Joint Syllabus for:
English 15: Rhetoric and Composition
Pl Sc/STS 135: The Politics of Scarcity, Disaster, and Survival

Fall, 1998
MWF 2:30-3:20 & 3:35-4:25

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Introduction

This course combines "The Politics of Scarcity", which examines some "big" questions about the prospects for human civilization in general and democracy in the United States in particular, with Eng. 15, Rhetoric and Composition, which sharpens your ability to analyze, critique, and construct sound arguments. Together, they seek to engage you in serious thinking, discussion, and writing about difficult topics, ones that you usually ignore because they threaten and disturb. These two courses also strive to improve your analytical thinking and writing skills. Both classes fulfill university-wide general education requirements (GWS and GS).

The class aspires to appeal to students regardless of major or college -- to scientists, engineers, students of the humanities, and even economists and political scientists. It is important that you understand from the outset that the political science component will deal less with "government" and specific government policies than many students expect from a political science class. Rather, it will grapple with fundamental questions of value that underlie and guide the play of power in our political system and with how the massive changes now taking place globally both affect and are affected by politics.

Much of the reading assumes that our civilization faces the twin problems of increasingly serious shortages of crucial resources and a growing ecological crisis that threatens the basis of life. Further, it argues that these "twin crises" feed upon each other, and that together they pose serious short and long run challenges to survival. Some readings attribute these problems to the dominant values that characterize modern Western society. The course does consider some dissents from this perspective, arguments that things will be just fine. However, it concentrates on problems and predictions of trouble. Thus, the class does not claim to present an evenly balanced assessment. Rather, it recognizes that most of what we learn, read, and see supports the status quo and assumes our civilization and energy-dependent way of life will continue. Consequently it makes sense to emphasize the less frequently argued position that we may be headed for disaster.

The English writing component of this class differs from other writing courses you may have taken because what you write about will be entirely based on the readings and subject matter dealing with the politics of scarcity. However, its aims will be the same as any writing course: to help you become a better writer, a more skilled crafter and presenter of arguments, and a more critical reader of the arguments made by others. To that end, we will spend class time analyzing arguments made in assigned readings (books, articles, and the NYT) and we will be looking closely at the ways in which language is used to persuade. You will be writing a series of short papers (of up to 1000 words) based on your reading assignments. In these papers you will be asked to apply the concepts you are learning about to situations drawn from your reading, the newspapers, and your own experiences. The assignments and formats for these papers will be quite precise. We will also spend class time preparing for these assignments. You will be reading and critiquing each
others' drafts, working in groups on some projects and assignments, and presenting your arguments to the class for consideration.

In addition to these short papers, there will also be a substantial final group project, to be evaluated by both of your professors. Throughout the semester, you will have opportunities to discuss your project in class, and there will be several short "project progress reports" due. There will also be time to consult on and revise the final project paper. You will be given more information about the projects later.

We will be taking three or four field trips to observe first hand the physical manifestations of some of the topics covered in class. We will also be reading the New York Times regularly, with special attention to articles that deal with topics and concepts from the class. Each week you will be asked to read a handful of specific articles and to submit a brief analysis of one them to one of the student interns. This aspect of the course is described in detail in a separate handout titled "Using the New York Times as a Textbook in PlSc/STS 135--Eng.15."

What will be expected of you

The combined classes require much work, but if you are like students who have taken them in the past, you will find the work rewarding. Be prepared to do substantial reading, to think about this reading, to discuss and debate it, to write essays on it, and to engage yourself actively in applying material presented in class to the real world both individually and in groups. And in doing this work, remember that it counts for two classes, not just one.

Every class meeting is important. Regular attendance in class is required and will count toward your final grade. Plan not only to show up but to take notes, to think, and to speak. Participation in group projects and peer reviews is required. Be prepared to challenge the basic premises of the class and the reading. We strongly encourage expression of a variety of perspectives and opinions, along with vigorous (but civil) debate and argument. Be willing to take some chances intellectually. The classes will emphasize discussion heavily, and rely relatively little on lectures by the main instructors. The classes will also employ other forms of active learning, including the group projects and field trips. We will take full advantage of the flexibility provided by having two consecutive class periods scheduled in Willard. Some days we will devote the entire time to workshops on paper drafts; on others we may discuss the readings in both class periods.

