CSUS 265
Exploring environmental policy and Issues using Film

Spring 2015
Monday 3:00-5:50 p.m.
136 Brody Hall

OVERVIEW
This course presents students with multi-media opportunities for learning about and considering aspects of environmental, natural resource, and sustainability policy, perception, and culture.

INSTRUCTORS
Michael Kaplowitz, J.D., Ph.D.  
Office: 884-6877  
Dept of Community Sustainability  
Fax: 353-8994  
133 Natural Resource Building  
Home: 351-4255  
E-mail: kaplowit@msu.edu  
Cell: 582-1918

Bineeta Gurung, Doctoral student  
Dept of Community Sustainability  
E-mail: gurungbi@msu.edu

TARGET AUDIENCE
This course is intended for undergraduate students interested in sustainability, environmental issues, and public policy. The course uses feature films, documentaries, books, and select scholarly articles among other materials. There are no required, prerequisite courses.

DESCRIPTION
The course will expose students to, as well as further their understanding of, 1) conceptions of nature and people’s interaction with nature, 2) how people’s conceptions shape environmental policy and behaviors, and 3) how political, economic, and social systems mediate competing interests related to the environment and natural resources. A goal is to promote critical thinking concerning the scope, complexity, and interdisciplinary nature of environmental issues.

Each year, the course focuses on different aspects of complex historical social conflicts with environmental and human health implications. The course uses the films and readings to help explore human understandings of nature, the environment, and sustainability. Course foci have included, asking such questions as, “are humans separate or linked with nature,” and “what is the role of nature in influencing our political and economic systems, and how has nature and the environment been a contributing factor in shaping the national identity of the United States?” It is hoped that by gaining a vocabulary, working knowledge, and understanding of alternative frames of “environmental thinking,” political and legal systems, and alternative views of environmentalism, conservation, and sustainability, students will become better consumers, generators, constituents, and practitioners.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students in this course will advance their knowledge, skill, and ability associated with the core competencies and associated learning outcomes for the Department of Community Sustainability’s undergraduate program. These competencies and associated learning outcomes include: Critical thinking, Systems thinking, Economic literacy, Ecological literacy, Boundary-crossing, Community, Equity, Civic engagement, Leadership, Ethics, and Initiative and practical skills.

It is expected that by the end of the course students in CSUS 265 will be able to:

- Articulate personal worldviews regarding sustainability and related issues.
- Identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they offer in their own and others’ work.
- Apply systems thinking to explain this interconnectedness of human and natural systems.
- Articulate the rights and responsibilities of citizenship with an understanding of the tensions between individual rights and responsibilities for the common good.
- Prepare and deliver concise presentations that are designed to increase knowledge, foster understanding or promote change in the audience’s attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.
- Include skillful choice of visual representations and text that express the desired content and enhanced meaning.
- Describe ways in which inequality is manifested (e.g., income inequality, injustice, social marginalization, voicelessness etc.).

COURSE CALENDAR

A draft calendar of course topics, films, required readings, and assignments is attached. This calendar will change. It, like the syllabus and other course materials, will be posted on the course instructional website (D2L).

MATERIALS

Books

There are three books. They can be purchased new or used. Copies of these books are on reserve at MSU Main Library. Students are expected to read the posted required readings BEFORE the class for which they are assigned. Three books featured in the course are:


There will be assigned readings for the course. They will be periodically posted on the course website and appear in the course calendar. The readings include chapters from books, scholarly journal articles, articles in leading magazines and newspapers, etc.
Films and Documentaries
Some films and documentaries are required viewing as homework and others will be shown during regular class time for enrolled students and instructors.

To facilitate students’ legal access to (as well as to help keep costs down for students), the films assigned as homework as well as those used in class are available on reserve in MSU’s Multimedia Centre at MSU Main Library.

Many of the films and documentaries assigned for the course are currently available on Amazon Prime/Amazon Student, Netflix etc.

Students are free to watch the assigned films in any legal way that they wish.

