Course Overview
This class is an introduction to the biology of environmental problems. Environmental problems are immensely complex, involving aspects of history, philosophy, behavior, science, economics, social justice, and politics. This course is designed to engage you with a broad perspective on our relationship with land, water, air, and other living things, in order for you to become an ecologically literate citizen. Ecological literacy involves a basic understanding of how the world works, and the ability to see and understand the connections between living and nonliving things. On an individual level, ecological literacy also requires an ability to see the connections among personal behavior, personal health, and the health of natural systems. Ecological literacy requires a comprehension of environmental problems and the ability to distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable uses of nature. Finally – and perhaps most importantly – ecological literacy involves the ability to identify and generate solutions to environmental problems, and to help enact those solutions. We expect you to engage yourself with the essential background information and knowledge necessary to facilitate your own path to ecological literacy.

This course satisfies the General Education Criteria for a Life Sciences course. In addressing the broad scope of environmental biology, we will also cover all the fundamental concepts of the life sciences, including genetics, speciation, evolution, growth and differentiation, metabolism and bioenergetics, ecology, and behavior. We will review scientific methodology, and you will engage in exercises that involve making observations, evaluating data, and problem solving.

Course Goals and Objectives
Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- describe how humans - as animals - need nature to survive.
- compare and contrast ways in which people have distinguished between the use and abuse of nature.
- summarize ways in which sustainability has been defined.
- list environmental problems that are the result of unsustainable human behavior and explain the root causes of environmental problems.
- explain core concepts in ecology and summarize our ecological understanding of environmental problems.
- explain how human health is related to land health.
- summarize changes in design/architecture, economics, policy, and education that promote sustainability.
- articulate his/her environmental ethic, and list actions to reduce his/her ecological footprint.
Course Structure

This is a 3-credit hour course. The course is 8 weeks long and consists of 7 content modules. Please be aware that this course is accelerated in nature; 16 weeks’ worth of content will be covered in an 8-week time span. You should dedicate approximately 12–16 hours per week to working on the course itself, but actual time commitments will vary depending on your input, needs, and personal study habits. You are required to log on to the course website a minimum of 4 days per week but as discussions develop, you will probably need to do so more frequently.

This course is designed with the principles of collaborative learning and active participation in mind. You are encouraged to share your thoughts and engage in problem-solving. The course has a consistent and predictable structure, organized around the weekly modules, with a course website that is straightforward and easy to navigate. Instructions and due dates for activities and assignments are clearly articulated so that you know what is expected of you and to stay on track.

We realize that you have a life beyond the scope of this course. We provide the opportunity for you to complete assignments well ahead of the due dates. This will give your classmates a head start in reading and responding to your work. Most assignments are due by 11:55PM on their respective due dates as listed on the course calendar, giving you and your classmates time to read and comment on each other's work before the next module begins. However, if you are unable to complete an assignment because of professional obligations, you should notify the instructor at least 48 hours in advance of an assignment due date, and one week before a weekly quiz.

Readings and responses to discussion questions should be read and submitted during the module for which they are assigned to get the most benefit from the discussions. At the end of each content module, participants will have an opportunity to make sure that they have completed all the required activities and assignments.

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction
You will learn how to navigate the course site, be introduced to your classmates and to the science of the environment.

Week 2: Ecology and Evolution
You will study the current understanding of the natural world. This knowledge gives a foundation for understanding the problems caused by our use of natural resources.

Week 3: Protecting Biodiversity
Biodiversity leads to stability in ecosystems. In this module, we will look at various forms of biodiversity and the influences that maintain or degrade biodiversity.

Week 4: Human Populations
We will have come to the heart of the matter—the consequences to the environment of the spread of human populations around the globe. We will discuss the growth of human populations in various countries, methods of building sustainable communities, and the agricultural methods have have sustained a growing population.

Week 5: Environmental Changes
Humans have had a significant impact on the environment. In this week, we will look at three of the largest impacts.
Week 6: Energy Sources
You will study impacts of the various ways we produce the energy that supports our modern lifestyle.

Week 7: Environmental Policies
You will study the policies and actions that reduce our impact on the planet.

Textbook
RECOMMENDED
Susan Karr, Anne Houtman, and Jeneen Interlandi
WH Freeman and Company, New York, NY

This book is available as both a paperback and as an ebook from the publisher.

Please note that there are no assigned readings or assignments from this textbook. This book is recommended as a supplementary text for students with limited background coursework in the biological sciences.

Academic Calendar

Course Length
This University of Illinois course is 8 weeks long.

Definition of a Course Week
A course week is defined as the period between Saturday, 12:00 AM Central Time, and Friday, 11:59 PM Central Time. For more information, see the University's Academic Calendar.

