
International Environment and Development – IED

Sample Syllabus

Please note fall semesters go to Ecuador and spring semesters to Ghana



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Course Description

The International Environment and Development (IED) program is a unique course of study that combines a 12 week seminar in Washington, D.C. with an intensive 15 day field practicum in Ecuador. The seminar and field practicum (8 credits), conducted along with a two-day per week internship component (4 credits) and an optional research project (4 credits), provide a comprehensive experiential learning program in which students:

- meet and interact with experts, decision-makers, activists, and others who work in the fields of development and environmental protection;
- attend regular class meetings, lectures, films, and discussions;
- gain work experience while interning in a DC based organization of their choice;
- participate in a trip to Ecuador designed to provide a case study for analysis and application of some of the key themes of the course.

This program will provide a broad overview of development and environment issues facing the world today. Together, we will learn about key actors, study specific development and environment issues, consider debates over how to approach those challenges, and both study and experience some of the potential solutions. We will seek to understand the linkages between development and environmental concerns while recognizing their enormous complexity.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify key actors in the global arena that impact and/or are involved with development and environmental issues.
- Recognize the inter-relationship between domestic and global challenges in the modern world.
- Be able to specifically describe and analyze the work of a variety of these actors in the field - having visited them both in DC and in Ecuador.
- Describe the causes/sources of several underdevelopment and environmental challenges and recognize the debates associated with these issues.
- Understand and be able to apply varied approaches to solving these challenges and current theories regarding advocacy for change, 'best practices' in the field, and collaborative approaches including public/private partnerships.

Course format

The Seminar – meets three days per week (Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday) and consists of classroom lectures and discussions as well as visits to DC based organizations and lectures/meetings with policymakers, practitioners, and a range of other specialists.

The Internship – internship days are Monday and Tuesday along with two additional days designed to allow you to put in extra time at your internship to compensate, in part, for the time you will miss while in Ecuador. You are also strongly encouraged to work during final exam week at your internship, if at all possible. Your internship instructor, Professor Domask, will discuss this program with you further and provide a syllabus for this course.

The Field Practicum in Ecuador – this trip will provide us with the opportunity to study a ‘national case’ in depth and to consider the various course concepts we have studied in a real-world setting. While in Ecuador we will hear from speakers, visit diverse organizations and their site projects, while also participating in cultural and tourism activities. The draft itinerary for this trip will be distributed in late September. Students should be aware that the time abroad will be both physically and emotionally challenging, as the trip is designed, in part, to help you gain awareness of conditions faced by people in developing countries.

Texts and Course Materials

Recognizing the breadth of materials available on environment and development issues, I have chosen to prioritize readings and pod-casts available on-line for this course. My intention is to enable students to experience the diversity of information available, to learn about resources that will allow you to continue to learn over time, and to emphasize materials directly and concisely related to course concepts and guest speakers.

On-line readings (resource websites) will be included in each weekly schedule (emailed on Saturdays). It is important that you carefully read these works and critically consider them before class. In some cases, I will ask you to print the articles and bring them with you for in-class activities. There is also one book review assignment, described below, in which you can choose a book to read and review. Also recommended is an Ecuador travel guide, of your choice.

During classes, I will frequently distribute small current event articles and utilize both on-line video clips and DVDs. Use of films can help us to have a common understanding of a topic and to visualize and have a deeper understanding of a particular issue.

Course requirements and grading system

The IED Seminar and Field Practicum are conducted as a single 8-credit course. However for most colleges, grades must be reported out in 4 credit units and therefore, instead of receiving one letter grade for the 8 credits, students will receive two separate but generally identical letter grades (one for SIS 471 and one for SIS 472).

Class Participation – Site visit reflections, class activities, engagement, and class discussion: 25%

- Throughout the course, I will be asking you to complete short activities related to our site visits and readings. Sometimes these will be reflection questions and other times you may be asked to fill out a ‘speaker’s chart’, in which you will briefly describe what you learned from each speaker and/or site visit. These charts will be due regularly and should reflect your attendance and thoughtful consideration of material presented.
- Additionally, there will be a variety of class-based activities which will be assessed based upon effort and demonstration of understanding of key course concepts.
- A portion of your participation grade (10%) will reflect your professionalism and engagement while in Ecuador. As a large group traveling rapidly within a developing nation, it is extremely important that you follow trip guidelines and represent our program professionally.

