

Fostering Environmental Literacy Through a Non-majors Environmental Problems Course (They don't know, what they don't know!)

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What is Environmental Literacy?

- the capability for a contextual and detailed understanding of an environmental problem in order to enable analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and ultimately sound and informed decision making at a citizen's level

In short:

Environmental literacy is about practices, activities, and feelings grounded in familiarity and sound knowledge.



Environmental Literacy

- Context – understanding in relation to experience
- Connections – of concepts & phenomena to one another & daily life
- Competence – ability to apply knowledge (includes problem solving & decision making skills)
- Conscience – understanding the values of our society (worth)



Fostering Environmental Literacy

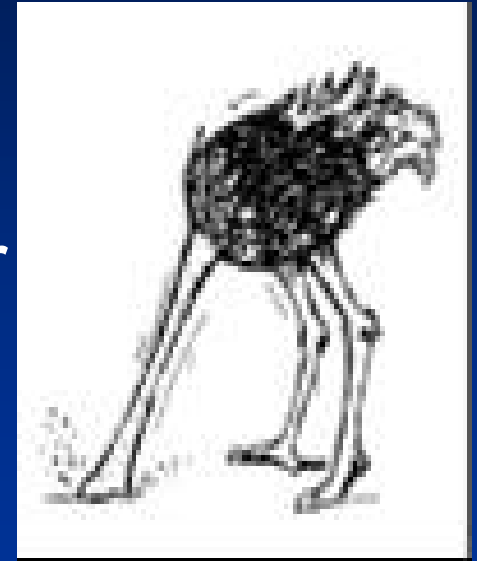
- Biology 3070 – Seminar on Environmental Problems
- Typically taken by non-majors
- Limited enrollment of 12
- Meet once a week for an extended time




At the Beginning of the Course

Initial student survey revealed

- No knowledge of local environmental problems and/or issues
- Little understanding regarding negative environmental impacts
- No knowledge of public/civic environmental groups
- Few ideas on what or how to affect positive change



E.L. Goals for the Course

- Understand how environmental issues are interconnected
 - Identify & defend data-based recommendations to mitigate problems
 - Demonstrate understanding of selected environmental problems from a variety of perspectives
 - Improve oral & written communication skills as you become a citizen scholar
 - Distinguish among & critically evaluate sources of information
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To Reach those Goals

Sample activities include:

- Surveys on environmental beliefs & values
 - How they conflict or can be congruent
- Carbon footprint figures / reporting
- ‘Global Warming on the Brain’ quizzes
- Figuring a Personal Ecological Footprint
- Self reporting (water use, solid waste, electricity, paper, etc.)



To Reach Those Goals

A sample exercise from the course:

We'll View a video –

WORLD POPULATION

After it is over, write a short paragraph (5 - 8 sentences) to describe your initial reaction to the film.

Identify 3 points for discussion.



Course Requirements To Reach Those Goals

- Required reading idea sheets
- Environmental articles & reports
- Written assignments
- 4 hours of public service
- Field trips / reviews
- A cumulative 'white paper'
 - policy paper on a local environmental issue



White Paper on Local Issue

In lieu of exams

students choose a local environmental issue

- Problem statement
- Background on the issue
- Stakeholder analysis
- Alternatives
- Conclusion
- Presentation of the paper to the class



Environmental Literacy

is about choices & personal responsibility.

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks about changing themselves.

-Tolstoy



YOUR MISSION

List 3 ways you can make a personal positive difference in the environment.

Take action on 1 of those ideas before the end of the week.





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