WRITING CRITICALLY, AND BIOREGIONALLY, ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

English 30  Spring 2005

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Section 007:  TuTh 2:30- 3:45, Willard 271
Office Hours: TuTh 4:00– 5:00
Wed 10:00–12:00, 1:00 – 3:00

Required  The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook ed. by Cheryl Glenn (Thomas Heinle)
Texts:  The Skeptical Environmentalist by Bjorn Lomborg (Cambridge University Press)
The Chesapeake: An Environmental Biography by John Wennerstein (MHS)

Recommended  Global Crises, Global Solutions ed. by Bjorn Lomborg (Cambridge University Press)
Texts:  Appalachian Winter by Marcia Bonta (University of Pittsburgh Press)

Additional  “Misleading Math about the Earth: Four Rebuttals of Lomborg’s Claims in The Skeptical
Environmentalist, with responses from Lomborg and ScAm ed. J. Rennie. (SciAm Online)
“Critical Thinking: A World Campus Guidebook” by Michael Svoboda. (ANGEL)
“State of the Bay: 2004.” Save the Bay Newsletter. (Chesapeake Bay Foundation)
Relevant articles, editorials, and reviews from online sources of news/opinion (ANGEL)
A recent book or movie of environmental interest

Course Description:  This course seeks to improve your writing and your critical thinking skills in the
context of a semester-long discussion of the environmental issues confronted by our world and by the
specific bioregion in which Penn State is located, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The course will be
divided into two parts.

In the first half of the course we will take up the controversial work of statistician Bjorn Lomborg.
After reading his first major work, The Skeptical Environmentalist, we will examine the several, often
impassioned, rebuttals that have appeared in a variety of publications, most notably Scientific American.
In this portion of the course, you will first explain Lomborg’s position on a particular issue, then analyze
his critics’ responses to that position, and, finally, argue for your own position on that issue.

In the second half of the course we will examine environmental issues in the specific environmental
context of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, the bioregion that encompasses much of Pennsylvania,
including the University Park campus of Penn State. During this phase of the class, using the example
provided by Wennerstein’s The Chesapeake, you will write your longest paper of the course: a natural
history of some feature of the watershed. You will then transform that paper into the shortest paper of the
course: a two-minute radio script, one that may eventually be produced, on CD, for play on radio stations
located within the watershed. (You may even be invited to participate in that production.)

Between these two sets of linked assignments, you will also be asked to review a recent book or movie of
environmental interest. Many such books are published each year, but the fall of 2004 saw the publication
of Bjorn Lomborg’s edited collection, Global Crises, Global Solutions, a book that is sure to stoke the
already heated debate of his work. And perhaps we’ll see a successor to “The Day After Tomorrow.”

Course Assignments:

Essay #1 - Analytical Summary (3-4 ds pages, 10%)  Essay #4 – Book or Movie Review (3 ds pgs, 10%)
Essay #2 - Stasis Analysis of Debate (4-5 ds pgs, 15%) Essay #5 - Natural/History of CBW (8–10 pgs, 25%)
Essay #3 - Summary Analysis (6-8 ds pages, 15%)  Essay #6 - Two-Minute Radio Script (2 ds pgs, 10%)
Five (5) Journal Entries (1 ss page each, 5%)  Participation – 10%
Requirements for Essays:

All essays should be double-spaced, on pages with 1” margins all around, and set in 12 pt Times New Roman. The first page of every essay should carry the following headers: “English 30” (top, flush left), “[John/Jane Doe] (top, flush right), “Instructor: Michael Svoboda” (below “English 30”), “Assignment #N” (below your name). The following pages should be headed by your name and page number in the upper right corner.

Other Requirements:

I expect you to be here. Within approximately three weeks, I will know everyone’s name. Thus, poor attendance will have both a direct (the class participation grade) and indirect (the decision whether to round up a grade) effect on your final grade. In addition, chronic absenteeism almost always results in lower grades on the individual assignments because I further clarify/specify the criteria for each in class. Finally, I reserve the right to lower your grade down to an “F” solely for chronic absenteeism (Senate Policy 42-27).

