

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY –  
in partnership with the Gap Year Association study abroad**

**ESM 101: Environmental Sustainability**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**CREDITS:** 4 quarter-credits – Continuous Enrollment Course

Students who plan to use this course to fulfill specific curriculum areas should discuss transfer options and obtain written approval from a counselor or study abroad advisor at their own college/ university PRIOR to enrollment in this course.

**PREREQUISITES:** There are NO prerequisites for this course.

**METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:** This course is field-based. The course instructor will be available via email.

**INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD:**

PSU has approved the following Instructors of Record, one of whom will be assigned to you typically two+ weeks prior to the beginning of your program:

- Britt Basel, MS - [brittbasel@ecothropic.com](mailto:brittbasel@ecothropic.com)
  - Dianna Hahn, MA – [dianna.hahn@gmail.com](mailto:dianna.hahn@gmail.com)
  - Alexander Papouchis, MS - [alexpapouchis@gmail.com](mailto:alexpapouchis@gmail.com)
  - Cam Sylvester, MA – [camsylvester@gmail.com](mailto:camsylvester@gmail.com)
- Office: 503-206-7336  
Web: <https://gapyearassociation.org>  
Address: PO Box 17427, Portland, OR 97217

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to provide hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students who participate in study away opportunities. It offers the student a chance to learn outside of the classroom focusing on sustainability and technological issues impacting communities locally, regionally and/or globally. Students will engage with issues of environmental sustainability observed through travel and service learning.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

- **Environment of Respect:** Disagreement and diversity of opinions are encouraged. You will be challenged to think critically about the impact of cultural differences, which may include gender, race, the roles environment has in business and market development, socioeconomic status, physical and cognitive ability, sexuality and other forms of diversity. You are encouraged to ask difficult questions and engage in discussion and critical reflection. Please be respectful of others, listen, and try to understand differences.
- **Experiential Learning:** In this course, learning is an experiential process in which you have the opportunity to engage in and reflect on a variety of different experiences throughout the term. The richness of this class will depend on the questions, insights, and active participation that you bring.
- **Personal Responsibility:** You are expected to engage fully in this class and take action if you need help. Please communicate any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or classroom activities.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please adhere to university policies. Please take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. It is expected that each student will prepare his or her own assignments and that any assignments submitted will be the sole work of the student. Academic

dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information, will not be tolerated. The University's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct>.

### **STUDENT OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Gain a working knowledge of sustainability issues in the developing world.
- Relate the importance of ecosystem conservation to the survival of all ecosystems worldwide.
- Build, take part in building, and learn about alternative practices (ie, biogas systems, alternative building techniques, organic farming, greenhouse gasses and carbon offsets, ecosystem management).
- Witness and interview first-hand local artists, environmentalists, and/or environmental managers to learn about current methods and relevant issues.
- Experience and learn about the inherent tensions between local populations and their needs, balanced with issues of environmental conservation.
- Select articles and journals related to the travel/study experience and analyze them critically.

### **CONTACT HOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

A total of **40 volunteer hours** will be facilitated. Additional hours may come in the form of:

- On-site instruction with local guides, group field trips, independent travel, and guest speakers.
- Books, periodicals, and videos provided by on-site organization/tour operator.
- Volunteering with environmental conservation projects (ie, reforestation, invasive species removal, censusing of local fauna, etc.).
- Introduction to, and volunteering on alternative building and/or alternative energy projects and methods.
- Interviews with local inhabitants.
- Optional: Students will use the Internet to access resources and evaluate information sources according to the external criteria, such as the author's credentials, the timeliness of the information, the genre of the source, etc.

### **STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS:**

**REQUIRED HOURS** – must complete 40 volunteer hours. Gap Year Association will provide verification of hours.

**A DAILY JOURNAL** in English will be a descriptive study/journal of your semester. Use it to keep brief narratives of your daily experiences. It should contain notes on places visited, interviews, daily purchases, oral language activities, student observations of different and unique cultural traits, etc. Self-reflection is important and will be a significant part of your journal grade. Self-reflection will involve answering questions that force you to think critically about your experiences. When writing journals consider questions like:

- How is this experience different from my expectations?
- What challenges have I faced throughout this experience? How am I overcoming them?
- Explore differences, similarities to your home culture.
- What have been the most poignant learning experiences? How has that impacted my world-view?

**REQUIRED READING** – must read at least 1 book from the Reading list and demonstrate knowledge learned and/or perspectives expressed (with citations) in your FINAL REPORT.

**A 15-MINUTE PRESENTATION** must be made during your group semester presenting on an environmental issue that your volunteer service is addressing. Interviewing local contacts and organizations is the best way to do research for this presentation.

**FINAL REPORT** of insights gained from this international service experience. **Our expectation is that the papers you submit will reflect college-level writing.** Your report will be 8-10 pages in length. Reports must be typed (double spaced) with a cover page that includes your name, the quarter (eg. fall 2021), the international program attended, and course number.

