

ENVS 690 SENIOR SEMINAR            SPRING 2008  
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Office hours: 3-3:30 T and by appointment

## SYLLABUS

What we're going to do this semester is talk about change; specifically, talk about what we should do to solve the problems you've spent your time in ENVS learning about, and which have assumed ever more threatening dimensions. This class will be run like a seminar—in other words, we'll read and talk about what we read. We'll be dealing with questions like these:

Can our political/economic system be reformed so that it can produce adequate policy responses? If so, how? How can a movement be built to support the kinds of legislation and other policy changes that we need?

Or is the system hopeless—so corrupt and violent that it must be overthrown, and the only honest approach is to take direct action against its physical manifestations?

Climate change and many other environmental problems are global problems. Although there is no global government (and certainly no representation of the public at a global level) there are powerful global institutions accountable to no one, and many sovereign states that don't want the rest of the world interfering in their affairs.

The three books we will read and discuss this semester offer different answers to these questions. They will certainly stimulate your thinking; my hope is that they will help you shape your identity as a political citizen and locate your path as an activist..

### Required books:

IGNITION: What you can do to fight global warming and spark a movement, edited by  
Isham and Waage

ENDGAME, VOL. II: RESISTANCE, by Derrick Jensen

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE IF...by Susan George

### WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM YOU:

- 1) Attendance at all class sessions (roll sheet will be circulated. More than one absence will affect your grade, with ½ letter deducted for each absence after the first
- 2) Timely completion of assignments (reading should be completed BEFORE CLASS by everyone, even if you are not leading discussion that week).
- 3) Written work will consist of
  - a) 3 single-spaced papers of 3 pages each minimum, based on focus questions that I will distribute at least two weeks before due date (60%)
  - b) Your resume (due at end of semester) 10%
- 4) Your presentations on assigned readings and class participation (30%). Each week, one student will lead the discussion of assigned reading. These presentations do not need to be formal and should not be summaries. Rather, they should *criticize* the readings and/or present *questions to the class* for discussion. So, for example, in one of the chapters of Ignition it is claimed that

successful movements are based on values that are widely held in society. So you might prepare a short list of widely held values that you think will help people to embrace the need for action on climate change, and then ask the class to discuss your list. Another example: Susan George argues that “the American Establishment will set itself against any significant momentum towards an ecologically sustainable, socially responsible....world.” You could argue with her by pointing out counter-examples, and ask the class to discuss them. If you are scheduled to present and find yourself really stuck, see me. You should plan to generate at least 3-4 such questions/arguments when you present.

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| Feb. 29 | Introduction to course, Focus the Nation   |
| Feb. 5  | Ignition, parts I and II   |
| Feb. 12 | Ignition, parts III and IV   |
| Feb. 19 | Ignition, Part V and concluding discussion                                       |
| Feb. 26 | Endgame: Premises and pp. 513-584. <b>First paper due.</b>                       |
| Mar. 4  | Endgame: 601-706   |
| Mar. 11 | Endgame: 707-822   |
| Mar. 18 | Endgame: 823-end   |
| Mar. 25 | Spring break; no class   |
| Apr. 1  | Concluding discussion of endgame.  |
| Apr. 8  | Another World, part I Chs. 1-3 <b>Second paper due.</b>                          |
| Apr. 15 | Another World, Chs. 4-5  |
| Apr. 22 | Another World, Visions of the Possible   |
| Apr. 29 | Another World, Part II.  |
| May 6   | Another World, finish.   |
| May 13  | Conclusion. <b>Resume due</b>  |
| May 20  | (Final exam day; no exam given but come to class to <b>turn in last paper.</b> ) |

ENVS 690 SPRING 2008 FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR PAPER 1 (DUE FEBRUARY 26)

This paper is based on the book *Ignition*, which should be cited (you don't need to include book publication data in your citation, but you should note the chapter number or author, and the page number). You are free (but not required) to use additional sources. If you do use them, please include full citation data—publication, publisher (if applicable), date, page number.

Focus question: You are with 3 friends in a bar, and the subject of climate change comes up. One friend is “concerned” about climate change, but is not convinced that voting in the upcoming federal elections will do any good. Another is from a farming community in central California; her parents are farmers who are already hurting from high fuel prices, so she leans against any climate policy that would increase their costs of doing business. She takes her religion seriously and attends services regularly. A third friend is worried about his brother, who can't find a good job and is considering enlisting in the military, even though it means he is likely to be deployed to Iraq, because he wants to help fight terrorism—and also so that the military will help finance his education. Climate change is not really on his “top ten” list of concerns.

Use the book to help figure out—and explain in your paper--how you would talk to each of them about climate change.. Don't neglect the later chapters.