Grading policy

Grades for Pl Sc 135 will be computed on the following basis:

- Five short exercises -- 25%
- Three revised exercises -- 10% [Due November 25th]
- The "Synthesis Essay" -- 15% [November 13th]
- Final exam -- 10% [Due on or before Dec 16th]
- Group Project -- 25%
- Attendance, participation, diary, and class presentations -- 15%

Grades for English 15 will be computed as follows:

- Five short exercises -- 20%
- Revised short exercises -- 35% [Due November 25th]
- Group Project -- 25%
- Attendance, participation, and class presentations -- 20%
Required Texts:

The New York Times
Fahnestock & Secor. *A Rhetoric of Argument*. 2nd ed. (RA)
Schumacher, E.F. *Small is Beautiful.*
Wiesel, Elie. *Night.*
Ophuls & Boyan. *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity Revisited*

*135 Readings Packet* Available from Student Book Store, 330 E. College Ave. Readings in this packet are designated in reading assignments by an asterisk (*).

#Reserve Readings Undergraduate Reserve, marked by the # symbol. Books are shelved by call letter; articles are in a "bin" at the back of the room under "Political Science: 135"

Some readings are both on reserve & in the packet (marked "*#").

The purchase of a 3-ring notebook in which to keep the SBS reading packet and other course materials is **strongly recommended**.

You will also keep a "course diary" that you will be asked to turn in every Friday. Please purchase a separate small notebook to write your diary entries. The "diary" assignment is described in a separate handout, "The PlSc/STS 135--Eng.15 Diary."

Everyone in the class will be signed up for a class listserv through their PSU Access E-mail account. More details will be provided in class.

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The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.
Lecture Topics, Reading and Paper Assignments


READ: Wiesel, Night. [Read entire book in one sitting, and at night.]

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This paper should be between 500 and 750 words, typewritten if possible. Strive to write clearly and logically. Say what you really think. Make sure you answer both questions.

1. What lessons does Night teach about the nature of politics in the 20th century? Think broadly about the events described and how they came about. Does the book stimulate thoughts about what politics might be like in the future?

2. Describe honestly the personal/emotional reactions you had to the book. There can be no right or wrong answers. This question asks only that you monitor your own reactions and feelings, that you think about them, and that you insightfully describe them.

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READ: Handout on Group Projects
Orr, "The Liberal Arts, the Campus, and the Biosphere."
"Executive Summary" of "Sustainable PSU" report; skim one or two other chapters that catch your eye. The WWW address for the report will be announced in class.
RA Ch. 1-2.

Aug. 31. PlSc/STS: Discussion of Group Project handout. TA presentations of their projects. Discussion of Orr's argument and its relevance to the class projects.

English: Generating ideas for group projects. Basic principles of argument: stasis; what we argue about. Overview of definition.

READ: *Capra, The Turning Point, Ch. 2
RA, Ch. 6.

Topic 2. Philosophical and Material Underpinnings of the Status Quo.

Sept. 2. PlSc/STS Discussion Section: Discussion of NYT articles.

English: Peer Review: Bring rough draft of Exercise #1 to class.
Sept. 4. Final draft of Exercise #1 due in class.

PlSc/STS: Discussion of Exercise #2 assignment. The Newtonian World Machine [Why is the Newtonian world view so appealing?], the "Boom," their implications for thinking about the future, and the validity of the notion of the "good ole' days."

English: Discussion of Night papers (Exercise #1); discussion of RA Ch. 6: definition; comparison and contrast.


Exercise #2, rough draft due Sept. 16, final draft Sept. 18.

Capra explains much of the current crisis as the logical result of a dominant world view or paradigm that threw over the world view of the Middle Ages. In Chapter 2, "The Newtonian World Machine," he describes the development and content of this new world view. Elements of this view include: the world as machine; application of Cartesian "reductionism" to the task of developing methods of acting on nature; nature as something to be dominated and exploited by man; emphasis on the production of material goods.