**Submit a comprehensive report and analysis about ONE volunteer experience at an environmentally focused organization (sustainable agriculture, animal conservation, ecosystem protection, alternative energy, resource conservation and material recycling) during your travel/study experience. In your report, describe the organization and mission, the issue the organization addresses and how you can continue to address the issue moving forward.**

As you research the issue you might want to consider how the issue became a problem, what are the long-term effects of the issue, the history or the organization, how the organization gets funding, how your volunteer work impacted the organization, and what kind of on-going support is necessary to resolve the issue.

Final Report will be graded as follows:

- Description of organization and mission— 10%
- Research and analysis of environmental issue the organization addresses—30%
- Analysis of how you can support the mission/issue after travel— 20%
- Clarity and Organization of Ideas-20%
- Grammar and Punctuation -10%
- Ability to Demonstrate Knowledge from the Required Readings - 10%

#### **DUE DATES, SUBMITTING JOURNAL AND FINAL REPORT:**

##### **Calendar/Schedule:**

All course requirements must be submitted by:

Fall Semester: January 20<sup>th</sup>

Spring Semester: June 20<sup>th</sup>

##### **Submitting Journals & Final Reports:**

Please email your final report to the instructor and post any necessary journals or supportive documents to:

Gap Year Association  
PSU Grading Instructor  
PO Box 17427  
Portland, OR 97217

**\*\*\* Purchase tracking for anything you post as some materials have gotten lost in the past.**

## **COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

**Daily Journal** (30% of total criteria): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, clearly presented ideas and observations, creative thought and appropriateness.

**Final Paper** (70% of total criteria): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, complexity of grammar and verb use, format, content appropriateness, organization, analysis, originality and summarization skills.

**Presentation:** Successful completion of the presentation is required for this course.

**Required Hours:** Gap Year Association will provide verification of these hours.

**Grading:** This course is graded with letter grades; A - F. See more details about PSU's grading system [here](#).

## **READING LIST:**

**Students must read and cite at minimum ONE book in the final assignment. The following books have been approved for this course and are listed by program region. Any other books not a part of this list must first be approved by the instructor.**

### **All Regions:**

Cradle to Cradle. Authors: William McDonough and Michael Braungart

*A manifesto for a radically different philosophy and practice of manufacture and environmentalism.*

Manifestos on the Future of Food and Seed: Vandana Shiva

*A short collection of essays about what we eat and how we grow it.*

Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit: Vandana Shiva

*The story of activists who are fighting corporate maneuvers to control access to water.*

The Sixth Extinction: and Unnatural Extinction: Elizabeth Kolbert

*A book about the future of the world, and the mass extinction unfolding before our eyes*

(Fiction) Ecotopia: Ernest Callenbach

*William Weston, a young journalist, visits Ecotopia, an energy-efficient mini city with no urban sprawl, pollution, and a female dominated government and is determined to report his findings objectively.*

The Omnivore's Dilemma: Michael Pollan

*Through an analysis that interlaces history, science, and sociology, Pollan explores how America has shifted priorities around the economics of a single crop and the implications this has on production and consumption of many products.*

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs.the Climate: Naomi Klein

*Klein argues that our addiction to carbon is fueling our inability to radically tackle the biggest problem of our time. Climate change is a wake-up call delivered through severe weather events. Klein further explores how it is interwoven through poverty and development.*

### **Central America:**

The World Without Us: Alan Weisman

*If human beings disappeared instantaneously from the Earth, what would happen? Alan Weisman draws on every field of science to present an environmental assessment of a world without humans.*

Fire In The Turtle House: The Green Sea Turtle and the Fate of the Ocean: Osha Gray Davidson

*Sea turtles have existed since the time of the dinosaurs. But now, suddenly, the turtles are dying, due to mysterious plague.*

Savage Shore: Life and Death with Nicaragua's Last Shark Hunters: Edward Marriott

*The true story of Edward Marriott's journeys with the last surviving shark fishermen—a fierce ethnic brew of black Caribs, Nicaraguan Indians, and the descendants of seventeenth-century English pirates.*

Jaguar: One Man's Struggle To Establish The World's First Jaguar Preserve: Alan Rabinowitz

*In 1983, zoologist Alan Rabinowitz ventured into the rainforest of Belize, determined to study the little-known jaguar in its natural habitat and to establish the world's first jaguar preserve.*

**India:**

Jungle Lore: Jim Corbett

*Corbett's autobiography of his life and career as a conservationist in India.*

Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India: Madhav

Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha

*An exploration of the most ecologically complex country in the world. India's peoples range from technocrats to hunter-gathers and its environments from dense forest to wasteland.*

Relicts of a Beautiful Sea: Survival, Extinction, and Conservation in a Desert World: Christopher Norment

*By telling the story of little known desert creatures, Norment illustrates the beauty of evolution and explores ethical and practical issues of conservation.*

**South America:**

One River: Wade Davis

*The story of two generations of scientific explorers in South America*

Mother of God: An Extraordinary Journey into the Uncharted Tributaries of the Western Amazon

*Explorer Paul Rosolie's adventure in the uncharted tributaries of the Western Amazon.*

Walking the Amazon: Ed Stafford

*The story of Ed Stafford who set off to become the first man ever to walk the entire length of the Amazon.*