle?
- How do you think you could reduce your ecological footprint?
- What would your environmental footprint be if you made all the same choices but lived elsewhere (say in Africa)?
- What do you see as the major environmental problems facing the planet?
- How does your ecological footprint relate to those problems and their solutions?
- Evaluate the importance of the following: reducing your own ecological footprint; bringing about policy change to reduce footprints; increasing the activism to better advocate for change.

The Ecological Footprint essay is due (uploaded to Moodle) by **midnight on Mon Sep 5**.

**Essays #2 and #3: Essays of Topic Areas** (choose 2)

Note: you will NOT write an essay on the topic that you are presenting on – see group presentation below – so students will have a choice of writing about 2 of the other 4 topics.

Essays are meant to be a further exploration of one of the topics or debates within each topic area. You are free to choose any topic within each topic area, therefore there is no “prompt” for these two essays. Students are expected to reference at least two of the class readings within their topic area, but are encouraged to do additional research on their topic.

Due dates (uploaded to Moodle) for the topic area essays are as follows:

- **Climate Change** – due by **beginning of class Sep 27**
- **Pollution & Toxins** – due by **beginning of class Oct 11**
- **Built Environment** – due by **beginning of class Oct 27**


B. Group Presentations (10% of grade)
Groups of four to six students will be formed the second day of class. Each group will give a 30-minute presentation (followed by class discussion) on one of the five topic areas. Each group will meet with the professor at least two weeks before your presentation day to discuss your topic. In-class presentations for each of the 5 topic areas will be on the following dates:

- Climate Change – Sep 27
- Pollution & Toxins – Oct 11
- Built Environment – Oct 27
- Nature in the City – Nov 10
- Food & Health – Nov 29

The best presentations will use NEW material to explore and deepen our understanding of key issues and concepts within your topic area. This should be more than just a list or outline but rather a rich exploration or illustration. Students are expected to do additional research for their presentations.

Your presentation may take a number of different formats, or a combination thereof. Be creative. Some ideas include:

a. Case study
You may choose to do a "case study" to illustrate the one or more of the key issues covered in the topic area. This is an opportunity to dig deeper. Students may pick case studies that integrate their topic area with topics already covered. For example, students presenting on Topic 5 (Nature in the City), could look for case studies that allow exploration of the connections between Nature in the City and pollution, food or built environment issues (ideally, you would not try to make connections between topic areas we haven’t yet covered).

b. Game
Jeopardy and other games are a great way to engage the class in testing or deepening their knowledge of the topic area. The focus should be on substantive issues rather than trivia. Students who have read the materials, come to class, and listened to your presentation should be able to play the game. Stay focused on your topic. Again, you may incorporate connections to previous topics, but the focus should be on the topic area being covered.

c. Debate
Consider dividing your group into two debate teams and tackle one or more of the more difficult questions in the topic area. Each team should bolster its arguments with data from the readings, lectures and other sources. You might have the class vote to determine the debate winners, or pose questions for on the spot mini-debates.
d. Role Play
You can put together a role play by your group, or as a participatory exercise for the class. In either case, be sure to define the roles and explain the situation being role played to the class.

e. Panel Discussion
One of the most common formats for presentations in the working world is a panel discussion at a conference where each panelist gives a brief presentation and a discussion with the audience ensues. Be sure to let the class know who you are as presenters and who they are as the audience.

Grading will be based on new material covered, grasp of key concepts within your topic area, organization, clarity (including quality of presentation), originality, and your ability to elicit class participation.

3. RESEARCH PAPER (35% of grade)

The purpose of your final paper is to conduct research on a topic of your choosing that relates to one of the five broad topic areas. You must meet with your professor in office hours to discuss your paper topic (your professor must approve the topic).

When selecting a topic and research question, explicitly write out your topic, what question you hope to answer and why that question is important; complete the following 3 steps:

STEP 1: name your topic; be as specific as possible. Fill in the blank:
I am trying to learn about (working on, studying) __________.

STEP 2: add a question that specifies something you don't know/understand about your topic but want to. Fill in the blank: because I want to find out who/what/when/where/whether/ why/how _________,

STEP 3: state why the answer to your question is important. Fill in the blank: in order to help my reader understand how, why, or whether __________.