How useful is Capra's interpretation of what it is that determines the characteristics of the modern age? The answer can only be found by looking at how well it works in helping you to understand existing institutions. We will use your high school as an example. Write a paper of no more than 1000 words (4 typewritten pages) that examines both your day to day activities as a student and the nature of your school -- its structure, and the content of the subject matter taught. Specifically, to what extent was (1) your day to day life and (2) the structure and subject matter of your High school consistent or inconsistent with Capra's view? To what extent can the sum total of your high school experience be understood using Capra's perspective?

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READ: RA Ch. 9

Sept. 11. PlSc/STS Discussion Section: Discuss Ophuls, Field trip. English: Discussion of Causal Arguments.

READ: Handouts for field trip; RA Ch. 15 (we will discuss this on Friday, Sept. 18).


Sept. 16. PlSc/STS: Discussion of field trip.

English: Peer Review: Bring Draft of Exercise #2 to class.

READ: *Webb, "Ended: 400 Year Boom."
Sept. 18. Turn in final draft of Exercise #2.

English & PlSc/STS: Analysis of rhetoric and argument of Webb article. Discuss exercise #2.

READ: Schumacher, Small Is Beautiful, Parts I and II.

Listserv posting: By Friday evening, post a brief resume of your interests and skills relevant to the group project, and at least two projects (from the list distributed or your own proposal). By Monday, read all the posts and contact each other to set up groups.


English: Evaluating Schumacher's arguments and style.

READ: *Capra, first & last page of Ch. 3, "The New Physics" (in reading packet w/Ch. 2) 
#Postel (on reserve), "Toward a New 'Eco'-Nomics," World Watch, 9/90 
#Florman, "Small is Dubious" in Florman, Blaming Technology

Exercise #3. Rough draft due Sept.30, final draft, Oct.2.

You will be asked to write an essay of no more than 1000 words that takes the perspective of E.F. Schumacher to critique either a speech or an article that we will select and make available. Your essay will answer the question, "If Schumacher were alive and had 1000 words to assess this statement, what would he say about it?"


English: Project Bazaar. Meet with others who share your interest in possible group projects; form groups & make preliminary plans.

Sept. 25. PlSc/STS Discussion Section: Discuss Schumacher & Florman's critique of Schumacher.

English: Discussion of Schumacher's evaluative criteria.


Project Milestone #1 due: describe group project in a one-paragraph group posting on the listserv, including names of the groups’ members.

Sept 30. PlSc/STS: Discussion of field trip.

English: Peer Review: Bring Draft of Exercise #3 to class.

Oct. 2. Turn in final draft of Exercise #3.

PlSc/STS Discussion Section: Discussion of Schumacher Exercise (Exercise #3).

English: Style Workshop.

READ: Ophuls, Ch. 1, "The Science of Ecology"

Oct. 5. PlSc/STS: Lecture and discussion on Ophuls' ecological approach and its implications for assessing the challenges posed by population growth, food production, minerals, pollution, energy production, and technology.

English: Using Transitions.

Project Milestone #2 Due: hand in formal project proposal.

READ carefully: Ophuls, Ch. 2 & Ch. 3.

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Exercise #4. draft due Oct. 12. final paper due Oct. 16.

This paper will ask you to employ Ophuls' approach to assess the advisability of a solution to a current problem reflected in a New York Times article that has appeared this semester.

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Oct. 7. PlSc/STS: "William Ophuls" comes to class to set you straight on the impending ecological crisis.

English: Library seminar.


English: Internet seminar.


English: Peer Review: Bring Draft of Exercise #4 to class.

Oct. 16. **Turn in final draft of Ophuls Exercise #4.**

P1Sc/STS: Discuss field trip. Discuss Ophuls Exercise #4;

English: Style Workshop: passive voice.

**Read: RA, Ch. 8.**

**Topic 4. Putting Course Concepts into Practice: Group Project Work**

Oct. 19. P1 Sc/STS Project workshop; in-class group project meetings

English: Evidence and verification.

**READ: RA Ch. 14**

Oct. 21. P1 Sc/STS-Project workshop; in-class group project meetings

English: Refutation.

