

Syllabi by Discipline :: Environmental Studies

Course Title: Community and Environmental Compatibility in the York River Watershed York, Maine :A Service Learning Program

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School: University of New England

Categories:

Environmental Studies, Sociology

Syllabus:

This course is listed as: **Sociology 300, LSC 495**

Human communities and the environment are increasingly endangered in today's society. Pressures for economic growth, the world economy, and the expansion of state and national regulations have decreased local control and have heightened the strains on the environment. While this project will not change these conditions at a local level and to see how a community is trying to deal with its concerns about its environment.

This Project draws on the combined resources of the students of the University of New England (UNE) Departments of Life Sciences and Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Community of York to develop the foundations for assessing the human impact on the York River Watershed in York. It will involve community officials and interest groups, environmentalists, professors, and students in developing and implementing an assessment of the current social, microbial, and invertebrate populations of the Watershed and planning for future research directions.

There are four objectives to this work. The first is to develop greater communication and interaction between the partners noted. The second is to provide students with a hands on opportunity to help the community address a problem and work inter-disciplinarily in formulating and addressing the problem. Third, it will integrate service learning not only across disciplines but across academic boundaries and into the regular classroom as three normally non-service learning courses will be integrated into this service-learning project. The final objective is to establish the foundation for addressing the issues of the watershed in a more in-depth and ongoing manner.

There are three expected outcomes of this work. First, it will help gather and provide the community with a previously scattered or non-existent base of information on its watershed which will help stimulate discussion and future examination of the watershed by the community. Second, it will provide students with an in-depth perspective in watershed management, community processes, and research formulation. Finally, it will develop the mechanisms needed for future collaboration by the project participants.

Student Participation and Evaluation

The foundation of this project is the work of the students. Students will play a critical role in determining the activities to be undertaken, the process in which issues are addressed, and doing the actual work. Accordingly, students will NOT be given a syllabus which details what they will do. The tasks to be accomplished will be established collectively as the semester develops. In undertaking this

project students will be expected to perform the following tasks.

Date Assignment Weight

All Semester Complete a minimum of 120 hrs. 15 points
 Feb., March, April Journal 24
 Weekly Internship Group Meetings 20
 All Semester Group Leadership 08
 All Semester Group Liaison 08
 End of Semester Project Presentation 10
 05/07 Final Project or Paper 15
 TOTAL 100points

Work Requirement

Each student will be required to complete a minimum of 120 work hours this semester. This is an average of about eight hours a week. In some weeks the student will work more and in others less. A "work hour" is any task which needs to be completed as part of the project. These can be interviewing community members, collecting data, making phone calls, arranging for class visits, library research, reading assigned materials, and even journal writing. Hours can also be accumulated by attending class sessions that extend beyond two hours, for driving to York once a week (counted as one and a half hours), and by presenting to other interested classes. Other situations for credit for hours will be considered on a case by case basis. Fifteen points or fifteen percent of the grade is dependent on the completion of these hours. Students will be on their honor to count their hours and maintain a weekly total.

Journals

An important part of service-learning is reflecting on one's activities. Journals will be kept by each of the students. These will be reviewed by one of the instructors each month for a total of three times. The content of the journal will vary from student to student and from week to week. The primary intent of a journal is to provide the students with the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned. This may include: making observations, asking questions, expressing feelings, or documenting information. The journal can also be used to record information such as interviews, data gathered in the field, or directions as to the next step to take on a project. There is no set rule for the appropriate length of a journal. If there are doubts about whether you are doing enough, give an instructor an entry or two and ask for feedback. There a total of 24 possible points, eight for each session of the journal. The points are awarded based on a reasonable attempt to reflect on one's learning.

Internship Group Meetings

Group meetings are a critical part of an internship experience. It is during these sessions that activities will be planned, work reviewed, and educational material such as a presentation or discussion of readings will take place. Each student will be expected to attend all of the weekly group meetings. At the first session we will attempt to find a time that works for all the faculty and students. We are expected to have approximately 10 sessions. Therefore, they will be worth two points each. These will be from one to two hours in length. Students may be excused for illness or work related to the internship. Students must give notification of a "miss" 48 hours in advance. These meetings will take place 5:00-7:00 PM Mondays in Decary 302.