Mid-term exam: 15%

- This exam will include identifications and short answer questions asking you to describe and apply key course concepts and to connect to course speakers, site visits and readings/resources. This exam emphasizes lectures that I have given along with initial site visits. It is much more content driven than the final exam, which emphasizes analysis and ‘putting it all together’ in a big picture.

Youth Activism – An applied learning group project: 20%

- As a course involving the study of how people make a difference in domestic and global challenges, this class asks you to reflect upon a variety of activism strategies. This group project will enable you to think about your own preferences for activism as well as the myriad of challenges facing activists as they seek to achieve their goals.
- There are three underlying goals of this assignment:
 - To help you critically consider activism strategies especially education/awareness raising, fundraising and the importance of funding, and the challenges of working with others.
 - To practice professional skills including: group collaboration, report writing and presentation, modern technologies in networking, traditional networking, and fundraising (optional).
 - To encourage you to work together within the class, to learn from each other’s diverse background experiences, and to get to know your classmates prior to our trip to Ecuador.
- Detailed instructions along with your group assignments can be found at the end of this syllabus.

Success Stories Book Review: 10% (due beginning of class Wed. 10/26)

- Select a book from
 - *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg Mortenson
 - *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, Tracy Kidder (about Paul Farmer in Haiti)
 - *Unbowed*, Wangari Maathai
 - *Banker to the Poor*, Mohammed Yunus
 - Book of your choice **with approval** of the instructor – please note that the book must be a non-fictional story of a ‘successful’ effort in the global community.
- Write a reflective essay describing a minimum of four themes of the book and specifically connecting those themes and examples from the book to our course topics and experiences. You are strongly encouraged to reflect upon ‘best practices’ and ‘activism strategies’ described in the book and to consider what attributes make these entrepreneurs and leaders ‘successful.’

Ecuador reflective essays and speaker's chart: 10%

- During the trip you will be given a series of topics to discuss in a journaling and reflection format. This 'journal' will include a speaker's chart, as well as questions designed to elicit your critical reflection on the trip experiences.
- Please note that an additional 10% of your grade (described above under participation) is based upon your engagement and professionalism during the trip.

Comprehensive Take Home Final Exam: 20%

Course Schedule¹

Please note that every Saturday I will email you a weekly schedule with meeting times, locations, and specific details regarding our lectures and site visits for that week. You should always leave Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday open from 9am to 5pm unless otherwise noted in the schedule below.

Introductory Week – Thurs. 8/20/09

- 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. – Syllabus distribution and brief introduction to IED
- 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. – Introduction to internship course with Prof. Joe Domask

Week 1 – 8/26 (note class dates are Wed., Thurs., and Fri.)

- Introduction to IED, your classmates, course concepts, and modern global challenges
- Group project group assignments
- Introduction to DC resources – museum visits
- Internship course meetings with Professor Domask
 - Remember the internship bazaar on Monday!
 - Aug. 24, Monday: 6:00 to 7:30 PM in Federal #173
 - Aug. 28, Friday: 1:00 - 2:00 PM in Federal #173

Week 2 – 9/2

- Key actors in environment and development – INGOs, IFIs, IOs, private partners, foundations, governments, the media, individuals, etc...
- Activism strategies and an introduction to 'Best Practices'

Week 3 – 9/10 (note that most internships will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7th for Labor Day)

- Environment and development challenges and reforms in Washington, DC
- Inequality, underdevelopment, and the effects of poverty

Week 4 – 9/14

- Key actors and approaches to development and environment – foreign aid, diplomacy, advocacy/awareness raising, direct service, etc.

Week 5 – 9/21

¹ Please note that weekly topics are subject to change and that depending on speaker availability we may do a site visit or hear from a speaker that is not related to that week's topic.

