

# YALE-NUS PROGRAMME IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

## **YID1201: Introduction to Environmental Studies 2016-2017, Semester One (August – November 2016) Monday and Thursday, 14:30 – 1600, CR14**

### **Facilitator: Michael Maniates**

Office: Cendana 02-04J

Email: [michael.maniates@yale-nus.edu.sg](mailto:michael.maniates@yale-nus.edu.sg)

Consultation hours: Tuesdays 9:00 – 11 a.m., Thursdays 3:00 – 5:00 p.m., and by appointment

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/maniateshours> to schedule a time

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Environmental Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that draws from the social sciences (geography, economics, history, politics, global affairs, psychology, and sociology), the natural sciences (ecology, physics, chemistry, and geology), and the humanities (religion, philosophy, literature, and the arts). Like all fields, ES has a set of operating assumptions, core ideas, accepted truths, and fights in the family. This course introduces you to these elements of the ES field. As such, our time together may at times feel more like a course in anthropology or psychology than one in the natural sciences.

YID1201 is the foundation for upper-level courses in Environmental Studies at Yale-NUS, and is required for both the major and the minor in the program.

### **Learning Objectives**

The primary objective of this course is to provide an introduction to the field of environmental studies. You should leave this course knowing how practitioners and theorists of ES think, what they study, and why. In particular, you should feel comfortable by the end of the semester with the following ideas:

- 1) the dilemma of unlimited growth on a finite planet
- 2) the function of natural systems and the role of these systems in provisioning human society
- 3) the interplay of three ideas central to the field: sustainability, systems, and power
- 4) how the close study of issues like energy use, food, biodiversity, technology, and climate-change demonstrates the utility of ‘sustainability,’ ‘systems,’ ‘risk,’ and ‘power’ to our thinking about the environmental predicament
- 5) how ‘flashpoints’ of current environmental controversy present opportunities for reflection, action, and change

This class is not meant to convert you to an environmentalist way of thinking, nor is it meant to privilege an environmental studies lens on contemporary issues over other perspectives. Instead, our aim is to understand, as fully as possible, how and why the environmental studies community (comprised of natural scientists, social scientists, humanists, activists, policymakers, political elites, and citizens) conceptualizes, understands, and reacts to environmental threats to human well-being. This is a useful course for students contemplating a career in the field, and for students who may later interact with environmental scientists and others in the environmental studies world.

## Assessment

A kickoff essay (3%): This essay helps me better understand your interests. It also allows you to assess my expectations of your writing.

Four blog entries (6%): You'll contribute four times during the semester to our Wordpress site in response to specific assigned questions. Blogs are graded as "plus," "satisfactory," or "minus."

Ecological Footprint Exercise (7%): I'll ask you to calculate and reflect upon your ecological footprint early in the semester, and submit a one to two-page summary of your work.

"Trial Run" Midterm (7%): We have two in-class midterms in this class. To familiarize you with the structure and difficulty of these exams, I'll ask you to take a mini "trial run" exam at the end of the third week of class, with a take-home component due the following week.

Case studies (14%): We will explore four case studies during the semester. The case studies ask you to critically examine controversial environmental issues from alternative perspectives and offer a set of recommendations. We will initiate a discussion of these cases during class, but you'll need to continue the conversation within your group outside of class. A different member of each group will be responsible for writing a summary recommendation for each case (each student in this class writes up ONE case). The name of this primary author should appear first at the top of the page in each report. Case briefs should draw on class discussion, relevant lectures, and readings. There is a maximum word limit of 1,300 words. At the end of the semester you will evaluate one another (through a confidential message to Prof. Maniates) on the level of commitment to the case-study exercise.

Two Midterms (24% each, 48% total): We will have two exams (at the middle and end of the term). Each will combine a closed-book/closed-note in-class exam with an open-book, open-notes portion.

Eighteen In-Class Reflections (15%): You'll write on-the-spot in class on some aspect of course material. Reflections are graded as "plus," "satisfactory," or "minus." They cannot be made up if you miss class or arrive late.

## Workload

Expect to devote ~ 10 hours a week, on average, to this course, including time in class. Some weeks will be heavier and some will be lighter. Please see me if you are spending more than ~ 10 hours a week so that we may discuss how you can streamline your approach.