A. BENCHMARKS (5% of grade)
You should begin work on your research paper early. To ensure you work on your paper throughout the term (and not leave it to the last minute, which invariably leads to a poor grade), we have set a series of benchmarks (uploaded to Moodle website by 5pm):

(1) Identify topic and 2-3 possible questions: Sep 15
(2) Narrow topic and complete 3 steps: Sep 29
(3) Annotated bibliography: Oct 6
(4) Draft Outline: Oct 20
(5) Detailed Outline: Nov 8
(6) Draft Paper: Nov 17 (optional)

B. CLASS PRESENTATION (5% of grade)
In the final two sessions (Dec 1 and 6), students will complete a 5x5 presentation – 5 minutes and up to 5 Powerpoint slides to explain the key argument of your paper.

Think of this as a précis (a condensed summary of the key pieces of your paper). You should discuss:

1. The issue you studying (i.e. your topic).
2. How you studied it (e.g. comparison of cases, interviews, etc).
4. A couple piece of evidence to back up your claim/argument.
5. Lessons learned or potential remedies.
   (note: these 5 things do not necessarily correspond to your 5 images)

Since you only have 5 minutes, it is essential that you rehearse your presentation – know exactly what you want to say. Having notes to remind yourself of key points is fine, but do not read your presentation. Use your 5 images wisely -- they should be primarily photos, graphs, charts, diagrams, etc rather than text (remember a picture is worth a thousand words!).

Your Powerpoint files are due (uploaded to Moodle) by midnight on Nov 30 (these will be compiled into a single Powerpoint file for each day).

C. WRITTEN PAPER (25% of grade)
The papers should be between 10 -12 pages (not counting endnotes, bibliography, and graphic evidence), double-spaced, 12-pt font. Your research paper should not be a description of what you found out, but rather must answer an important research question; as such, students are expected to make a claim or argument (taking the form of a thesis statement) and provide evidence to back up your claims. The best papers will be grounded in research of a variety of sources, especially scholarly journal articles. The best papers will explore policy responses, either in place, proposals under discussion, or new ideas. The best papers will draw on and integrate concepts and discussions from the course as well as outside sources. Use of proper CMS format for citations is expected – see CITATION FORMAT below.

Grading will be based on your ability to conduct an independent research paper and answer a well-defined research question, your depth of analysis and critical thinking. Also taken into account will be the quality of your sources, use of graphic evidence (maps, tables, charts, photos, etc), integration of course readings, meeting minimum requirements (timeliness, length, etc) and professional presentation (proper citation format, work cited list, spelling, grammar, overall organization, etc).

The written paper is due by midnight on December 12.
**Citation Format**

For your reading responses, essays and research paper, we will use the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) author-date system for citations. This is a standard format for social science writing and may be slightly different from other formats you have encountering, so please take the time to familiarize yourself with it. The CMS format involves 2 things:

1. **within-text reference**: within the body of the text, when making a reference to another author’s unique ideas or thoughts, you must give credit. In CMS author-date format, this is done by adding the author’s last name followed by the year of the publication in parenthesis at the end of the sentence. For example:

   Price claims that many people see Los Angeles as having no “nature” at all (Price 2005).

   If you quote directly (verbatim) from another author, you must put it in quotations and cite the page number(s) after the publication date. For example:

   As Price says, Los Angeles is “sort of the Death Star to American nature lovers.” (Price 2005, 222)

2. **Works cited list**: for each reference you make within the body of your text, you must provide the full citation in a ‘works cited’ list at the end of your reading response/essay/research paper. For example, for the Price reference above, the full citation would look like this (note the year of publication comes directly after the author’s name):


Below are a few websites that should provide guidance:

- [http://departments.oxy.edu/cae/writing/index.html](http://departments.oxy.edu/cae/writing/index.html)
- [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) (author-date tab)
- [http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/chicagogd.php](http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/chicagogd.php)
Readings and Class Schedule

All readings are available on the class website – refer to the website for reading list – see CLASS WEBSITE above.

Students are strongly encouraged to read at least one daily or weekly source of news (e.g. LA Times, NY Times, Wall Street Journal, The Economist) and help incorporate the information and ideas connected to relevant articles as part of the seminar discussions. These are accessible on campus in the library and also available for purchase in the bookstore. Students are also encouraged to review “opinion” publications by various political, environmental, feminist, religious, etc. perspectives. Grist (www.grist.org), Common Dreams (www.commondreams.org) and AlterNet (www.alternet.org) are samples of on-line news sites that feature stories on the environment and social movements.