Participation

Student Commitment
By registering for this online course, you commit to self-motivated study, participation in online course activities, and timely submission of all assignments. Furthermore, you commit to accessing the course website and checking e-mail at least 4 days per week, as well as to devoting at least 12–16 hours weekly to preparing for each module and completing the required assignments and readings.
Assignments

Late Submissions of Assignments, Reflective Essays, and Other Written Work

Assignments, reflective essays, and other written work are due by **11:55 p.m. Central Time** on the dates specified in the course calendar, unless otherwise noted. Unless permission from the instructor is obtained **at least 1 day before a due date**, projects submitted more than 24 hours past the due date **will not receive a grade** without a note from the Dean of Students.

Late Submissions of Discussions

The required initial discussion and response posts **must be made on time**. Submissions more than one day late or submitted beyond the timeframe of the week’s discussion **will not be graded**.

Being Excused from Assignments

If you wish to be excused from participation in class discussions or from submitting assignments on time because of medical reasons or personal emergencies, you must address the issue with the course instructor. Because of this course’s fast pace and the potential effect missed assignments have on your ability to complete the course successfully, any accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Because of the extended timeframes available for most of the assignments, late assignments will only be considered with a **Dean’s Note accounting for extended absences (>3 days) or emergencies**. A missed self-assessment will count as your dropped grade. If you miss more than two weeks of assignments and activities, you are advised to take an incomplete for the semester and resume the course next semester.

Instructor Responses

Instructor Feedback Turnaround Time

Questions posted to the **Course Q & A** forum generally will be answered within 48 hours. If possible, students are encouraged to answer questions posted by other students to the **Course Q & A** forum, rather than waiting for an instructor’s response.

Assignments submitted online will be reviewed and graded by the course instructor and TAs within one week. Proctored exams will be graded within 5 business days.

Responding to E-mails

The instructors and TAs will respond to e-mail messages within 24 hours of receiving them Monday through Friday. **When sending e-mails, include a subject line that identifies the discussion section and nature of your question.** The instructor may not respond to questions sent to him or
her that should be posted in the Course Q & A forum. Please don’t be offended if you are asked to forward your question to this location.

Responding to the Discussion
The role of the instructor within the discussion forums is to help facilitate discussion by providing probing questions, asking for clarification, and helping solve conflicts, as necessary. The instructor will not respond to every post; you are encouraged to share your thoughts, experiences, and ideas with each other as well.

Copyright

Student Content
Participants in University of Illinois courses retain copyright of all assignments and posts they complete. However, all materials may be used for educational purposes within the given course. In group projects, only the portion of the work completed by a particular individual is copyrighted by that individual. The University of Illinois may request that students' materials be shared with future courses, but such sharing will only be done with the students’ consent. The information that students submit during a course may, however, be used for the purposes of administrative data collection and research. No personal information is retained without the students’ consent.

Non-Student Content
Everything on this site and within University of Illinois courses is copyrighted. The copyrights of all non-student work are owned by the University of Illinois and its Board of Trustees, except in approved cases where the original creator retains copyright of the material. Copyrights to external links are owned by or are the responsibility of those external sites. Students are free to view and print material from this site so long as

- the material is used for informational purposes only;
- the material is used for noncommercial purposes only; and
- copies of any material include the respective copyright notice.

These materials may not be mirrored or reproduced on non–University of Illinois websites without the express written permission of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. To request permission, please contact the academic unit for the program.

Student Behavior

Student Conduct
Students are expected to behave in accordance with the penal and civil statutes of all applicable local, state, and federal governments, with the rules and regulations of the Board of Regents, and with University regulations and administrative rules.
For more information about the student code and handbook is available here: http://studentcode.illinois.edu/.

Netiquette

In any social interaction, certain rules of etiquette are expected and contribute to more enjoyable and productive communication. The following are tips for interacting online via e-mail or discussion board messages, adapted from guidelines originally compiled by Chuq Von Rospach and Gene Spafford:

- Remember that the person receiving your message is someone like you, deserving and appreciating courtesy and respect.
- Be brief. Succinct, thoughtful messages have the greatest effect.
- Your messages reflect on you personally. Take time to make sure that you are proud of their form and content.
- Use descriptive subject headings in your e-mails.
- Think about your audience and the relevance of your messages.
- Be careful when you use humor and sarcasm. Absent the voice inflections and body language that aid face-to-face communication, online messages are easy to misinterpret.
- When making follow-up comments, summarize the parts of the message to which you are responding.
- Avoid repeating what has already been said. Needless repetition is ineffective communication.
- Cite appropriate references whenever using someone else’s ideas, thoughts, or words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>&gt;97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93.0-96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0-92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0-89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.0-86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0-82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0-79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73.0-76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70.0-72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0-69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63.0-66.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignments, Weights, and Deliverables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Forum/Assignment</th>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
<th>Environmental Issues - Replies</th>
<th>Multi-Week Projects</th>
<th>Final Exam</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10**</td>
<td>90**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>95*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
<td><strong>195</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>160</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Lowest self-assessment grade dropped.