As in the real world, you are also expected to turn your work in on time. However, if you talk to me in advance of deadlines and have a legitimate excuse, then I am fairly flexible regarding extensions. But if you do not talk to me, I will impose a penalty on late submissions.

And then, clearly, you must participate. This means, first, completing the assigned readings so that you are prepared to contribute to the discussions. But, second, from time to time there will be small research projects to complete: questions will arise in our readings and I will look for your help in answering them. Finally, newspapers provide daily evidence that environmental issues are an important part of our political dialogue; read at least one regularly.

Academic Integrity:

Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office and to their colleges for possible further disciplinary sanction.

A Policy Reminder. The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions, please tell me as soon as possible.
**Course Schedule**

**Week One**
1. **Tu 01/11**  Course Introduction, Diagnostic Exercises.
2. **Th 01/13**  Review of Diagnostic Exercises. Setting Up the Analysis: TSE – Part I (pp. 3–42)

**Week Two**
3. **Tu 01/18**  Building the Analysis: TSE – Parts II & III (pp. 45–158); WC – Lessons 3–5
4. **Th 01/20**  Continuing the Analysis: TSE – Part IV (pp. 163–211)

**Week Three**
5. **Tu 01/25**  Concluding the Analysis. TSE – Part V (pp. 215–324); WC – Lessons 6–8
6. **Th 01/27**  Reviewing the Analysis: TSE – Part VI (pp. 327–352). Draft Workshop for Essay #1

**Week Four**
8. **Th 02/03**  The Debate. Part 2: *Grist* – “Something Is Rotten in the State of Denmark”

**Week Five**
9. **Tu 02/08**  The Debate, Part 3: *SciAm* – “Misleading Math About the Earth”

**Week Six**
11. **Tu 02/15**  Electronic Databases: Pattee Library. **Due date for Essay #2**

**Week Seven**
13. **Tu 02/22**  Coming to a Conclusion: WC – Lesson 14. 1st Draft Workshop for Essay #3
14. **Th 02/24**  Expressing a Conclusion: WC – Lesson 15. 2nd Draft Workshop for Essay #3

**Week Eight**
15. **Tu 03/01**  Observing Nature – Readings. **Due date for Essay #3.**
16. **Th 03/03**  Observing Nature – Campus Field Trip

Mn-Fri 03/07–11  **SPRING BREAK — No Classes!**

**Week Nine**
17. **Tu 03/15**  Writing Nature/History, Pt. 1: *CEB* – Chapters 1, 2 (pp. 1–68).
18. **Th 03/17**  Environmental Books and Movies: Reviews. **Due date for Essay #4.**

**Week Ten**
19. **Tu 03/22**  Writing Nature/History, Pt. 2: *CEB* – Chapters 3, 4 (pp. 69–139).

**Week Eleven**
21. **Tu 03/29**  Writing Nature/History, Pt. 4: *CEB* – Chapters 6, 7 (177–233).

**Week Twelve**
23. **Tu 04/05**  Writing Nature/History, Pt. 5: Solving Your Writing Problems
24. **Th 04/07**  1st Draft Workshop for Essay #5: Addressing the Audience, Telling the Story

**Week Thirteen**
25. **Tu 04/12**  2nd Draft Workshop for Essay #5: Mechanics and Style
26. **Th 04/14**  **Due date for Essay #5.** (Field Trip?)

**Week Fourteen**
27. **Tu 04/19**  Writing for Radio: Cutting to the Core
28. **Th 04/21**  Writing for Radio: An Oral/Aural Culture

**Week Fifteen**
29. **Tu 04/26**  Read-Aloud Workshop #1
30. **Th 04/28**  Read-Aloud Workshop #2. **Due date for Essay #6 is 5 PM Friday 4/29.**