**Read West in RA, 247.**

Oct. 23. P1Sc/STS: Discussion

English: Discussion of West, refutation

**READ: Schumacher, Part III, chs. 1 & 2; Part IV, chs. 1, 3, 4, 5;**

Oct. 26. P1Sc/STS: Discussion of Schumacher, Parts III & IV.

English: Refutation, continued.

**READ: *Simon, The Ultimate Resource, Intro, Ch. 1,2,3, 8, 9, and Conclusion.**

Optional:

# Kahn, "The Coming Boom," Ch. 4 & 9
OR
# Kahn, "The Next 200 Years," Ch. 1, 8, 9
OR
# Morris, The Coming Global Boom,
Introduction (ix-xx)

**Topic 5. Defenders of the Status Quo and the Dominant Secular World Religion.**

A brief explication of the view that everything will be "A Okay" with just a little bit of luck.

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**Exercise #5 rough draft Nov. 4. final draft due Nov. 6. Assignment to be handed out in class. You will be asked to apply the concepts and perspectives of Julian Simon to critique a current statement reflecting the views of people adhering to Ophuls' outlook.**

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Oct. 28. P1Sc/STS and English: "Julian Simon" comes to class to set you straight on why everything is going to be okay.
Oct. 30. PLSc/STS Discussion Section: Simon's key concepts reconsidered.

English: Refutation of Simon's Argument

Project Milestone #3 due: group listserv posting.

Nov. 2. PLSc/STS: Lecture and discussion: The principal assumptions, concepts, and style of argument of Julian Simon and other optimists. Discussion of Simon Exercise #5.

English: Logical fallacies.

Nov. 4. PLSc/STS: Concluding discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Simon's argument and perspective.

English: Peer Review: Bring rough draft of Exercise #5 to class.

Nov. 6. Turn in final draft of Simon Exercise #5.

PLSc/STS Discussion Section: Discuss papers.

English: Group Project workshop.

READ: Ophuls, Ch. 4, 5, 6 & 7.

Kahn, Next 200 Years, Ch. 6 & 7.

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November 13 "Synthesis Essay" (in class 50 minute essay, with notes). Assignment to be handed out in class.

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Nov. 9. PLSc/STS: Discussion of "Synthesis Paper" assignment. What do Ophuls and Kahn have to say about where we are as a nation and world civilization? How serious is the ecological crisis?

English: Preparing for the in-class essay: focus.

Nov. 11. PLSc/STS: Lecture and discussion: Ophuls on the politics of scarcity and the American political economy.

English: Preparing for the in-class essay: development.

Nov. 13. PLSc/STS: Write in-class 50 minute "Synthesis Essay."

English: Discussion of student answers to synthesis essay question.

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Nov. 25th. Revisions of three of five short papers due.

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Nov. 16. Discussion of the question, "What, according to Ophuls, are the principal obstacles to successfully meeting the broad range of interacting problems that he refers to as the ecological crisis? What does the Kahn-Simon perspective say about each obstacle?"

English: Workshop on revising weekly exercises.

Make a list of what you ate in the Dorms over the weekend in preparation for field trip.

Nov. 18. Field Trip: Food Services.


optional *Korten, (from reserve copy) When Corporations Rule The World, Ch. 10, "Buying Out Democracy," and Ch. 18, "Race to the Bottom."

**Topic 7: Transnational Corporations and the Ecological Crisis**

Nov. 20. PlSc/STS and English: Watch and discuss the film, "The Global Assembly Line."

Nov. 23. PlSc/STS: Discussion: The nature and impact of Transnational Corporations.

English: Audience and structure in the group project report.

Nov. 25. "Wild Card" Day. Revisions of three weekly exercises due on or before today.

**Topic 8: Student Reports on Term projects and papers.**

Nov. 30, Dec. 2, 4, 7. Schedule to be determined.


English: In-class essay.

Dec. 11. Turn in Group Term Projects.

PlSc/STS and English: Discussion of students' perspectives of the issues presented in this class.

**FINAL ESSAY/ASSIGNMENT DUE ON OR BEFORE DEC. 16TH, 107 BURROWES.**