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University of Washington
School of Public Health
and Community Medicine

ENVH 205
Environmental Health in Film
Winter 2008

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 mid-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 a 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 me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need in this class.

Last modified: 1/15/2008