

Statement on how ENR 347 meets the general principles of the GEC Model Curriculum and the specific goals of the category(ies) for which it is being proposed

General Principles: ENR 347 addresses the goals and general and specific principles of two GEC categories:

- 1) Category 2. Breadth, Section C. Arts and Humanities, Subsection (3) Cultures and Ideas
- 2) Category 4. Diversity, Subsection (1) Social Diversity in the United States

The general and specific goals and expected learning outcomes in these areas are as follows:

Arts and Humanities General Principles

Goals:

Students evaluate significant writing and works of art. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students develop abilities to be informed observers of, or active participants in, the visual, spatial, performing, spoken, or literary arts.
2. Students describe and interpret creative work, and/or movements in the arts and literature.
3. Students explain how works of art and writings explore the human condition.

Cultures and Ideas *Expected Learning Outcomes:*

1. Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret major forms of human thought and expression.
2. Students develop abilities to understand how ideas influence character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

Social Diversity in the United States

Goals:

Courses in social diversity will foster students' understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students describe the role of religion in the pluralistic institutions and cultures of the United States.
2. Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

The Expected Learning Outcomes for "Cultures and Ideas" and "Social Diversity in the United States" courses closely match the course objectives for ENR 347, which include:

- 1) To introduce the development and diversity of religious responses to environmental concerns in North America, including trends, debates, and ideas that have shaped the field.
- 2) To facilitate students' reflection on how their spirituality and values shape their own engagement in environmental citizenship.
- 3) To analyze the contribution of religion to environmental citizenship and in solving environmental problems.
- 4) To develop students' capacities for critical reading, thinking, writing, and discussion; and for aesthetic and historical response and judgment regarding ethical and moral dimensions of environmental issues within American culture.

Specifically, ENR 347 satisfies these GEC learning goals and objectives in the following ways:

a) Through course goals. The course goals of ENR 347 closely match the GEC goals and objectives. By closely studying a range of religious environmental expressions, students will develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret the major forms of human thought and expression found in the diversity of religious expressions of environmental concern in America. Particularly in regard to environmental values and how those influence environmental citizenship, students will develop abilities to understand how religious and moral ideas influence the character of human beliefs, perception of reality, and the norms that guide human behavior. This includes reflecting on how their own values shape their conception of and engagement in environmental citizenship, and influence their relations with others.

b) Through assigned readings. The assigned readings cover a range of religious expressions that constitute the landscape of American religious environmentalism, and provide students suitable material for analysis of this landscape. The readings also address fundamental ethical and moral questions relevant to the dialogue between science and religion, and invite students to reflect on and develop their own understanding of how such religious ideas contribute to environmental citizenship within the pluralism of American culture. The variety and diversity of readings also challenge students to develop their critical reading skills.

c) Through course topics. The course is designed to proceed through fundamental questions of ethics and morality as they regard environmental sustainability, followed by a brief historical account of the development of religious environmentalism in America. The remainder of the course then examines the major traditions and approaches seen in American faith-based environmental work. This progression of topics allows the students to gain tools useful for analysis before studying a range of specific traditions.

d) Through written assignments. Students will examine the course material and their own views through a series of regular writing assignments. Weekly synopses of readings, a peer-reviewed autobiography, essay exams, and a term paper all provide opportunities for students to develop their thinking through writing, and to improve their writing skills. Weekly recitations will invite dialogue and critical discussion of course material, and allow students to develop their oral communication skills. Weekly synopses allow for regular feedback on student writing; peer reviewed autobiography essays require students to give feedback to peers before revising their essay; outlines of term papers allow for instructor feedback to improve the conception and organization of their term papers; students are able to revise and re-submit written assignments as time allows in the course. The sizable readings list and the regular written work to summarize the readings require students to hone their reading skills and information literacy.

e) How will students sharpen communication skills through the preparation of essay exams and papers and discussions? The essay exams in this course are designed to be learning exams, where students are asked to synthesize and integrate information in a way that is itself instructive. The exams also require students to be disciplined in their writing effort, to succeed in both short responses and long essays. The discussion sections encourage thoughtful expression of ideas in response to readings and the ideas of classmates. Discussion leaders provide incisive questions to lead discussion and guide students into deeper engagement with complex and perennial ideas, and the course material invites ethical and moral reflection that is often exciting for students to engage.

f) How does this course aim to sharpen students' response, judgment, and evaluation skills?

This course asks students to reflect on fundamental questions of value and meaning, and to explore and evaluate different religious responses to questions of "how should we live?" in regard to care of the environment. The course also asks the student to reflect on their own values, and these coupled tasks provide a medium for exercising and developing judgment and evaluation skills. The evaluative writing assignments in the course also aim to particularly improve students' thinking and evaluation skills.

Additional comment on how this course addresses the expected learning outcomes for the "Social Diversity in the United States" category:

This course precisely aims to describe the role of religion in the pluralistic institutions and cultures of the United States as they affect environmental citizenship. And this course explicitly invites students to examine and write about how this social diversity shapes their own attitudes and values, and how those attitudes and values interact with the worldviews, ideas, and moral views of others.

Course Assessment Plan for GEC course ENR 347

This course adapts a long-standing and successful semester course (Natural Resources 407) offered at Cornell University, whose method and success is described in detail in: Baer, Richard A. Jr., James A. Tantillo, Gregory E. Hitzhusen, Karl E. Johnson, and James R. Skillen. "From Delight to Wisdom: Thirty Years of Teaching Environmental Ethics at Cornell." *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion* 8.2-3 (2004): 298-309. Many of the elements of that course are replicated in ENR 347, and hopefully also its long-term success.

For instance, a common comment of students in NR 407 at Cornell is that it was one of the most important courses in their academic career. In many cases this is because the course invites students—especially Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources students, but also those in the Arts and Sciences—to examine and wrestle with questions they tend not to encounter in their other courses. These positive assessments from students come primarily from three sources: standard student course evaluations, supplemental course evaluations, and letters written to instructors after the course (in many cases years later, to say thanks for the impact the course had on their lives). To gain more insight into the effectiveness and success of ENR 347 in meeting its goals, instructors will collect anonymous supplemental course evaluations asking students to rate and evaluate specific readings and assignments, and to reflect on course elements they found most and least fruitful, including the performance of the instructors.

The course will also be evaluated through peer review within the School of Environment and Natural Resources, specifically assessing whether the course is meeting its objectives, including the goals and learning outcomes of the GEC categories detailed above. The instructor and TA's will also meet on a weekly basis during each quarter, both to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing lessons and to consider changes for future quarters.

And though it seems obvious to say, term papers and exams will also serve as a primary gauge of whether students are achieving the learning goals of the course. The course achieves much of its success by engaging students in careful examination of topics and questions that are of great importance to them—the environment, ethics, religion, and their own behavior and values—and this engagement tends to lead to an investment in the written work. The instructor believes that if he is doing his job well, and providing a fair opportunity to engage these topics thoughtfully, critically, and through provocative ideas and new discoveries, then success in meeting learning goals will already be apparent in the quality of students' written work.