

Earth Charter: Pathway to a Sustainable Future?

RD 491, section 001
Michigan State University
Spring 2002

Schedule: Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:20

Location: Tuesday-Bessey 108, Thursday-Wells Hall C103, C104, C109, C110

Instructors: Dr. Laurie Thorp
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Text: Earth Charter document, www.earthcharter.org
Course packet, available at Budget Printing or on reserve Main Library

Course Description:

We believe that you cannot talk about global sustainability without including our current system of education as part of the equation. The present patterns of distanced, abstract and objectified teaching and learning only serve to perpetuate a way of knowing and being that is detrimental to planet Earth and her inhabitants. This course has been purposefully designed as an alternative model for students, teachers and the subject to come together in a meaningful way. In developing this course we have designed opportunities for:

- thoughtfulness and deep reflection rather than rote memorization of information
- action and engagement rather than passive receptivity
- creative self-expression rather than one-size-fits-all assignments
- individualized self-assessment rather than multiple guess tests with one right answer
- collaborative construction of meaning through dialogue rather than lobbying for position with debate and discussion

This course will focus on the Earth Charter document as a vehicle for *personal*, *institutional*, *community*, *national* and *global* transformation. During Tuesday class sessions students will critically engage with a variety of speakers as they address the

fundamental principles proposed in the Earth Charter. Thursday class sessions will be structured as dialogue circles for small group reflection on various ways to put the Earth Charter into action. Each student will be expected to participate in a semester-long project of engagement with the Earth Charter document and their community. The project will be chronicled through the compilation of a *praxis* portfolio.

Course Plan:

Date	Topic	Speaker	Assignment
1/8- Tues	Overview of course and Shared expectations, portfolio learning components	Thorp and Link	2 page critical reflection on the EC document, due 1/15
1/10- Thurs.	Principles of dialogue		Read Rockefeller 2001
1/15- Tues.	History and review of EC document	Karen Vigmostad, MSU, Resource Dev.	Read: Rockefeller and World Charter for Nature 1982
1/17- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
1/22- Tues.	Biodiversity (sec.5)	Stuart Gage MSU, Entomology	Portfolio learning plan, due 1/29, Read: Pimental
1/24- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
1/29- Tues.	Precautionary Principle (sec. 6)	Ted Schlettler, Society for Environment and Health Network	Read: Meadows and Myers
1/31- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
2/5- Tues.	Patterns of Production, Consumption & Reproduction (sec.7)	Marty Heller, U of M Ctr. For Sustainable Systems	Read: McDonough to be distributed
2/7- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
2/12- Tues.	Ecological sustainability (sec.8)	view video Baraka	Read: Schumacher and Berry
2/14- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
2/19- Tues.	Eradicate poverty (sec.9)	Judy Gardi & John Duley MSU	Read: Addressing Inequities and Meadows
2/21- Thurs.	Dialogue session		Formative evaluation of course, and schedule learning plan review this week.
2/26- Tues.	Education (sec. 14)	Thorp and Small, Lansing Schools	Read Vollmer, and Orr
2/28- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
3/5	Spring Break		
3/7	Spring Break		
3/12-	Gender equality (sec. 11)	Tracy Dobson,	Read Dobson

Tues.		MSU Fisheries and Wildlife	
3/14- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
3/19- Tues.	Discrimination (sec. 12)	Sasha Williams and panel, Olivet College	Reading to be assigned
3/21- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
3/26- Thurs.	Democracy (sec. 13)	Peter Plastrik, Consultant and Author	Read: Osborn and Plastrik
3/28	Dialogue session		
4/2- Tues.	Equity of wealth (sec. 10)	Ken Parsons and Students for Economic Justice, MSU	Reading to be assigned
4/4- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
4/9- Tues.	Animal welfare (sec.15)	Sally Walshaw, Adroaldo Zanella, Jeanne Burton	Reading to be assigned
4/11- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
4/16- Tues.	Peace, Nonviolence (sec.	Peter Dougherty, Michigan Peace Team	Read: Seville Statement, Weber, Zinn
4/18- Thurs.	Dialogue session		
4/23- Tues.	Last Class, Wrap Up	Thorp and Link	Summative evaluation notes
4/25- Thurs.	Portfolio Project Share Fair		Portfolios due today for presentation

Course Outcomes and Evaluation:

Praxis Portfolio- 50 points

Traditionally portfolios are a carefully selected collection of a person's work utilized to showcase particular talents of their profession. In this course, a *praxis* portfolio will be compiled throughout the semester by each student. The purpose of this portfolio is 2-fold: 1) to document and self-assess your learning (reflection, inquiry and outreach) throughout the semester; and 2) to creatively respond to the Earth Charter document. Your portfolio will be evaluated according to the attached rubric by a course instructor, your praxis learning partner (to be assigned to you by the instructors) and yourself. Specific criteria for evaluation are described in the attached rubric.

Due 4/18

Critical Reflection- 5 points

During the first week of class you will be expected to thoroughly read the Earth Charter document and critically reflect on the document. What part(s) of the document resonate with you? Why? Is this an idealistic text or a practical tool for engagement? What are the strengths and weaknesses you find in the document? Does the text inspire action? If so, what? If not, why? 2 page minimum, due 1/15

Portfolio Learning Plan-10 points

You will submit a portfolio learning plan outlining your proposed plan for community engagement and outreach. Your outreach may take many forms; examples include: volunteer work, advocacy work, artistic expression offered to the public, or civic participation to name just a few. The attached learning plan should be used for this assignment. A list of suggested community engagement contacts has been attached for your reference, this however is by no means an exhaustive list of the possibilities. You are also required to schedule a mid-semester learning plan review with either instructor.

Plan due 1/29, Mid-semester review scheduled week of 2/21.

Attendance-30 points

Sign-in sheets will be circulated during each class session (Tuesday and Thursday). 1 point will be awarded for each session, totaling 2 points per week.

Final Exam-5 points

The final examination for this class will be a scheduled "exit interview" with the course instructors. This will be a time to provide input for your grade as well as your overall experience in this course. You may schedule your appointment any time during finals week.

Late Work

Late work will be graded down by 10% for every day it is late, unless accompanied by a University excused absence (i.e. note from physician).

Grading:

100-90 = 4.0

89-85 = 3.5

84-80 = 3.0

79-75 = 2.5

74-70 = 2.0

69-65 = 1.5

64-60 = 1.0

Portfolio Learning Plan Proposal due 1/29

Name:

e-mail:

phone:

Specifically state section(s) of the Earth Charter that will be the foci of your reflection, inquiry and engagement and why it resonates with you.

How do you plan to bring these principles alive in yourself and your community? Briefly describe your outreach commitment, who you have contacted, what you discussed as terms for your engagement.

Approximate timeline with proposed activities:

Reminder: You must schedule a mid-semester review of your learning plan the week of 2/20.