COPYRIGHT, FAIR USE, AND DIGITAL MILLENNIUM ACT
Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States (title 17, U.S. Code) to the authors of "original works of authorship," including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works. Civil and criminal remedies may be imposed for violations of an author's copyright interests. Michigan State University is committed to obeying copyright law. The TEACH Act (Title 17, Section 110(2) of the US Code) gives faculty the ability to use materials in a classroom for face-to-face teaching. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) is a United States copyright law that implements two 1996 treaties of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The films, documentaries, and other teaching materials will be part of mediated instruction. The films, etc. are to be used in educational settings by the university professor/students and in compliance with U.S. copyright law.

OFFICE HOURS
Professor Kaplowitz will generally be available to meet with students before class and after class. Students may sign up for office hour appointments (default time: 15-minutes) with the instructor in person before/after class or via email (kaplowit@msu.edu). Office hour appointments will typically be on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2-4 pm. Professor Kaplowitz will try to keep this time available for student appointments. Please let him know in advance if you would like to meet.

Ms. Gurung will generally be available to meet with students after class. Students may sign up for office hour appointments with her in person after class or via email (gurungbi@msu.edu).

RESERVATION
The instructors reserve the right to alter or amend this syllabus at any time.

CLASS ROOM LOGISTICS
The class will be held in 136 Brody Hall. Seating will be not be initially assigned. However, a seating chart may be distributed so that students can ‘select’ and document their seat assignment.

Classroom Discussion, Lecture, and Presentations
Classes will include lecture, discussion, and student presentations. In addition to submitting their homework (i.e., reading reflections) to the homework folder on D2L PRIOR to 5:00 pm on
Sunday evenings (day before of class), students should bring a copy of their submissions to class for their use in class.

**HOMEWORK**

**Assigned Readings.** Students are expected to have completed all of the week’s assigned readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. That means completing the readings in advance of Monday’s class.

**Homework Assignment (HW)**
(based on weekly at-home reading/film/documentary).
Students will find each week’s homework posted on the class website. *These written assignments are due at 5:00 pm on the evening of Sunday before the class for which they are assigned.* The homework answers should reflect the student’s understanding of the week’s reading and homework film/documentary. They should be posted in the appropriate D2L folder.

**Reflection/Synthesis Paper (RP)**
(based on readings, homework film, classroom film, and discussions).
Each week the students are required to submit a brief (1-page) reflection/synthesis paper that is responsive to one of several paper topics assigned by the instructor and that incorporates the student’s understanding of the readings and film/documentaries. These papers are due in the appropriate D2L folder on Thursdays at/before 9:00 am.

**FINAL PAPER AND PRESENTATION**

**Final Paper**
There will be a final paper due on May 6th at 3:00 p.m. The content of this 5 to 8-page paper will be finalized during the course. In the past, the final paper has been structured as follows:

1) What Worked Well  
   a. Film that worked well and why. Identify theme, etc.  
   b. Reading that worked well and why.

2) What Did Not Work Well  
   a. Film that did not work so well and why.  
   b. Reading that worked well and why.

3) Film Not Used this Year Should be Used Next  
   a. Identify a film or documentary that should be used next year. Explain why.  
   b. Identify a companion reading that should be used next year and why.

4) Conclusion  
   a. Include feedback and suggestions on how the course could be improved.

This year the paper will likely focus on an environmental or sustainability issue of your choosing.

**Presentation**
Each student will put together a brief presentation based on a draft of their final paper during the last two weeks of the course. These presentations will be 3-4 minutes in length and are expected to be ‘professional’ quality and informative. Ideally, there will be youtube videos, movies, automated power points or other well-designed and automated video/audio presentations. *All*
presentations must be posted on the course website before class on April 20th. More will be explained about the presentations later during the course.

