

**Proposal to the University Curriculum Committee
Freshman Inquiry Course**

I. Cover Sheet

Course Title: Human \cong Nature: Exploring the Equation

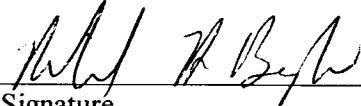
Date first offered: Fall, 1999

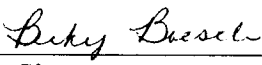
Sections per year: 4


Statement of theme/topical area:

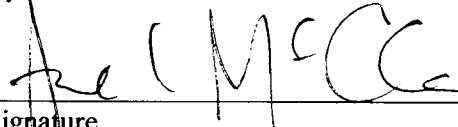
We will explore (1) the nature of human nature and (2) how humans have seen and understood the natural world, then (3) consider the implications of both in relation to one another.

Signatures of participating faculty:

<u>Richard Beyler</u>	<u></u>	<u>2/9/00</u>
Name (typed)	Signature	Date

<u>Becky Boesch</u>	<u></u>	<u>2/9/00</u>
Name (typed)	Signature	Date

<u>Michael A. Toth</u>	<u></u>	<u>2/9/00</u>
Name (typed)	Signature	Date

<u>Unnamed Faculty</u>	<u></u>	<u>9.11.00</u>
Name (typed)	Signature	Date

Contact Faculty:

<u>Richard Beyler</u>	<u>HST</u>	<u>725-3996 (w) 286-5496 (h)</u>	<u>beylerr@pdx.edu</u>
Name	Mail code	Telephone numbers	email

Proposal to the University Curriculum Committee re Freshman Inquiry Course

II. Course Narrative

A. Statement of theme/topical area.

The human animal is considered to be both a part of and yet distinct from nature. This relationship between our human selves and the natural world we inhabit is complicated and perplexing. This theme explores the complex connections between humans and nature. In what ways are humans “natural”? Is there such a thing as human nature and, if so, what is it? How are we related to nature and our larger natural surrounds? How have we described and represented nature to ourselves? How have humans over the course of time understood and interacted with the natural world? How have our understandings of nature changed? Do humans have unique responsibilities toward the natural world and, if so, what are they? Over the course of the year we will attempt to answer these questions, drawing on the resources of the social and biological sciences, history, literature, and the arts.

B. Learning objectives specific to this theme.

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Identify and specify the principle issues of the “nature vs. nurture” debate in regard to human behavior.
2. Explain how human behavior and development is currently understood through religious, biological, linguistic and cultural lenses.
3. Trace the ways human societies in different places and times have understood the natural world and the relationship of humans to that world through such disciplines as science, art, and literature.
4. Recognize and explain the implications of human interaction with the natural environment that accompany different cosmologies, epistemologies and *Weltbilder*.
5. Develop a personal strategy which addresses their responsibilities within the human and natural dilemmas that technologically advanced societies present.

C. Assessment of student learning.

Assessment of both theme-specific and University Studies goals-based learning will be accomplished through graded written work, oral presentations, web products, attendance, and contributory participation; ungraded but carefully reviewed work such as drafts and personal journals; content-specific measures of knowledge which may include but are not limited to exams; and specific measures of University Studies goals. Over the year, that student grades will be based on attendance/participation 10%; written work (including analysis essays, research papers, journals and synthesis essays) 50%; computer generated materials (including Excel graphs, web pages, and power point) 20%; oral presentations 20%

D. Description of methods to ensure coherence of theme across participating faculty.

The “Human/Nature” team will meet for a concentrated period during the summer and weekly throughout the academic year to discuss course implementation, including adjustments and redesign as necessary. Faculty will visit and present in each other’s classes on a regular basis throughout the year. The syllabus will be collaboratively constructed and major assignments and readings will be shared over the entire three terms.

E. Interdisciplinarity of the theme.

Our faculty team currently includes an applied linguist (Becky Boesch), an historian (Richard Beyler), and a sociologist (Michael Toth). Together they represent over 25 years of interdisciplinary teaching. We anticipate one additional faculty member from either the arts or biological sciences.

F. Relation of this course to other University Studies offerings.

This theme is not formally tied to any Sophomore/Junior cluster. However, students interested in continuing to pursue the issues raised in this course would be well served in several clusters, including “Environmental Sustainability,” “Knowledge, Rationality, and Understanding,” “Framing the Two Cultures,” and “Natural Science Inquiry.”

G. How this theme will address the University Studies Goals:

One of the guiding principles of the course is to design in-class content and assignments which integrate several educational goals simultaneously. Note also that the items in the middle column are meant as examples, not an exhaustive list.

University Studies Goal	Representative Assignments	Assessment Plan/Type
Communication: Writing	Each term: reading response essays; one 7-8 research paper on a significant historical paper; one term long synthesis paper; several poems; one researched argumentative paper on an environmental issue	UNST pre- and post writing assessment; ongoing evaluations of student work in both written oral form
Graphics and Visual Communication	Fall term: students present on a nature/nurture aspect using power point and Excel; Winter term: students present creative work through web format; Spring term: students present controversial environmental issue through panel format.	Assess effectiveness of graphical information and oral presentation of information through given rubric.
Numeracy (Quantitative Communication)	In all terms, we will utilize numerical data in connection with topics of inquiry; Fall term-statistics; Winter term-physics; Spring term-statistical and quantitative data as it relates to an environmental issue.	Assess ability to analyze and interpret numerical data accurately as reported in research documents.
Oral Communication	At least two major assignments will include a formal in-class presentation. Informal discussion, both in the “main” class and mentor sessions.	Assess various aspects of effective oral skills as delineated to students in a rubric.