INTRODUCTION (Sep 1 - Sep 13)

Th Sep 1 – Course Overview
   [1] Review syllabus & introductions
   [2] General overview of course/ Intro to Oxy initiatives

Tu Sep 6 – Ecological Footprints & Green Consumerism*
   [1] Intro to Oxy initiatives (continued)
   [2] Ecological Footprints & Green Consumerism

* NOTE: ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT ESSAYS DUE MIDNIGHT MON SEP 5.

Th Sep 8 – Historical Context & the Story of Stuff
   [1] Timeline/Historical Context

Tu Sep 13 – The Right to the City & the Geography of Capitalism
   [1] The Right to the City

TOPIC #1 – GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE (Sep 15 – Sep 27)

Th Sep 15 – The Climate Change Debate
   [1] Overview of Climate Change
   [2] Class debate: is climate change real & is human activity responsible?
Tu Sep 20 – Peak Oil and the Energy Crisis
[1] The Energy Crisis
[2] Class Debate: Cap & Trade vs Carbon Taxes

Th Sep 22 – Beyond Coal & Greening LA
[1] Beyond Coal
[2] Greening LA

Tu Sep 27 – The Climate Gap & Group Presentation

TOPIC #2 – POLLUTION, TOXINS & WASTE (Sep 29 - Oct 11)

Th Sep 29 – Everyday Toxins & Pollutants
[2] Polymers and POPs

Tu Oct 4 – Environmental Justice & the Green Movement
[1] Mainstream & Grassroots Environmentalism
[2] Cases: Air & Water Pollution

Th Oct 6 – Toxic Tour (details to be provided in class)

Tu Oct 11 – Alternatives & Group Presentation
[1] Alternatives: Cradle-to-Cradle

TOPIC #3 - BUILT ENVIRONMENT (Oct 13 - Oct 27)

Th Oct 13 - Rationalization, Cars & Freeways
[1] Rationalization of cities
[2] Cars & Freeways

Th Oct 20 – Housing, Built Form & Health Impacts
[1] Housing Policy
[2] Built Form & Health Impacts

Tu Oct 25 - Planning & Transportation Alternatives
[1] Transportation Alternatives
[2] New Urbanism/Transit Oriented Development
Th Oct 27 – Gentrification & Group Presentation
[1] Gentrification & Public Space

Built Environment Essays Due

TOPIC #4 - NATURE IN THE CITY (Nov 1 - Nov 10)

Tu Nov 1 - Production of Nature
[1] Seeing Los Angeles
[2] Designing with Nature

Th Nov 3 – LA River Tour (details to be provided in class)

Tu Nov 8 - Parks, Justice & Designing with Nature
[1] Parks & Justice
[2] Designing with Nature

Detailed Outline Due

Th Nov 10 - The Garden & Group Presentation
[1] Case: South L.A. Farm (Film in class)

Nature in the City Essays Due

TOPIC #5 - FOOD & HEALTH (Nov 15 - Nov 29)

Tu Nov 15 - Overview of Food System
[1] The Global Food System
[2] Nutritionism

Th Nov 17 – “Cheap Food” Policies
Film: Food Inc.

Draft Paper Due (Optional)

Tu Nov 22 - Food Alternatives & Urban Farming
[1] Organic Labeling

Tu Nov 29 - Organic Labeling & Group Presentation
[1] Organic Labeling

Food & Health Essays Due

Paper Presentations
Thursday Dec 1 and Tuesday Dec 6
PowerPoint Slides Due Nov 30 @ Midnight
Research Papers Due Dec 12 @ Midnight
## Course Overview

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<td>1-Sep Course Introduction</td>
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<td>2 6-Sep Ecological Footprints &amp; Green Consumerism **</td>
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<td>15-Sep The Climate Change Debate</td>
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<td>22-Sep Alternatives: Cap &amp; Trade and Carbon Taxes</td>
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<td>5 27-Sep Climate Gap &amp; Group Presentation **</td>
<td>29-Sep From Air Pollution to Toxins &amp; Waste</td>
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<td>6-Oct Toxic Tour (TBD)</td>
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<td>7 11-Oct Alternatives &amp; Group Presentation **</td>
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<td>18-Oct Fall Break (no class)</td>
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<td>12 22-Nov Food Alternatives &amp; Urban Farming</td>
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<td>13 29-Nov Organic Labeling &amp; Group Presentation **</td>
<td>1-Dec Individual Presentations</td>
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<td>14 6-Dec Individual Presentations</td>
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<td>15 12-Dec Research Paper Due **</td>
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** = group presentation or paper due
Course Policies and Support Services

Late Work
Students are expected to submit their work by the stated due dates. No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval, which will NOT be granted as last minute requests in person or by email. No exceptions.