## Core Texts/Sources

- ✚ Primary text: *Big World Small Planet*
- ✚ *Big World Small Planet* will be supplemented by additional required readings, websites, and videos that will become available at our WordPress site as we move through the semester
- ✚ Expect 20 – 40 pages of reading per class meeting – on the low end at the beginning of the semester and at the high end when we engage the case studies.

## Grading Philosophy

I'm old-school regarding grades: In this class, an "A" = excellent and exceptional; a "B" = Very Good; and a "C+" = Acceptable. The average final grade in past iterations of this course falls in the "B" range.

## Course policies and Procedures

- ✚ Attendance: I have no attendance policy in this course. If you miss a class, you miss whatever material we covered that day (including any in-class reflections – see above). It will be up to you to consult other members of the seminar to figure out what you've missed. I will be available to help as well, but the primary responsibility for figuring out what you missed will rest on you.
- ✚ Late Submissions: You may submit late material at a cost of 10% of the assignment grade per 24 hours of tardiness.
- ✚ Tardiness: I'll aim to start promptly. Please endeavor to be in a seat before then, as coming in late will be distracting given the configuration of the room.
- ✚ Laptops: You need access to your laptops for readings, but laptops in class can also be distracting and tempting. I'll ask you to close your laptops from time to time; please don't be offended when I do.
- ✚ Academic Integrity
  - This would be an unfortunate moment for you to run afoul of our shared understandings of academic integrity. Please see the Yale-NUS "avoiding plagiarism" website at <http://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/plagiarism/> PLEASE review the Cornell University Plagiarism Tutorial on this page. You should also review <https://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/policies/academic-integrity/>
  - Instances of lapses in academic integrity are easily found, including [this recent embarrassment](#) at the Republican National Convention in the United States. But other, more subtle mistakes, often associated with sloppy paraphrasing, are equally common. Be especially diligent in your notetaking practice (consider using Zotero or another citation management to help you) and work closely with the library staff and your capstone advisor if you have doubts about your ability to write in your own voice. Also consider reviewing, thoroughly, "*They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*", which is a favorite of many environmental-studies professors at Yale-NUS.
  - It is difficult to overstate in this document the difficulties that we will all experience if you should violate, either intentionally or inadvertently, our norms of academic integrity. Make every effort to err on the side of full citation of the work of others, and organizing your note-taking and draft-writing work to insure that you are composing prose that revolves around your own voice rather than the voices of others.
  - Midterms and Final Essay: You may confer with others as your brainstorm and study, but your work must be your own. Provide full literature citations when you invoke evidence for your assertions.

- **Case-Study Briefs:** While the discussion of a case study is obviously a group effort, the member who takes responsibility for writing up each brief will receive the grade for that brief. **Be especially wary of possibilities for plagiarism.** Since you will evaluate each other's overall contribution to your group (see grading), there is a strong incentive for all members to participate actively and constructively in thinking through and contributing to these cases. Though not required, I encourage the author of each brief to solicit editorial suggestions from fellow group members -- in past years many students have found this to be quite helpful. My criteria for grading case briefs are the thoughtfulness of your summary and recommendations, the arguments you make in support of your recommendation, and the organization and quality of the writing.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or other learning disabilities that require special accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met.

### **Important Schedule Information**

- We will normally meet on Mondays and Thursdays from 1430 – 1545.
- Class is cancelled due to a public holidays on Monday 12 September. Additionally, Prof. Maniates may be away on Monday, 17 October – this is to be determined.
- We will make up all missed classes via additional sessions that will be scheduled either from 5:15 – 6:30 p.m., or 6:45 p.m. – 8 p.m., depending on the majority preference of the class.

### **Other Important Dates**

Short Writing Assignment: released 11 August/due 15 August (11:59 p.m. via Canvas)

Ecological Footprint Assignment: released 18 August/due 23 August (11:59 p.m. via Canvas)

Trial Run Exam: released 28 August /due 2 September (11:59 p.m. via Canvas)

Exam #1: released 10 September/due 16 September (11:59 p.m. via Canvas)

Exam #2: released 1 November/due 9 November (11:59 p.m. via Canvas)

Case Studies due on 23 and 30 of October, and 6 and 21 of November (11:59 p.m. via Canvas)

### **Module Structure**

PART ONE: What's Wrong?

PART TWO: Environmental Studies and the Natural Sciences

PART THREE: Four Core Concepts

PART FOUR: Four Case Studies

PART FIVE: Expert Canoeist or White Water Raft?