

## BIO 102: ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE - 2014

### TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT

***From the syllabus:*** “You will write a paper of at least seven (7) typed pages based upon your independent research of a topic of your choice. You will be required to choose a tightly focused topic on some aspect of environmental biology discussed in the readings or lecture. The topic must be approved by me beforehand. For this paper, you will be required to link together the interrelationship between environment and people in the developing world. Your paper should address how the environment (or changes in the environment) impacts people, and how people impact their environment. Answering these questions may require an examination of economics, public health, community development, sociology, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, and will hopefully give you an appreciation for the linkages among these many factors. You will illustrate your theme using several in-depth ‘case studies’.”

To help keep you on task, **you are required to turn in a one-page outline of your research project by Thurs November 13<sup>th</sup>**. The outline will be worth 10% of the term paper points (10 pts). I am looking for a reasonably detailed outline that spells out how you will introduce your topic, bring up various case studies to build your case, and then sum up and synthesize what you have learned. **The full paper will be due in class on Thurs December 11<sup>th</sup>**. No exceptions to these deadlines will be made.

#### **CLARIFICATION**

Your term paper is to be focused on an environmental issue in the less developed world (i.e., “developing world”, “Third World”, or simply “poor world”), such as Africa, Asia, India, or South America. Do *not* make the industrialized nations (e.g., USA, Europe, Japan) your focus. Part of the goal of this course is to get you to think about how people in very different physical, social, and economic environments see their world. Try to get into their shoes and see their perspective. What are their lives like? How do they relate to their environment? You can always study your own culture, but this is a unique opportunity to study a culture different from your own, one that is more common in the world. Most people living in the world today have a Third World lifestyle – our affluent lifestyle is in the minority. We want to try to understand their lives so that we can better identify with them. **Be sure that your paper deals with the following three components: (1) people, interacting with their (2) environment, in the (3) developing world.** You must also incorporate one more case histories into your paper, as explained below.

#### **CASE STUDY APPROACH**

A case study is a research strategy that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. The case study methodology is a common approach used in social science based on an in-depth investigation of a single case (e.g., individual, group, or event) over a period of time. A case history is a particular example resulting from the case study research approach. In terms of this course, a case history would be all the relevant information gathered about a particular environmental topic in a specific community or region. **For your term paper, you are required to use one or more case histories to illustrate your topic.** For example, if your topic was water shortages resulting from climate change, you might choose the shrinking of Lake Chad as a case history. You may choose several case histories when appropriate (in the example above, you might use Lake Chad, the Aral Sea, and Mount Kilimanjaro as case histories). The case histories you use will depend upon the appropriateness to your topic and the availability of resources in the library or on the internet. **In general, plan to use around three (3) in-depth case histories (1-2 pages for each case).** This is not a magical number, since you might choose a single very detailed case history or a number of cases depending on the information available. Your case histories should be drawn from your own independent research and must not be taken solely from your assigned course readings (however, you could choose to go deeper into an example mentioned briefly in lecture or in the text). If in doubt, run your idea past me by email or right after our class meeting.

## Pet Peeves

**These are some of my pet peeves about term papers. They are things that bug me and result in a lower grade:**

- I hate it when students give me verbatim quotations from their sources rather than putting the point in their own words. I see it as laziness, not wanting to think for yourself about how to articulate a point and just copying what someone else said. Once in a blue moon it is okay to directly quote someone if it is a really important quotation, but in just about all cases it is far better to paraphrase in your own words. So please, go through your papers and root out those offending verbatim quotes!
- I hate it when I have to count the number of pages in your paper because you did not number the pages. Every word processing program has an easy function for inserting page numbers...please use it! It's a little thing that shows you care about the details.
- I hate it when there are really obvious spelling or grammar errors, especially when it makes it difficult to figure out what you are trying to say. That is really the kiss of death, because it indicates that you didn't even proofread your paper. Did you know that your word processing software has a spell check function, and a grammar function as well? (Did you wonder why those red lines were appearing below some of the words?) I strongly advise that you ask a trusted friend to proofread your paper, someone who knows how to spell and write grammatically. That's what friends are for, right? Or go to the Student Writing Center in the Bond building and get some help there. There is really no excuse for spelling and grammar errors, and it really can destroy a good body of information.
- I hate it when students refer to Africa as if it is a country. Please remember that Africa is not a country, it is a CONTINENT made up of 50 nations! If you are writing about Africa, specify what country in Africa you are referring to, or at least what region of Africa. Note that South Africa is a country, while southern Africa is a region.
- I hate it when a paper makes a lot of general statements without ever giving any specific examples of how your topic plays out in real life. Please be sure to use at least one CASE HISTORY in your paper, or several case histories that make your point. Papers without case histories will be marked down.