** Lowest Environmental Issues replies dropped.

You can access your scores by clicking the Grades link from the sidebar of the course home page. All interim and final deliverables have due dates. Failure to meet deadlines results in a reduction of the assignment points. For the due dates of each assignment, please see the course calendar.

Week Overview

Each week will begin with the overview, explain what the week is about, what learning goals you are expected to achieve, how long it will take, and in what activities you will participate. Each week is designed with the same structure and activities unless otherwise specified. The activities are explained in greater detail below. You can find the due dates of specific assignments in the course calendar.
Individual Assignments

You will have some assignments that do involve interacting with others. These include lecture lessons--weekly interactive lectures where the instructor covers the bulk of the content. This, together with any assigned readings, should give you exposure to all of the information you need to know.

Interactions

A variety of assignments will help students to interact with the instructor and other students to reach a deeper understanding of the topics. The Environment Issues Discussion is designed to be a student-lead discussion of current environmental issues. In addition, students will have the opportunity to discuss assigned topics by posting a few paragraphs and reply to the postings of fellow students.

Extra Credit Participation Activity - By participating in any of the student/student Question and Answer (Q&A) discussions, a student can earn up to two extra credit participation points each week. Each question or answer is worth one extra credit participation point.

Self-assessments

Each week (except during break) students will take a self-assessment to evaluate new knowledge obtained. These quizzes will be primarily multiple choice but may also include matching and will cover the objectives for each lecture and discussion lesson. They may be taken any time between 12:01 a.m. and 11:55 p.m. on Fridays, but once you have started the quiz you will have a time limit of one hour. You may take the quiz twice in this period. Your final grade will be averaged.

Study material

It is highly recommended that you only consult the following sources of information in studying for this class:

- Suggested books and required readings
- Supplemental information posted on course website
- Internet links provided in class or on course website

Use of another source (such as Internet sites found via Google) may provide information that is unreliable.

Academic Integrity

Expectations

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Examples of academic dishonesty include the following: cheating, fabrication, facilitating infractions of academic integrity, plagiarism, bribes, favors, and threats, academic interference, examination by proxy, grade tampering, and non-original works.

Academic integrity means being honest about your intellectual work. In the context of our course, this means that you assert that written work you submit for the course is a product of your own intellectual effort and not the work of someone else. The written materials you prepare for this class are a method of demonstrating your knowledge of the facts and your understanding of the concepts
of environmental biology. If you use the words and ideas of another as your own, you are not being honest and have only demonstrated the other person's knowledge and understanding, not your own.

Discussion activities, including the "Current Environmental Issues Presentation", will occasionally require you to research a topic using other sources. It is acceptable to use information and data from internet or printed sources if the source is clearly cited.

However, under no circumstance is it acceptable to directly copy written information from a source (website or printed). Even if the source is acknowledged, directly copying written information is considered plagiarism.

**Self-assessments** must be taken without the aid of textbooks, the internet or other student help. Self-assessments are an individual effort. You may only use your own personal notes.

**What is plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without properly acknowledging the source. The most basic form of plagiarism is simply copying and pasting passages from a source and using them as your own. **Even if the source is then cited, this is still plagiarism!** In addition, this is only one form of plagiarism. Another common, unacceptable use of someone else's work is using their idea and writing structure, but changing a few words so it's not directly copied. **Simply changing a few words to synonyms, or moving a few words around, does not make the writing your own!**

To properly use an outside source, you need to read and internalize the information, and then paraphrase the ideas to support whatever point you are making in your own writing. And, whenever you paraphrase someone else's ideas, always cite your source!

For more information, and a few good examples, please refer to this page from our library's website: http://guides.library.illinois.edu/citing/sources/plagarism

In this course, we will use SafeAssign software to assess originality of student work and detect plagiarism.

Finally, a special note about using quotes in your work. Although properly quoted material is technically not plagiarism, the use of quotes does not demonstrate an understanding of the quoted material. So, assignments that form points and arguments using quotes from the class material may be heavily penalized.

**Copying and Propagation of Course Materials**

It is expressly forbidden to make copies of course materials without permission, including, but not limited to, self-assessments, exams, and assignments. It is further forbidden to upload any course materials to online websites including, but not limited to, course-assistant sites (e.g. CourseHero), online shared documents (e.g. Google Docs), or other online forums (e.g. Reddit). If you upload course material to these sites, we will consider that academic dishonesty of the most severe degree and will seek the maximum penalty via the University adjudication process. **Guidelines**

Should an incident arise in which a student is thought to have violated academic integrity, the student will be processed under the disciplinary policy set forth in the Illinois Academic Integrity **Policy**. All alleged incidences of academic dishonesty will be adjudicated using the University FAIR system.

If you do not understand relevant definitions of academic infractions, contact the instructor for an explanation within the first week of class.