ENVIRONMENT ACROSS
THE CURRICULUM


The philosophy of this text is best described by a quotation from Donella Meadows, one of its contributors (p. 74):

People don't need enormous cars; they need respect. They don't need closetsful of clothes; they need to feel attractive and they need excitement, variety, and beauty. People need identity, community, challenge, acknowledgment, love, joy. To try to fill these needs with material things is to set up an unquenchable appetite for false solutions to real and never-satisfied problems. The resulting psychological emptiness is one of the major forces behind the desire for material growth. A society that can admit and articulate its nonmaterial needs and find nonmaterial ways to satisfy them would require much lower material and energy throughputs and would provide much higher levels of human fulfillment.

The editors assure readers that this is a role for higher education. Understanding ourselves and our interactions with each other and the environment is crucial to the survival of both humankind and the planet. In chapter 1, David Orr addresses academics and encourages us to realize that we have been teaching as if the environment did not matter. His impassioned arguments for why the environment matters and how environment issues can pull together our all-too-frequently fragmented colleges and universities are extremely persuasive. Thus, this text is timely, exciting, and useful to any college instructor who wishes to include environmental issues in her or his course or any administrator who wishes to expand coverage of environmental issues across the curriculum.

The book's 12 chapters are loaded with information, ranging from how to include environmental issues in individual disciplines to how to reinvigorate undergraduate and graduate studies in the academy as a whole. In addition, a final summary chapter helps instructors to learn the art and science of teaching. A well-written introduction guides the reader on how to use this text. Each chapter is written by a specialist in a different discipline and includes an initial description of how environmental issues are germane to the disciplinary focus of that chapter (many cross-references are given throughout the text, which is appropriate given that environmental issues are inherently interdisciplinary). This initial discussion is followed by a detailed description of an upper division and/or a lower division course. The description includes what pedagogy the instructor used, as well as what readings, films, and other teaching materials were assigned. Finally, a number of references are given. In several chapters, the references are followed by descriptions of modules that can be used in other courses that readers may wish to design. One of the most useful features of this text is the annotated bibliography in each chapter. These bibliographies include classic as well as recent references for each topic. References include books, chapters, computer programs, Web sites, videos, and films. Thus, the instructor who is revamping a course would have a wealth of information from which to draw.

Ten chapters cover the following disciplines: anthropology, biology, economics, geography, history, literature, media/journalism, philosophy, political science, and religion. Most of these chapters advocate active learning principles and techniques. Most authors are also unabashed advocates for environmental protection through education. For example, Karl Grossman (chapter 8) states bluntly that environmental journalists must be advocates for the environment rather than objective reporters. However, he cautions that being an advocate takes a great deal of effort, including digging into all sides of an issue.

John Opie and Michael Black (chapter 6) note that historians must understand the differences between European and non-European cultures—specifically, how European cultures have a different view of the environment than their non-European counterparts. This chapter is one with whose general message I must take exception. Inherent in their argument is the idea that European cultures are "bad" and that non-European cultures are "good." Historian Richard White discusses this attitude, stating that it labels "whites as the bearers of environmental original sin" (Schullery 1997). And Schullery (1997) has noted that this labeling leads to a "reverse Eden myth in which the Garden, rather than being made off limits to sinners, was in fact invaded by them, chain saws in hand." One need only examine environmental problems in other cultures and see their severity and history. The environmental problems plaguing the developing world did not all originate with the imposition of Western ideals on those societies. It is important to examine environmental problems as human problems and to avoid cultural or political labels.
Taking In the Sites

If you want to read about, shop for, or even buy one of the most recently published books, the Web offers countless sites to explore; however, if you want to actually read an online version of one of the latest releases, you would be better off looking the old-fashioned way. Because of copyright issues, only the classics, such as the works of Darwin, can be found on the Web. But, who knows? Books on tape caught on. Perhaps network providers will soon attach a cyberbox to your server so that you can dial in to recently released books. Until then, the following Web sites can help you to find a book online:

The Universal Library Project (http://www.ul.cs.cmu.edu/) asserts that its mission is “to make available on the Internet all the Authored Works of Mankind so that anyone can access these works from any place at any time.” The site has a “Door to the Library” option that links visitors to a search engine. The search engine is divided into four types of media: books, music, art, and video. The books page allows visitors to select topics, such as science and technology, or to visit the general reference library.

At the Internet Public Library (http://readroom.ipl.org/bin/ip1/ip1.books-idx.pl?type=deweysystem&q1=500), you can search for a book by its title or view all the titles that are available in the library. You can also look for books in the following categories: earth sciences, paleontology, paleozoology, life sciences, botanical sciences, and zoological sciences.

To access an index of more than 4000 works, visit the “Books On-Line Page” (http://www.cs.cmu.edu/books.html), where you can search by author or title or browse by subject. The subject listing includes the physical sciences, biological sciences, medicine, agriculture, engineering, technology, and the environment.

As Collett discusses in the final chapter, rapid changes in environmental issues and environmental education will quickly make this book and other current texts obsolete. Therefore, he gives additional references, including listservers and Web sites. Moreover, he encourages teachers and administrators to become more active so that we can encourage and educate our students. This superb text belongs on the desks and anyone who wishes to encourage and educate our students.

Reference cited

PUBLISHING NEWS

The Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station has recently published a Plant Growth Chamber Handbook. This 240-page illustrated report, which was edited by R. W. Langhans and T. W. Tibbitts, contains an explanation of how to control the many different factors that are involved in the operation of chambers for growing plants. Thirty scientists and engineers contributed to the text to provide a basic understanding of environmental factors and general plant responses. Included are chapters on how to control and monitor conditions, how to conduct effective research, how to use solid media and hydroponics, how to control pests, and how to maintain the growth chamber. The handbook, Special Report nr 99 (SR-99), is available for $15.00 (plus $3.00 shipping) from Agriculture Information Services, 304 Curtis Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1050. Tel: 515/294-5616.

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