

THIS SYLLABUS IS A DYNAMIC AND WILL BE UPDATED CONTINUOUSLY

Updated 11/06/2018

BIOL 108: Environmental Biology
Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Jeff Atkins
Office: C312
Email: jwatkins6@vcu.edu

Lecture: Section 01 - Tuesday & Thursday 1200 – 1315
Section 02 - Tuesday & Thursday 1330 – 1445

Classroom: Gottwald B118

Office Hours: Tuesday 1500 – 1600 or by appointment

Course Description

This course is for non-biology majors and is intended to present an overview of issues in ecology, environmental science, and the relationships between humans and both the natural and built environments. At the core, this is an environmental science course with ecological and biological highlights. We will cover issues related to natural resources, agriculture, water use, climate change, population growth, land use, and current global environmental problems. We will examine these issues from scientific, social, political, and economic perspectives. After taking this course, students should be able to objectively assess how humans impact the natural environment.

Assessment

Your overall course grade will be derived from a combination of participation (20%), written assignments (40%), quizzes (10%), and exams (30%).

Quizzes will be 4-5 questions, mostly short answer, given at the beginning of class. Some quizzes will be “choose your own adventure” quizzes where you will provide questions on the board and I will pick the five to make up the quiz. The lowest scoring quiz will be dropped.

Assignments will be given throughout the semester that will reinforce the topics we talk about in class. These will be incredibly varied in approach and content and will comprise the bulk of your grade since they will require substantial effort during the semester.

Exams will be conducted twice during the semester, a mid-term exam and a final exam. Both will be take-home exams that will require you to use multiple outside sources. I want you to learn to think, not regurgitate facts.

Late Policy

All assignments that are late will be assessed a 10% penalty for each class period they are delayed.

Course Materials

- 1) Text book: Withgott and Laposta, 2018 Environment: The Science Behind the Stories (not required though, and readings will be uploaded).
- 2) Multimedia: Additional materials will be linked to in the syllabus (see below) during the semester. You are responsible for reading, listening to, or watching these materials.

Attendance and Participation

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected and will account for 20% of your grade. You are expected to arrive on time and remain until class is dismissed. Roll will be taken every day. Participation credit will be at my discretion, but includes being attentive, engaging in class conversation, and avoid distractions.

Authorized absences are granted for students who are approved by the appropriate administrator of the University to miss class. Examples of authorized absences includes class field trips, University sponsored workshops, musical performances, and intercollegiate sports participation. Students who miss class due to illness will be allowed to make up missed work provided adequate documentation is presented (e.g. doctor's note). Extenuating circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Communication via email, promptly, is necessary though.

September 27 – Watersheds

Assignment 1 – [Know your watershed](#) (Due October 4)

October 2 – Food, Agriculture, and Sustainability

Introduction to concepts and big ideas

Assignment 2 - [Where does your food come from?](#) (Due October 9)

October 4 – Out of class assignment (in lieu of class, you got some stuff to do!)

Assignment 3 - [YouTube Assignment](#) (Due October 9)

Preparation: Chapter 10 from Withgott and Laposta (will be online for all)

October 9 – Food, Agriculture, and Sustainability II

Quiz 1 - [Chapter 10 \(pg. 235-249\) from Withgott and Laposata](#)

October 11 – Food, Agriculture, and Sustainability III

Preparation: [Withgott and Laposta pg. 209-220](#)

October 16 – FALL BREAK

October 18 – The Earth

Preparation: NASA – [“The Birth of a New Island”](#)

Bill Nye – [“Plate Tectonics, Volcanos, and Earthquakes”](#)

[Withgott and Laposta pg.32-36](#)

Quiz 2 – Choose your own adventure!

*Bring in in a solid, short answer question to write on the board.

Best five get picked, with some type of reward if yours is chosen.

Assignment 4 - TBD

October 23 – Atmosphere & Weather

October 25 – Atmosphere & Weather II

Preparation: [Withgott and Laposta pg. 445-477](#)

October 30 – Ecosystems and Biomes & Exam Review

Preparation: [Withgott and Laposta pg. 92-99](#)

Quiz 3 – Matching up the biomes! (It’s going to be all matching)

Mid-Term Exam – Take home exam, due **November 6.**

November 1 – Ecosystems and Biomes

November 6 – Ecosystem Services

[Introduction to Ecosystem Services](#)

[In-class Activity](#)

Mid-Term Exam Due

November 8 – Environmental Ethics

Preparation - [White 1967](#) and [Hardin 1968](#)

Suggested: [Leopold 1949](#)

November 13 – Human Population

Preparation: Withgott and Laposta pg. 184-205

Quiz 4 – Human population growth!

November 15 – Guest Lecture

November 20 – NO CLASS

November 27 – Global Climate Change

November 29 – Global Climate Change

December 3 – Environmental Health

December 5 – Risks and Natural Hazards