

## What is “Greening the Curriculum”?

A presentation by Amber Katherine, EAC Chair

“Greening the Curriculum” is a growing trend in higher education today which aims at the preparation of professionals and citizens capable of meeting the challenge of converging global environmental problems through increasing levels of “ecological literacy,” or “environmental literacy.”

Recently, this trend was measured in the largest study (1,068 campuses, inc. SMC were surveyed) ever conducted on “Trends and New Developments in College and University Leadership, Academics and Operations,” entitled, [Campus Environment 2008: A National Report Card on Sustainability in Higher Education](#). “It shows that many positive changes are occurring on U.S. campuses, especially in the greening of campus operations. Ironically, it also demonstrates that between the years 2001 and 2008, the amount of sustainability-related education offered on campuses did not increase and may have even declined.”

There are several ways in which “greening the curriculum” is being institutionalized in colleges & universities across the country:

- Interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary courses, e.g. Human Ecology.
- Interdisciplinary degree programs, e.g. Environmental Studies or Sustainability Studies.
- Major and Minor degree programs.
- Specialty courses within a disciplinary focus on environmental content, e.g. Ecological Economics or Environmental Ethics.
- Establishing an Ecological Literacy graduation requirement.
- **Mainstreaming “ecoliteracy” into existing introductory courses (Intro to Sociology, Intro to Psychology, Intro to Economics, English, etc.) without fundamentally changing the course objectives. This might be accomplished through the selection of case studies or examples to illustrate content, integration of current events, or the development of a course theme.**

At SMC “greening the curriculum” is one way we are educating for global citizenship. SMC’s commitment to this curriculum movement is already embodied in the new Environmental Studies AA degree, the Ecological Literacy track in the Global Citizenship Graduation Requirement, and the ILO which states, “Students will take responsibility for their own impact on the earth by living a sustainable and ethical lifestyle.” Today, I am here on behalf of the Environmental Affairs Committee to promote the practice of integrating ecological literacy, or sustainability issues into existing courses across the curriculum.

One way to increase ecological literacy involves enabling students to understand humans, the earth, and the relationship between humans and the earth from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. This is exactly what we are being asked to do by SMC’s global citizenship task force this year: to make water a theme across the curriculum. Here are some examples of what I am doing in my philosophy classes:

- In my **Introduction to Knowledge & Reality (PHILOS 1)** course we will consider why the ancient Greek pre-Socratic philosopher Thales offered in response to the question, “what is the underlying nature of reality?” the answer, water. We will also inquire why philosophers turned away from naturalistic explanations for reality that emphasized the four elements (earth, air, fire, water) and toward more “otherworldly” or transcendent views of reality.
- In my **Modern Philosophy class (PHILOS 4)** students will be debating the question of private property raised by both John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In order to bring this 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> century debate into the present moment students will watch *FLOW*, the award-winning documentary which investigates a critical political issue of the 21st Century - The World Water Crisis. The critical question at issue in the film is: if we hope to overcome the crisis, should we treat water as a commodity or a human right? Students will use Locke’s philosophy to defend the former view and Rousseau’s to defend the latter.

## What can you do?

- Provide descriptions (such as these) of what you are doing in your courses to green the curriculum to be featured on an SMC website being set up by the EAC entitled “Greening the Curriculum.” Encourage your faculty to do the same.
- Invite the EAC to attend one of your upcoming department meetings to make this presentation and lead a discussion that is specific to the disciplines in your department.
- Start an online discussion with your faculty. Send out an article to featuring the latest theory/research in your field relating to environmental sustainability, and ask people to weigh in on the subject online.
- Offer a Flex Day presentation/workshop on greening your discipline(s).