Group Process	Class discussion (see above) will occasionally include “meta-level” discussion of the process of discussion itself. There will be at least two group-based projects wherein the students will be instructed in effective group behavior and process.	Assess readiness, preparedness for class discussion; students will keep a written reflection on their learning of group process; presentations will be assessed on organization and delivery aspects.
Computer Literacy	Students will regularly use computers for word processing, e-mail, and web-browsing/editing. They will be introduced to software applications for spreadsheets, graphics and presentations	Assess the layout and design of web pages produced in Winter and Spring terms; Assess the effectiveness of Graphics in group presentations.
Inquiry and Critical Thinking	The purpose behind most or all of the components of the class is to foster critical thinking. The major focus of the fall term is the multiple, often contrasting/conflicting perspectives on what constitutes “human nature.” Winter term will examine how humans have comprehended nature differently throughout various time periods. Multidisciplinary problem solving will be a key part of our work in spring term as we examine current environmental policy.	Assess ability to use critical thinking throughout students’ written and oral work. Critical thinking will be modeled on a regular basis.
The variety of human experience	The fall term will involve examining different worldviews of human nature as seen through varying creation accounts as well as through various readings. Winter term will include how different cultures have understood nature. Spring term, we will look at the similarities and differences of interactions with nature in several societies.	Assess the students written work examining the different cultural perspectives present within an idea/topic.

Ethical issues and responsibility	Ethical issues will be the primary focus of spring term as we examine the environmental consequences of specific human actions. The students will explore possible answers/solutions to these dilemmas. Students will also be involved in a community service project which will allow the to practice social responsibility.	Assess community service journal and researched environmental paper and presentation.
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Science has not been explicitly designated as one of the FRINQ goals; however, we note that each term includes content aimed at increasing awareness of and critical thinking about scientific issues: human biology and the nature/nurture controversy in the fall term; the emergence of major scientific “world pictures” (Newtonian, Darwinian) in the winter term; ecological science and its social and political implications in the spring term.

III. Provisional course outline for Human / Nature, Freshman Inquiry Class for 1999-2000.

Instructors: Richard Beyler, Becky Boesch, Michael Toth, and an instructor to be named (TBN)

<p>Term I. What Is “Human Nature”</p> <p>A. Humans as biological organisms (genetics, physiology)</p> <p>B. Humans as language speakers</p> <p>C. Humans as constructors of and constructions of society and culture</p> <p>D. Accounts of human nature / creation stories in various religious traditions – a comparative view (Jewish/Christian, Native American, Buddhist, etc.)</p> <p>E. Summing up: the nurture/nature controversy: first attempt at a resolution</p>	<p>Beyler [and/or scientist TBN]</p> <p>Boesch</p> <p>Toth</p> <p>Beyler</p> <p>Beyler/Boesch/Toth</p>
<p>TERM II. Humans’ Representations of Nature</p> <p>A. Changing images of nature in literature and art</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ancient/medieval 2. Renaissance/Enlightenment (nature as garden,) 3. Romanticism 4. Turn-of-the-century 5. Non-Western conceptions 6. Modern/contemporary 	<p>Boesch [and/or artist TBN]</p>

<p>B. Changing scientific models of nature</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newtonian worldview: nature as clockwork 2. Classical Darwinian worldview: nature as “progress” 3. Ecological worldview: nature as system 	<p>Beyler [and/or scientist TBN]</p>
<p>TERM III. Humans’ Interactions with Nature: Problems and Prospects</p> <p>A. Is “the natural” the same as “the good”? Ethical perspectives</p> <p>B. Technological revolutions in historical perspective</p> <p>B. Images of “the natural” in contemporary media</p> <p>C. Humans as natural objects: genetic engineering, etc.</p> <p>D. Challenges of the current ecological crisis (probably linked with community-based-learning project)</p>	<p>Toth</p> <p>Beyler</p> <p>Boesch [and/or artist TBN]</p> <p>Beyler [and/or scientist TBN]</p> <p>Toth [and/or scientist TBN]</p>

IV. Preliminary Reading List

Brownowski, J. *The Identity of Man*. Garden City, N.Y.: The Natural History Press, 1966.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Diamond, Jared. *The Third Chimpanzee: The Evolution and Future of the Human Animal*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993.

Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997

Fout, Roger. *Next of Kin: My Conversations with Chimpanzees*. New York: Avon Books, 1997.

McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Nelkin, Dorthy, and Susan Lindee. *The DNA Mystique: The Gene as a Cultural Icon*. New York: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1996.

Oelschlaeger, Max. *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Rölvaag, O. E. *Giants in the Earth*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

Rothenberg, David. *Hand's End: Technology and the Limits of Nature*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995.

Wright, Robert. *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Vercors. *You Shall Know Them*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953.