Academic Integrity
Occidental College assumes that students and faculty accept and respect the principle of academic honesty. The policies on academic misconduct are outlined in the Student Handbook (http://www.oxy.edu/StudentHandbook.xml). Plagiarism is representing others work as your own. Students are expected to understand and abide by Oxy’s plagiarism policy (http://www.oxy.edu/x8000.xml).

Classroom Responsibilities
Teachers and students share the responsibility of learning and teaching. We see our responsibilities as creating the space and stimulating enthusiasm for learning, coming prepared to class, creating the goals and structure for a course, introducing concepts and ideas, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge amongst the students and between ourselves and the students. Students are responsible for attending and participating in class, completing assignments in a timely manner, and being prepared to discuss readings and material in class. Students are also responsible for engaging in respectful, open and thoughtful discussion with each other and with the professors.

Classroom Policies
There are five basic rules in this classroom:
- (1) Read all assigned material before class
- (2) Ask questions if you don’t understand
- (3) participate in the discussion if you have something to say
- (4) respect others, and
- (5) turn off your wireless devices.

Support Services
The college provides a set of resources to students to support them in learning. The Center for Academic Excellence (CAE) provides writing assistance to students to develop ideas, draft, and revise papers. See http://departments.oxy.edu/cae/.

If you have specific physical or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that we can meet your learning needs. The Center for Academic Excellence also provides services to assist students with physical or learning disabilities; these students need to contact Magen Todd, Learning Strategies & Disabilities Specialist, x2849, mtodd@oxy.edu in the Center for Academic Excellence (x2545).

The Emmons Health and Counseling Center provides support for issues of stress, medical and mental health. See http://www.oxy.edu/EmmonsHealthCenter.xml.
Excerpts from
“Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes”


The “Fatal Five”

1. **Reading the slides.** More respondents complained about this behavior than anything else – and by a wide margin. Many indignantly asked why a presenter would read slides aloud when audience members were entirely capable of reading them for themselves…“Watching someone read PowerPoint slides is a form of torture that should be banned under the Geneva Convention,” wrote one respondent.

2. **Too long, too much information.** How long is too long? If a presentation is boring, respondents told us, even 10 minutes can seem too long. And boring presentations appear to be rampant across the sector… “Too many slides with too many words, too many points, too much data, too long, too didactic.”

3. **Lack of interaction.** The problem that first appeared when we asked respondents to describe the typical presentation resurfaced strongly in subsequent answers to open-ended questions. Many complained about being “talked at” for 30, 40, even 60 minutes at a time…

4. **Lifeless presenters.** Presenters who speak in a monotone, who seem to lack interest in their own material, or who appear to have wandered in from the set of “Night of the Living Dead” were also reported by many in the survey…

5. **Room/technical problems.** LCD projectors that don’t work, air conditioning that works too well, sound systems that are either too soft, too loud, or have too much hiss – just about every room or technical problem you can imagine showed up in survey answers…many are preventable, and even those that cannot be avoided do not have to ruin a talk…presenters often do not anticipate them or fail to have a backup plan.

The Three Most Wanted

In another open-ended question, we asked, “What one or two key things make a presentation excellent?” Again, respondents provided a wide range of answers, although a few unhappy campers claimed they had never seen an excellent presentation. A consensus emerged around three characteristics, and unsurprisingly each is a direct opposite of a common problem cited above.

1. **Interaction.** Nearly one out of every four respondents mentioned interaction – with the speaker, with other audience members, or both – as a hallmark of excellent presentations. “Interactive presentations that create opportunities for the audience members to work together and with the presenter are almost always top notch,” one respondent told us.

2. **Clarity.** Some used the words “well organized,” and some wrote “concise,” but if you were to scan the verbatim responses to this question, you would see a long run of answers that begin with “clarity.” One such response: “Clarity of three to four well-framed key points the speaker wanted the audience to take away, coupled with smart use of metaphors/anecdotes that helped speaker drive them home.”

3. **Enthusiasm.** Whether respondents used the words energy, passion, charisma, engaging, dynamic or lively, they all wanted the same thing: presenters who were enthusiastic about their topic and conveyed that interest to the audience.

Four other qualities that each received a high number of mentions were: humor, use of stories, relevance, and well-produced visuals.