## Resources:

### [Campus Environment 2008: A National Report Card on Sustainability in Higher Education](#)

[United Nations report \*Our Common Future\*](#) (1987)

“[What is Education For?](#)” by David Orr

[Reaching Beyond Compliance: The Challenges of Achieving Campus Sustainability](#) by Julie Newman (2009)

*Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability: Problematics, Promise, and Practice* (2004) by Peter Blaze Corcoran and Arjen E.J. Wals

*Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change*, Peggy F. Barlett and Geoffrey W. Chase (2004)

*Planet U: Sustaining the World, Reinventing the University*, Michael M’Gonigle & Justine Starke (2006)

*Greening the College Curriculum: A Guide to Environmental Teaching in the Liberal Arts*, ed. Johnathan Collett and Stephen Karakashian, (1996)

*Sustainable Education: Re-visioning Learning and Change*, Stephan Sterling (2001)

[LA Times’ Altered Oceans](#) (Award-winning 5 parts series, includes slide shows and video.)

## FREE FILMS w/ Sustainability Themes available online:

[A World Without Water](#) (1 hour documentary on world water crisis)

[Flow](#) (3 min trailer)

[The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour](#) (89 min) 2008 Narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio, explores the perilous state of our planet.

[The Story of Stuff](#) a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns.

National Geographic on Climate Change: [Six Degrees Could Change the World](#) (90 mins)

[The Future of Food](#) (88 min)

[Earthlings](#) (95 mins) about humanity’s dependence on animals (for pets, food, clothing, entertainment, and scientific research). Includes some graphic content.

[Life & Debt – Globalization Jamaica](#) Utilizing excerpts from the award-winning non-fiction text "A Small Place" by Jamaica Kincaid.

[The Corporation Pt 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#) (Includes environmental crimes by corporations and exemplary corporate citizens)

[Dr. Seuss's "The Lorax"](#)

## **ART & Sustainability**

[Melting Men](#) A thousand miniature people have slowly melted away in a [Berlin](#) square in an effort to draw attention to melting ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica. The installation, by Brazilian artist Nele Azevedo, was meant to spotlight the [World Wildlife Fund's](#) warning that melting ice could possibly cause levels to rise more than 3.3 ft by 2100.

[Art in a Changing Climate: A Grist Special Series](#) A special series on art in a changing climate, featuring an [essay from Bill McKibben](#) and [introduce some of the artists answering his call for climate art](#). We highlight specific projects via multimedia -- including an [audio interview with artist Chris Jordan](#), an [audio slideshow from the "Facing Climate Change" project](#), and a [photo series on performance art](#). We explore some of the [best \(and worst\) music to come out of the movement](#) and look at the ways the [music industry is working toward a smaller footprint](#). And finally, we suggest a tour of [green art museums](#), [online exhibits](#), and other [resources](#).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Lecture: "Our Water Crisis"

Mark Gold, President of Heal the Bay

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 6:30pm at Bundy 217

[Lecture: "Water Consciousness for Global Citizenship"](#)

Thursday, 10/1/2009

SMC philosophy professor will discuss the questions: How should we think about water? As a commodity or a sacred human right? What's your part in securing a future of water for all?

Location: Humanities & Social Science Building Room 165, 11:15 AM

THANK YOU!

Amber Katherine

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See Worksheet for including your course on the new Greening the Curriculum Website.

## **GREENING THE CURRICULUM**

### **A project of the Environmental Affairs Committee**

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Project Description: The EAC is developing a web site to feature the efforts faculty are making to integrate environmental and ecological examples, issues, themes and assignments into their courses. Faculty are invited to include on the link to each of the courses they have featured:

- A brief description of how they incorporate sustainability into their course.
- An image to illustrate and promote the class/theme/assignment.
- Links relevant to the intersection of their course and environmental literacy.

Students will be able to use this site to find faculty who choose to incorporate a “green” perspective in their courses. If you would like to participate please fill out the following form, forward it to Amber Katherine and you will be contacted to begin the process of featuring your efforts.

FACULTY MEMBER NAME:

What course(s) do you teach?

TITLE:

COURSE CODE:

How would you describe (in a few sentences) how you attempt to integrate environmental awareness/ecological literacy into your course(s)?

Would you like your course(s) to be listed on the “Greening the Curriculum” website so that students interested in sustainability might find you more easily? If so, please provide your CONTACT INFORMATION and I will be in touch.