

Course No: GERM 2XXX

Credits: 3

Title: The Environment in German Culture

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Content Area: CA 1

Catalog Copy:

GERM 2xxx The Environment in German Culture, Spring, 3 credits, 3 one-hour lectures/discussions, sophomore standing, graded.

Ecological thinking in German culture from the Greeks (Plato) to the Greens (Amery). The second half of the semester consists of student projects on current environmental policies in the European Union.

Course Information: There is currently no course on environmental issues in the German undergraduate curriculum and only one in content area 1, but none that approaches the issue from a cross-cultural perspective. Sophomore standing is required as students should already have good writing/presentation skills and a foundation in critical thinking in respect to topics in the humanities. In the beginning enrollment is restricted to 40 to allow for discussion and student projects. Depending on demand, the course size could be increased with graduate assistant support. The course should help address the demand for content area 1 courses and will be of help in discussing similar issues in the students' major field of study. There is no overlap with current courses. Students will be evaluated on the basis of a midterm exam, student presentation and term paper based on this presentation. The course addresses a current lacuna in the German curriculum and the General Education requirements as it approaches a subject relevant to many other fields (engineering, the social sciences, natural resources) and addresses the interests of several UConn constituencies (Eco House, Global House, Eurotech House, EcoHusky among others) that seek to broaden their knowledge of ecological thinking beyond US culture.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed:

1. become articulate

The course requires students' active interaction with the readings by way of in-class discussions and position papers. Groups of students will prepare a half hour in-class presentation. Each student will expand on the presentation in the form of a 12 page term paper.

2. acquire intellectual breadth and versatility

Students get exposed to approximately 2000 years of thinking about humans' impact on their environment focussing on particularly pertinent moments in intellectual history. The specific angle of ecological thinking will allow them to view familiar topics from a different perspective,

3. acquire critical judgment

each tradition of thinking is critically examined during in-class discussions; students will critically

examine contemporary policies on the basis of their understanding of these traditions.

4. acquire moral sensitivity

ecological thinking by necessity brings up questions of social justice and human rights; it also highlights the individual's impact on the rest of society as well as the impact of human society on all other species

5. acquire awareness of their era and society

The course offers a survey of pivotal moments in German history as well as the most pressing issues confronting contemporary German society

6. acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience

The course offers students a chance to investigate their own culture from the perspective of another.

7. acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

Each topic addressed will offer pathways into further reading and aspects that cannot be covered in the course of one semester; it also invites investigation of the same issues as to how they are being addressed in other cultures.

CA1 Criteria:

The course allows students to understand their own culture better by being able to compare environmental thinking in the German context to their own cultural context. It encourages students to critically assess their own and the other culture on the basis of their specific knowledge in this area.

a. Investigations and historical/critical analyses of human experience

The course offers students to investigate one country's history of ideas by focusing on a topic that foregrounds the individual's relationship to human society as well as the relationship of human society to all other species. The focus on contemporary issues will allow students to see to what extent they are informed by various ideologies and to what extent pragmatic approaches might not always be able to address the problems humanity faces.

b. Inquiries into philosophical and/or political theory

Ecological thinking touches upon fundamental philosophical problems such as the self's awareness of itself, the self's relation to the other and the awareness of one's own species in the context of others.

c. Investigations into the modes of symbolic representation

The course uses philosophical analysis, examples from the fine arts, film and literature in order to come to an understanding how the various media approach the same topic (the environment).

d. Comprehension and appreciation of written, graphic and/or performance art forms

The pieces of literature and examples of fine art as well as the media are set in the context of their times so as to make it possible for the students to understand how the various art forms attempted to approach a topic at a particular point in time. It also allows students to investigate how certain philosophical traditions informed the style as well as the content of the work of art under investigation.

e. Creation or "re-creation" of artistic works culminating in individual or group publication, production or performance. Three-credit courses in this category must be supplemented by written or oral analysis/criticism.