

## English 597.03 / Geography 597.03

### Adherence to Issues of the Contemporary World General Learning Outcomes

According to the GEC Program Learning Goals and Objectives the goals and expected outcomes for the “Issues of the Contemporary World” GEC component are:

#### **Goals:**

By drawing upon multiple disciplines, Issues of the Contemporary World coursework provides a capstone experience that helps students enrich their experiences of the increasingly global nature of the contemporary world.

#### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students synthesize and apply knowledge from diverse disciplines to contemporary issues.
2. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between information derived from different disciplines by interacting with students from different majors.
3. Students write about or conduct research on the contemporary world.

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| <b>1. How do the course goals of English 597.03 / Geography 597.03 address the expected learning outcomes above?</b> |
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The course goals are closely aligned with the goals and learning outcomes of this GEC category:

- Environmental issues such as global warming and access to clean, fresh water are currently of immense concern and emphasize the interconnections among local environments worldwide.
- As this course will emphasize, environmental issues may manifest locally, but always involve global processes.
- As this course (and indeed the minor of which it is designed to be the final course) will also emphasize, environmental issues are inextricably interdisciplinary; they always involve political, economic, cultural, physical, and biological dimensions.
- Environmental citizenship by its very nature involves debate and discussion among people from a variety of different circumstances and with different perspectives and knowledge. The course is designed to model that process.
- Solutions to environmental issues require coordinated effort and therefore advocacy. To address a specific issue of their choice, students in this course will conduct research, use that research to design solutions, and will communicate the outcomes of their research to both classmates and to public audiences.
- As an interdisciplinary course, it is designed to attract students from a variety of majors across different colleges at Ohio State.

**2. How do the readings assigned in English 597.03 / Geography 597.03 address the expected learning outcomes above?**

The readings are explicitly interdisciplinary, drawn from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Thus, students will be required to synthesize and apply knowledge from diverse disciplines to environmental issues. Dobson and Bell's *Environmental Citizenship* and Orr's *Ecological Literacy* directly address the interdisciplinary knowledge required for informed participation in environmental issues. The readings for Week 2 raise, from the perspectives of the humanities and the sciences, issues of identity, personal experience, and affect that influence how we understand and value our environments. The readings for Weeks 3 and 4 provide background for examining how the concepts of hydrology, ecology, biodiversity, and global warming can help us investigate the connections between local physical environments—in our case, the Olentangy watershed—and global processes as well as the policy implications of those connections. In Week 5, Castree and Takacs introduce students to the contested nature of scientific knowledge and the political dimensions of environmental policy, helping them understand some of the central challenges of environmental citizenship. The readings for Weeks 6 and 7 examine the histories of agriculture and urbanization, providing students with an essential perspective for understanding how environmental conditions arise from the interaction of physical and cultural processes. In Week 8, selections from Short and from Adamson, Evans, and Stein add a cross-cultural perspective. Readings for Week 9 examine attempts by various governmental and non-governmental organizations to represent environmental issues associated with the Olentangy watershed, thus focusing students' attention on the strategies of representation and communication in environmental debates. Finally, the readings in Week 10 (e.g., Williams, Lubchenco) examine the possibilities for citizens to engage in environmental issues, balancing earlier readings focused on understanding or "reading" environments with an emphasis on shaping or "writing" environments.

**3. How do the topics covered in English 597.03 / Geography 597.03 address the expected learning outcomes above?**

As indicated above in our discussion of the readings, the topics covered in English 597.03/Geography 597.03 represent diverse disciplinary perspectives, emphasize the inextricably reciprocal relationship between global and local environmental processes and policies, and stress the importance of sound research and effective communication to the practice of full environmental citizenship. The course begins and ends by linking environmental citizenship to the concept of literacy, understood as the ability to both understand and responsibly shape local environments in global contexts. To help students understand physical processes that shape environments, they will study hydrology, ecology, biodiversity, and global warming in relation to a case study of the Olentangy watershed. To help them understand cultural processes that shape environments, students will study the histories of agriculture and urbanization, two of the major factors affecting the state of the Olentangy watershed. Of course, students will also examine the reciprocal relationships between physical and cultural

processes, in part through a consideration of debates about the nature of scientific knowledge and through study of debates concerning particular environmental issues relevant to the Olentangy watershed. Finally, by studying how citizens and environmental organizations have engaged in public debate about environmental issues—and participating in those debates—students will develop research and communication skills essential to environmental citizenship.

**4. How do the written assignments completed in English 597.03 / Geography 597.03 address the expected learning outcomes above?**

The written assignments in English 597.03/Geography 597.03 emphasize interdisciplinarity, research, and communication skills. Responses to class readings, which will be posted on a threaded discussion list in Carmen, will engage students with information derived from different disciplines (represented by the students' majors and the readings). The lab assignments will engage students in evaluating primary data and communicating those evaluations to others. Finally, the interpretive guide will engage students in rhetorical analysis of environmental issues and effective communication of factual information to a public audience. Students will have opportunities to revise their work based on responses from the instructors and from fellow students (who will read and respond to one another's reading responses and lab reports posted on Carmen).