## **GUIDELINES**

- 1. Give me a full 7 pages of solid writing.** Do not fill up unnecessary space by using excessively large font, wide margins, or wide spacing -- use 11 or 12 point font, **1.5 spacing**, and 0.6-1.0 inch margins. Do not pad your paper by filling it with fluff. Figures, tables, and literature cited (references) do not count for the 7 page minimum.
- 2. Your paper should be a review and synthesis** of current knowledge on the topic, not your opinion or personal perspective. This is not a position paper for your response. I want the facts, not opinion or speculation!
- 3. Do not quote directly!** Say it in your own words (paraphrase), and cite the source.
- 4. No fuzzy thinking!** Think about what you are saying.
- 5. You are not asked to provide a solution to the problem**, only to report on the problem. If there are steps that people are taking in their communities to solve the problem, report on it. You don't have to have the answer. Too often, our solutions are simplistic because we do not understand the complexities of life in developing countries. (For example, just throwing money at a problem is never a solution.)
- 6. Write in complete sentences** -- no lists or bullet points!
- 7. Grammar, spelling, and vocabulary count!** If you need help in this area, the Academic Support Center is available to assist you.
- 8. If you use figures, photos, or tables, be sure to refer to them in the text.**
- 9. Number your pages** -- don't make me count them!

## **MORE HINTS FOR WRITING A QUALITY PAPER**

- 1. A picture is often worth a thousand words.** Make use of figures and illustrations when appropriate.
- 2. Focus your topic.** Don't try to cover too broad an area: you'll either be overwhelmed with information, or your coverage will be superficial. Better to narrow down the focus and do a complete job researching and presenting that narrower topic. Be sure you talk to me about your paper topic before you start writing.
- 3. Work to understand the literature on your topic.** Spend time in the library and on the internet.
- 4. Think about where you are going in your paper before you begin to write.** Plan out the structure of the paper in a reasonably detailed outline.
- 5. Write to illuminate, not to confuse. Be concise and succinct.** Give all the necessary information, but don't use any more words than you have to. Avoid verbosity. Long-windedness is not a virtue!
- 6. Stick to the point.** Do not include information irrelevant to your focus.
- 7. Make a statement and back it up.** Never make a statement of fact without citing a supporting reference. Within the paper, you can cite your references in the format of (Author, followed by year) or as a footnote. For example, "Population growth is a global problem (Southwick 1996)". Use whatever bibliographic style you want

for listing the full references at the end of the paper -- just be consistent. A suggested format for citing references is offered on the next page.

**8. Remember that 95% of good writing is re-writing.** When you finish your first draft, don't submit it right away! Leave it alone for a bit and then go over it again. Make corrections, think about how you might improve the flow, remove awkward sentences, clarify confusing concepts, and reorganize the structure to make it more logical. Then go back and revise. Once you are satisfied with your paper, show it to some trusted friends with good writing skills for their honest comments and constructive criticism. Re-write again. 95% of good writing is re-writing!

**9. Proofread.** All word processing programs these days come with a Spell-check. Use it! Check for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and typos. If a paper looks sloppy or careless, this will be reflected in the grade.

**10. Make the final paper look as good as you possibly can.** It should be typed, **1.5 spacing**, with 0.6-1.0 inch margins, on clean paper, using easy-to-read font (like Times-Roman), pages numbered sequentially. You are welcome to include figures, tables, and photos as long as you refer to them in your text (these do not count for the 7-page minimum). Aesthetics do matter!

## One possible format for citing references

*If you are used to using another format, use it. Just be consistent about the one you use. Otherwise, you can type your references in the following form:*

Bailey, N. J. 1981. *Statistical Methods in Biology*. 2nd edn. London: Unibooks.

Emlen, S. T. 1978. The evolution of cooperative behaviour in birds. In: *Behavioural Ecology* (Ed. by J. R. Krebs & N. B. Davies), pp. 245\_281. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications.

Robinson, M. H. & Robinson, B. 1970. The stabilimentum of the orb web spider, *Argiope argentata*: an improbable defense against predators. *Canadian Entomologist*, 102, 641\_645.

Smith, J.K. 1985. *Investigations on a freshwater crab*. PhD thesis, University of Durham.

### **Online document:**

Author's name (last name first). Document title. Date of Internet publication. Date of access <URL>.

Darwin, Charles. *The Voyage of the Beagle*. London, 1845. Project Gutenberg. Accessed Oct. 1997 <ftp://uiarchive.cso.uiuc.edu/pub/etext/gutenberg/etext97/vbgle10.txt>.