INSTRUCTION AND GRADING-COMPONENTS
A. Attendance (2 or more absences will lower your final grade)
   Since discussion is an important part of this course, attendance is mandatory. There is really no way that you can succeed without having been a participant in the class. Likewise, there is really no way that a collection project can be successfully completed without having been a participant in the class. Because the class is so large it would be restrictive to spend time taking attendance, however a sign in sheet will be passed around each class. If you miss more than two classes without an approved absence (either the instructors know beforehand or providing a legitimate excuse after) it may adversely affect your final grade.

B. Participation (10%)
   There is an expectation that each student will be fully prepared and will be able to participate in class. Participation means:
   1) doing the assigned readings,
   2) answering questions in class,
   3) positive collaboration in class exercises
   4) asking and answering appropriate questions during class, and
   5) contributing to the discussions in class in a positive manner

   Discussion will be an important part of this class, but you do not need to feel obliged to agree with what is being said – even by the instructors. However, to have a truly safe classroom we must respect each other, listen closely to what is being said, develop your own ideas about it, and then present your views in a respectful manner. If something is said that you did not understand, or need clarified, do not hesitate to ask for such clarification. Always feel free to raise your hand and ask a question or make a comment. Together we can create a truly unique and exceptional learning environment.

   Students should expect to be called on to answer questions in every class. If a student is called on during class for a contribution pertaining to class and that student is unable to participate because he or she is unprepared, the instructor will record this and it will be factored into a student’s course grade (i.e., may result in the students grade being lower than test scores, etc.). Poor participation as evidenced by poor preparation, evidence of not having read the material, not turning in on time and/or complete assignments etc. will be taken into consideration in a student’s final grade. Significant poor or disruptive participation will result in student’s final grade being lowered relative to his/her scores on exams, papers, etc. (e.g., 3.5 down to 3.0 or 2.5).

C. Homework (30%)
   Students are required to complete weekly written homework assignments. These assignments are to be turned in to the instructor on the class website at 5:00 pm on the day before the class (Mondays). Homework assignments will include the following types of assignments: 1) short answer questions, 2) reading summaries, 3) questions for the instructor, and 4) other
assignments. Completed and on-time homework assignments will receive full credit. Work that is timely but poor quality will receive less than full credit. Late homework will not be accepted for unexcused absences.

D. Reflection Papers (30%)
There will be weekly, short reflection papers expected from each student. The due dates are specified in the course outline but will typically be Thursday morning. Typically these papers will be about 1-2 pages. These papers must be well written, proofread, and properly sourced/referenced. Please use, 12-pt Times Roman font, 1” margins, and good organization.

E. Final Paper (20%)
There will be a final paper due on May 6th. See above. This paper should be approximately 5-10 pages. Submission to be made via course website.

F. Presentation (10%)
Each student will make a presentation based on their draft, final paper during the last two weeks of the course.

G. Turning in Homework and Papers
Students MUST submit their homework and papers electronically to the course website (i.e., D2L) in a timely manner (before deadline) for credit to be received. With the instructor’s approval, an electronic copy may be emailed to the instructor.

H. Retain (hard) Copies !
Students MUST retain a copy of all homework and papers submitted. Failure to do so may be used against the student, in the event that there is any question with the instructor over submission of work and or sufficiency/grade of the said item.

I. Final Grades—“The Curve” and “Penalties”
Students’ final grades will be initially based on the results of their homework (30%), reflection papers (30%), participation (10%), their final paper (20%), and presentation (10%). Then penalties and bonuses will be applied. The aggregate score for each student will typically fall in the range from 75 to 95. However, the assignment grades are a function of the instructor’s human frailties and the particular composition of each year’s course content. As a result, the instructor MAY ‘curve’ students’ exam and other course grades. For illustrative purposes, the instructor has assigned MSU GPA grades for a typical distribution of final scores as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>GPA Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92-100</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-91</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>A-/B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-85</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-79</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B-/C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-73</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>C-/D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTE: The actual grade range for your class may vary and as a result, the MSU GPA final grade assignment may vary too. The instructor explicitly reserves the right to change the grading scale but will strive to apply it uniformly and equitably.