- Challenges facing the world's children, child rights, child labor, conflict, and education

Week 6 – 9/28

- Water resources – environmental preservation, sanitation, equity, and access
- Oceans – the Tragedy of the Commons
- **Friday, Oct. 2nd – NO class, internship make-up day**

Week 7 – 10/5

- Biodiversity, land, and species preservation
- Introduction to Ecuador
- Case study – the Amazon; discussion of oil – development tool, environment destroyer, etc?

Week 8 – 10/12

- Ecuador introduction continued
- Mid-term review
- Mid-term exam – Thursday, Oct. 15th
- **Friday, Oct. 16th – Fall Break, no class**

Week 9 – 10/19

- Climate Change

Week 10 – 10/26

- **Wed. 10/28 – Book reviews due, in hard copy, at the beginning of class.**
- Success stories - Solutions to environmental and development challenges
- Eco-tourism, cultural-tourism, geo-tourism – potential and criticism

Week 11 – 11/2

- Success stories - Solutions to environmental and development challenges
- Micro-finance – development solution?

11/7 – 11/23 – Ecuador Trip

11/24 – 11/29 – Thanksgiving Break

Week 12 – Dec. 2nd

- Course conclusions
- Ecuador discussions

Final Group Project due Monday, December 7th in hard copy by noon – remember you must submit a copy of the group project design along with your personal reflective essay of approximately 5 pages.

Comprehensive Take Home Final Exam – Due Date Dec. 9th at noon.

Additional information and resources

Flexibility: Please try to be flexible when times and speakers change as this will happen on occasion. Keep in mind that each week's schedule will vary due both to speaker and classroom availability.

Guest speakers/site visit expectations:

- With each weekly schedule, I will provide resources regarding our speakers generally including organizational background and biographies. Please be sure to read these in advance and come prepared to thoughtfully engage with the presenter.
- Our time to get to speakers is very limited. Please be sure to meet at the assigned time and place and to be prompt. If you are running late, call my cell phone so that we can discuss whether the site is one that can be entered later or not.

Classroom guidelines/expectations:

- Please plan to be on time to class as well, as late entries are disruptive to others.
- It is helpful to bring your notebooks; writing materials; readings (when requested), weekly schedules and syllabus to class daily.
- I ask that students **not bring laptops** to class or speakers. While they are extremely useful in some ways, they are also often distracting to other students, the instructor, and guests. Engagement with the course, the instructor and the materials seems generally to improve in classes without laptops.
- Sleeping in class or during guest speakers is a professional concern on many levels and will significantly impact your participation grade.

Course Costs:

- Unfortunately, AU does not pay for transportation costs while you are in DC. Please be sure to get a metro card early and to be prepared to pay for your metro expenses. There will also be times when I ask the class to have lunch downtown (between speakers or events). You can obtain a bag lunch from the university by asking one day in advance, if you would prefer. There are two scheduled events with small entry fees – if these present a problem for you, please let me know in advance.

Office Hours:

- Please contact me to schedule an office appointment. I am available regularly via email. I will not have pre-scheduled office hours due to the changing class/speaker times each week, but I am able to come in on evenings and weekends, as well as to schedule meetings when we do not have class Wed through Friday. In some cases I can also meet you at your internships.

General Assignment Policies:

- All written assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class, on the date due, in printed format (not by e-mail unless otherwise noted). Papers should be proofread, in 12 point font, Times New Roman, with 1-inch margins and page numbers clearly marked.
- Students with questions should contact the instructor early in the semester to receive assistance.
- The grading scale will follow AU's policy – 90-100 A; 80-89 B; 70-79 C; 60-69 D; below 60 F.
- Please note AU's academic integrity policies. If you have questions about how to cite materials, please see the Writing Center and/or the instructor. Remember, when in doubt, cite!

Additional Resources: AU provides an academic assistance center, counseling center and disability services along with a Writing Center on Tenley campus. Please let me know if you would like information on these services or if you need any assistance during the course.

