

Environment Health in Film (ENVH 205)

Winter 2008

COURSE SYLLABUS

Time: Wednesday, 2:30-4:50 pm

Place: Mary Gates Hall, Room 231

Credits: 2

Offered by: Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

Instructors

Richard Fenske, co-instructor

543-0916

rfenske@u.wisc.edu . . .

Dan Luchtel, co-instructor

543-6097

dluchtel@u.wisc.edu . . .

Course Description

This class will examine environmental factors that affect human health through the use of popular and documentary film. We will explore how scientific issues related to health and the environment are embedded in a cultural matrix that involves ethical, legal and social concerns, and evaluate how science and scientific information are portrayed in these films. Some of the questions we will be asking: What real-world events prompted the making of the film? What scientific issues are central to the film? What has happened since the film was made? How did the film affect our society's thinking about environmental health hazards? Five films will be presented in this class. There will be a film shown every other week, followed by a discussion on the weeks when no film is shown.

Learning Objectives: At the end of this course, students will be able to

- explain the key scientific concepts presented in the five course films
- describe how drinking water can be contaminated with hazardous chemicals
- explain the major health risks associated with smoking
- explain the major health risks associated with nuclear power
- explain the health effects associated with asbestos exposure
- explain how scientific evidence is used in legal disputes related to environmental contamination
- describe the role of the media in the presentation of environmental health risks

Grading

Grades will be awarded based on attendance record (20%), class participation (10%), film commentaries (30%), oral presentation (10%), and paper (30%). Attendance is encouraged at all class sessions. Excused absences should be arranged in advance. There will be no final examination for this course.

Student Responsibilities

- **Attendance at Film Viewing:** All students should plan to attend the film presentations; pre-arranged excused absences will be permitted for 1-2 film viewings, provided the student watches the film on his/her own prior to the next class session.
- **Attendance at Discussion Sessions:** Attendance at the first class session and the five discussion sessions is an essential component of class participation. We encourage everyone to attend and participate actively during each of these sessions. *We strongly advise that you not enroll in the course if you cannot attend these sessions.*

NOTE: the final class discussion session will take place during finals week, at the time scheduled for the course's final examination.

- **Electronic Device Use:** cell phones and other communication devices will need to be turned off during class. Students are expected to remain in the classroom throughout the class session. Discussion sessions will typically have a 5-10 minute break midway through class.
- **Film Selection:** each student will be asked to select one film for detailed study. Instructors will provide questions about each film.
- **Class Presentations:** each student is responsible for a short (5-minute) presentation on one of these questions. Each student should consult the resources on their assigned film provided in the syllabus, explore other library and internet resources, and be prepared to take a leading role in the film's discussion. Students working on the same film are encouraged to meet together at least once to plan class presentations.
- **Written Assignments:** each student will prepare a paper (4-6 pages, double-spaced) on the assigned question. The paper will be due one week following the discussion period for that film (except for the last week when the paper will be due the Friday of that week). Each student will also be expected to write a short commentary (1 page max) on each of the other films in the course, due at the beginning of the discussion session for that film.

Final Examination Period

The class will meet for its last session during the scheduled final exam period (Tuesday, March 18, 6:30-8:20 pm). There will be no final examination for this class.

Students with Disabilities

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924 (voice/TTY). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating that you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the instructors so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need in this class.

Course Schedule

Date		Instructor
Jan 9*	Environmental Health in Film	Fenske/Luchtel
Jan 16	Film 1 – <i>A Civil Action</i>	Fenske
Jan 23	Film 1 – Discussion of <i>A Civil Action</i>	Fenske
Jan 30	Film 2 – <i>The Insider</i>	Luchtel
Feb 6	Film 2 – Discussion of <i>The Insider</i>	Luchtel
Feb 13	Film 3 – <i>Erin Brockovich</i>	Fenske
Feb 20	Film 3 – Discussion of <i>Erin Brockovich</i>	Fenske
Feb 27	Film 4 – <i>Libby, Montana</i>	Luchtel
Mar 5	Film 4 – Discussion of <i>Libby, Montana</i>	Luchtel
Mar 12	Film 5 – <i>The China Syndrome</i>	Fenske
Mar 18**	Film 5 – Discussion of <i>The China Syndrome</i>	Fenske

* Attendance is strongly encouraged for the first class (January 9), and the five discussion sessions: Jan 23, Feb 6, Feb 20, Mar 5, Mar 19.

** The final class session is Tuesday, March 18, 6:30-8:20 pm (the final exam period for this course).

GUIDELINES FOR CLASS PRESENTATIONS

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Before Class:

- Conduct a search for background information related to your question.
- Practice your presentation.

In Class:

- Prepare a 1-page handout for your fellow students; 40 copies; if you e-mail this to me before Thursday noon, we will photocopy:
rfenske@u.washington.edu or rwr5@u.washington.edu
- It would be helpful to use overheads (24 pt font minimum), but this is optional.
- State your question to the class.
- Give a short presentation (5-6 minutes) that is responsive to your question.
- Be prepared to lead discussion of your question (5-10 minutes).

Presentation Hints:

- Speak clearly so that everyone can hear your presentation.
- direct your comments to your fellow students rather than to the instructors.
- Repeat questions that you are asked before answering them for the benefit of the other students.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN REPORTS

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Your written report should focus on the question that you selected for your class presentation. Make sure that you address all of the points raised in the question.

Write your report on the assumption that the reader has seen the film. You do not need to summarize the plot of the film or present information that is not related to your question.

Develop a paper that reads as a 'stand-alone' piece of writing. Your paper should be an interesting discussion of the issues raised by your question.

Research

Draw upon resources beyond the film and the written materials provided in class. Use the UW library system or internet search engines to identify relevant materials.

NOTE: searching the internet can yield information that varies greatly in quality. Be sure to consider the source and accuracy of the information you use in your paper.

Citing references in the text (two options):

You can number your citations in the text, and then provide a numbered list of the references as a bibliography at the end of the paper.

OR

You can put the last name of the author and date (e.g. Johnson, 1999, or NCI, 2005) in parentheses in the text, and then provide an alphabetical list of the references as a bibliography at the end of the paper.

Reference material

Provide complete bibliographic information for references, such that the reader could find the cited information. For journal articles, provide authors, journal, volume and page numbers. For internet citations, provide the source of the information, the url, and the date accessed. For books, provide author, title, publisher, publication date, and page number(s).

Paper length

The paper should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced, plus your list of references.

Due date

Your paper is due one week after the class discussion of your film; for *The China Syndrome*, your paper is due at the end of finals week.

Grading

Your paper will be graded based on how well you address the question, organization, clarity of writing, and grammar.