Bonuses and Penalties. As discussed above under Attendance and Participation, a student’s final grade for the course may be downgraded if they are excessively absent (two or more unexcused absences) and/or if they are frequently unprepared. Likewise, students who exhibit extra effort, contributions that bring added value to the course, etc. will be eligible for consideration for some bonus points in the final assignment of course grades.

POLICY ON EXCUSES
Students are expected to attend each class, submit assignments on time, and take exams at the regularly scheduled time unless an acceptable reason as per MSU policy is offered. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious observances, family emergency, or conflicts with other final exams (if verified or validated). Students are expected to notify the instructors ahead of time whenever possible and in all cases as soon as possible, in writing (e.g., e-mail) or in person, if they cannot attend class, submit written assignments, or take an exam. If legitimate reasons are presented in a timely and reasonable manner, arrangements can be made to acquire class notes, submit work, take exams, etc.

INCOMPLETE WORK AND DEFERRED GRADES
Unexpected circumstances may cause a student to request a final grade of Incomplete (I) or Deferred (DF). Requests must be made in writing before the date of the final exam stating the reason(s) for the request and a plan for removal of the I or DF grade. University policy requires that work to remove an I be completed by the 5th week of the next semester in attendance or the grade automatically becomes an F. A DF grade (available only to graduate students) must be removed within two calendar years.

POLICY ON PHONES/LAPTOPS/PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY IN CLASS
Students are expected to pay attention and participate in class. We all are creatures of habit and many of us, including the instructor, like to check email, Facebook, do Google searches, etc. In a class of this size there is the potential for abuse of any of these items. A study done by UM’s CRLT found that more than 40% of students felt distracted by other students surfing the net, or otherwise using their computers for something other than taking notes. Therefore, if you choose to play a game of any sort or go surfing, remember that you may be distracting others around you. Needless to say, tuition is not cheap, and engaging in these sorts of activities is not so much disrespecting to the instructor as it might be disrespecting to your own, and other students’ abilities and opportunities. Of course, during breaks you may check your various accounts, surf the web, etc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Article 2.III.B.2 of the Academic Freedom Report states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Sustainability adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations.
Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment. Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course. This course is overseen by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

TURNITIN.COM
Consistent with MSU’s efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student’s work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student’s work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a ‘similarity score’. The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student’s work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.

Students should submit papers to Turnitin Dropboxes without identifying information included in the paper (e.g. name or student number). The system will automatically show this info to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.
## CLASS CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings Before class</th>
<th>Film/Documentary before class</th>
<th>Film/Discussion in class</th>
<th>Due 5:00 pm on Sundays before the class</th>
<th>Due 9:00 am on Thursdays after the class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 12</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>WALL-E</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>Oreskes &amp; Conway. 2010. <em>Merchants of Doubt</em>. Introduction Ch 1 and 6</td>
<td>An Inconvenient Truth</td>
<td>Cool It</td>
<td>HW1</td>
<td>Reflection paper 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Oreskes &amp; Conway. 2010. <em>Merchants of Doubt</em>. Ch 5 and 7</td>
<td>Greedy Lying Bastards</td>
<td>The 11th Hour</td>
<td>HW2</td>
<td>Reflection paper 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>Pollan. 2006. <em>The Omnivore’s dilemma</em>. Introduction, Ch 4, 5, 6 and 7</td>
<td>Food Inc.</td>
<td>Fed Up</td>
<td>HW3</td>
<td>Reflection paper 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>4 suggested readings</td>
<td>Blue Gold</td>
<td>The end of the Line</td>
<td>HW4</td>
<td>Reflection paper 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mar 23</td>
<td>Friedman. 2009. <em>Hot, Flat and Crowded</em>. Ch 4 and 5</td>
<td>Wasteland</td>
<td>No Impact Man</td>
<td>HW8</td>
<td>Reflection paper 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Apr 6</td>
<td>Comprehending soil within the context of the Land community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Apr 20</td>
<td>Student presentations and class discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Apr 27</td>
<td>Student presentations and class discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Final papers due at 3.00 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>