Emergency Preparedness (the following is a statement from American University)

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

Book Project

- 1) Your essay, of approximately 5 to 7 pages, is NOT a summary of the book. Instead, the essay should demonstrate your understanding of connections between the book and course concepts.
- 2) For example, all the books on the list provide illustrations of the importance of entrepreneurial leaders and creative/persistent leadership. Thus, leadership should be one of the four or five sub-topics in your paper. You would write about leadership by giving specific examples from the book (stories, quotes, etc.) with page numbers and then describing how those examples illustrate the characteristics of leadership in your book. A thorough essay would also reference other examples of leadership you learned about in class and why leadership is a best practice. You might also discuss how leadership can be problematic or difficult to replicate.
- 3) A sample outline for the report is as follows:
 - a. Introduction – 2 paragraphs or less summary of the book with key themes.
 - b. Sub-topic one – A topic that connects the book to the class such as: leadership, poverty and inequality, the importance of community ownership or cultural knowledge, other best practices you see in the book, water or public health issues, etc.
 - i. With each sub-topic be SURE to give specific stories, quotes, examples from the book to demonstrate that you read the whole book and understood the theme or issue. Put page numbers in parentheses after your example.
 - ii. Also give examples from class (site visits, discussions, readings, etc.) and link the two together. Feel free to include examples from your internship course or other life experiences as well.
 - c. Sub-topic two – see above
 - d. Sub-topic three –
 - e. Sub-topic four –

- f. Conclusions – what did you learn from this book? What was valuable or not about reading it? Overall did it connect well with class, is it worth including in the curriculum? Did it inspire you or help you to understand the issues any better? Etc.

IED Activism – An applied learning group project

Before meeting as a group, visit and review this website - <http://www.charitywater.org/birthdays/> - this is an example of what small group activism, modern technology, and creativity can accomplish. We will discuss the Born in September effort later in the course, as well.

Steps:

1. Visit the site above.
2. Get to know your group members, consider communication strategies.
3. Discuss your project (Ecuador sites in the fall, Ghana in the spring). Please note we will visit all the sites for which you are collecting supplies/fundraising/doing education efforts.
4. Have your ‘contact’ coordinator email Professor Heckel to get more information about your specific project including photos, if available. Schedule a meeting with the professor for your group.
5. Meet with the professor to get additional information.
6. Design a project plan
 - a. Project plan should include:
 - i. Description of the program/challenge/organization you are supporting
 - ii. Goal statement
 1. Keep in mind these are short-term and small scale projects and your plan should involve realistic uses of resources such as those at AU, your home colleges, facebook, friends, families, etc. Remember to make the most of your own contacts and resources.
 - iii. Materials – what do you think you would need to achieve this goal?
 - iv. Activism strategies that you will use to achieve the goal
 1. Internal communication and management – how do you plan to work with your group?
 2. What information would you collect?
 3. How would you publicize/frame/tell the ‘story’
 4. Who would you leverage and how?
 5. Who would you network with and why? Be specific – what network resources/people/types of organizations are most likely to be available to students?
 6. Overall – how will you motivate others to support you?
 7. What technological strategies might you use?
 8. How will you define and evaluate your success?
 9. What challenges do you expect to encounter and how, initially, do you plan to meet them?

Later, after your project is completed, you will need to add the following:

1. Overall summary of what the group did and how it was accomplished.
2. Summary of what the group was not able to do – i.e. what parts of the project plan were you unable to complete and why (remember it is often what we don’t do that teaches us the most).

3. If you had more time and were continuing this project, what would you do for next steps or to be sustainable?
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7. At the end of the course submit:
 - a. Group project plan – 50% of overall project grade (all members receive the same grade for this portion)
 - b. Individual analysis (5 to 7 pages) – 50% of overall project grade
 - i. Written analysis describing this project
 1. What did your group do to enact the plan? Evaluate your group's efforts and outcomes.
 2. What did you individually do, evaluate your contribution. What did you learn from your efforts and accomplishment about how to be a successful activist?
 3. What were the challenges faced by the group – be specific and discuss different types of activism challenges in detail. Connect to our lectures on activism, your observations from various site visits. What did you learn about issues facing individual activists, non-profit organizations, and others trying to engage in fundraising and awareness-raising? Make connections to other things we have learned in class!
 4. Reflect on what you learned once you got to Ghana – how did visiting the site change your view of this project?
 5. Other relevant issues of interest to you.