Group Leadership

Each student will be expected to be the leader of one activity and the assistant leader of another. For example, one person will be the Data coordinator and direct all activities related to the maintenance of data, while another student will assist in this activity. In each area, the student will be the one primarily responsible for all aspects of the particular activity. Potential activities include:

-Coordination of groups

- Media director (print media, video, and photography)
- Liaison to one of three related classes: Community Organization, Microbial Ecology, Invertebrate Zoology
- Data coordinator
- Group treasurer/clerk/secretary
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Maps coordinator.

The responsibilities will vary by activity. The intent is to provide students a clear focus for their work and to ensure that tasks related to the project are completed. Every attempt will be made to connect students with the areas of interest. There are a total of eight points for this activity. Points are awarded upon satisfactory completion of the assigned activities.

Group Liaison

Each student will be expected to be the primary liaison to one community group, agency or individual in the town of York. For example, one person will need to be responsible for coordinating communication with the Town Planning Office, the York Rivers Group, and the Conservation Commission. In each case, there will be one person assigned to assist in group liaison. There are a total of eight points for this activity. Points are awarded on a satisfactory completion of the assigned activities.

Project Presentation

All students are expected to do one public presentation related to the project. This may be done individually, in small groups, or by all the interns. The presentation can be in a variety of settings. Possible forums include: undergraduate research days, presentation to a class on campus, presentation to a community group in York, or a presentation to a regional undergraduate research conference. The presentations will be determined as the semester progresses. There are 10 points assigned to these presentations. These will be graded on a 10-point scale based on criteria to be discussed later in the course.

Final Project or Paper

All students are expected to do a final presentation related to the project. This may be done individually, in small groups, or by all the interns. These may take a wide range of formats. For example, it is possible to do a photo essay of a particular problem or issue. You may choose to write a section of a grant to the National Science Foundation. You may prefer to conduct a series of interviews on a topic and to transcribe these interviews into a document. The options are almost limitless. The key factor is that the work provide you with an educational opportunity and that the results contribute in some way to the goals of the project. These are graded as a paper or project would normally be graded. There are a total of 15 points assigned to this activity.

Weekly Assignments

Because this is an experiential project that evolves as the semester progresses, it is difficult to make weekly assignments. In general, there are four phases to the project. The first will be the informational and organizational phase and will last from January 15 until March 1. The first step of this stage, will be for the various participants to get to know each other, establish lines of communication, examine the course goals and objectives, and identify the needs of the York community. For example, in this phase we will determine which students will interact with which agencies and individuals and how. The second step of this phase will include presentations by the faculty, students, and community members on key academic and informational elements of the course. For example, how do we define the research area of the watershed and why, and what are the potential human impacts on the watershed? What information has already been collected on the watershed? During this period students will make site visits to the key agency participants to see how they function and what their role in the overall project is. In addition, students will begin to collect existing field and community data.

The second phase will take place during the first three weeks of March and will consist of a planning

phase in which the students and participants establish time frames, and objectives of the field research. These will be done in conjunction with all project participants. The task for the students will be to assimilate the information.

The third phase will go from the third week in March until the first week in May. This will consist of students gathering data directly from the watershed or the human community surrounding the watershed. These data will then be integrated with the already existing data on the watershed.

The final phase will overlap with the other phases of the project. The dissemination and assessment of information will begin as early as possible. For example, students will disseminate ideas and accomplishments through local newspapers. As the research is completed, students will participate in various undergraduate research forums at UNE, in the region, and in the community of York.

Activities in January and the First Week of February

January 20 -

First group meeting. Explain the purpose of the project and develop foundations for understanding, community, ecology, and the town of York. Reading assignments and materials will be distributed at this meeting.

January 27 -

Second group meeting. Students will determine which activities they wish to coordinate and the agencies/groups they want to be a liaison to. Readings for the first week will be discussed. A presentation may be given by the town planner of York. Additional readings or tasks will be assigned.

February 3 -

Possible presentation by Heidi Kost-Gross of the Radcliffe Seminars of Radcliffe College. Ms. Kost-Gross will make a slide presentation of her groups Watershed Study of the York River. Readings for the second week will be discussed. Students will begin to develop their particular area of expertise.

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