

THE OREGON EXTENSION

COURSE OFFERINGS & SAMPLE TOPICS OF STUDY

The Oregon Extension fall semester is divided into four month-long segments of study. Students choose one course as their focus for each segment. Course descriptions are expressed in very general terms in order to honor our courses' interdisciplinary character as well as their individualized, guided-study format, allowing maximum flexibility in meeting both students' true interests and scholarly discipline.

This booklet offers examples of the kinds of topics chosen by OE students in the past. The possibilities are limited only by the course you need for your academic program, and your own imagination for what topics of study that course might include.

Segment One: What Is Nature?

(Credit: 4 semester hours. Choose one)

ENVS 395 – Environmental Studies of the Natural World

HIST 395 – Historical Perspectives on the Natural World

SOC 395 – Social Thought on the Natural World

Foremost here is the question “what is nature?” from a social-historical perspective, recognizing that perceptions of nature are always viewed through cultural frames. The concept “nature” has the power to put one into particular moods, and each of these moods has a social history. Nature is never an un-interpreted reality that confronts us pure and simple. We bring histories and cultural habits of thought to every encounter with the natural world. In this course we seek to identify and understand these cultural frames—where they originated and how they shape our views of nature.

Note: This first segment does not have an individualized research component. During these first weeks, we gain experience in careful reading, note-taking and small group discussion. Books used for this segment in recent years include the following:

- William Cronan, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*
- Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*
- Michael Lewis, ed., *American Wilderness: A New History*
- Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
- Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*
- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
- Wendell Berry, *Home Economics*
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*
- Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*
- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Segment Two: What Is Community?

In this course we focus on how humans create, maintain, and undo the threads of community that bind us together. Our core reading examines a social theory that explores these threads through a consideration of mimetic desire and the phenomenon of scapegoating, and then considers this theory in connection with the present flashpoint of populism, climate and war-triggered refugee movements, and geopolitical realignments. In the second half of the course students will undertake individual Research Projects to explore social issues that interest them and will meet in daily tutorials with faculty advisors.

(Credit: 3 semester hours. Choose one.)

ART 396 – Topics in the Intersection of Art and Society

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines, and a research project examining the role of the fine arts in reflecting and/or shaping the social realities of a particular locale and period in world history.

- Theories in photography: Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, John Berger
- Art criticism through the lens of justice: the essays of John Berger
- Suzanne Lacy's 'Mapping the Terrain': emerging criticism in public and community art
- Christopher Alexander's human-centered architecture
- Art as a social force in the 1930s
- Hieronymus Bosch and the apocalyptic imagination
- Outside Art and populist vision

BIST 396 – Selected Social Issues in Biblical Perspective

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining

biblical texts relevant to current social issues and helpful in understanding the underlying dynamics of human society.

- Genesis and theories of social contract
- Rene Girard and the scapegoating mechanism in scripture
- God and human violence in Habbakuk
- Brother narratives in Genesis
- Biblical views of homosexuality
- Women and Jesus in the Gospels
- The meaning of the city in biblical perspective
- Christian community in the New Testament

COMM 396 - Topics in the Relationship of Society and Human Communications

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the role of human communications in reflecting and/or shaping the social realities of a particular locale and period in world history.

- Brandscaping and the accessorizing of identities
- Electronic media and the disappearance of childhood
- The military and the media in the Iraq War
- The original TV critics: Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman
- Susan Sontag: Images and the pain of others
- A Journalism of Empathy: John Howard Griffin, Alex Kotlowitz, Adrienne LeBlanc
- How media shapes women's body images and experiences
- Electronic social media and the bonds of community

EDU 396 – Topics in Educational Theory and Practice An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining theories and practices of selected educational thinkers or movements, with special concern for their insights into or reflections upon the dynamics of contemporary social life, and their implications for social change.

- The revolutionary pedagogy of Paulo Freire
- Inner city adolescents in the public schools

- Educational controversies: boys and girls in the classroom
- The role of athletics in the educational system
- How working class culture shapes children's educational aspirations
- Allan Bloom on the closing of the American mind

ENVS 396 – Topics in the Relationship of Science and Society

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the place of science in the contemporary world and the scientific method in contemporary thought, with special attention to the impact of science and technology on social and natural environments.

- The deep ecology movement
- Animal rights
- Ecofeminism
- Wendell Berry and the new agrarianism
- Water conflicts in the Klamath Basin
- The ethics of genetic manipulation
- E. O. Wilson and sociobiology
- The environmental justice movement
- Yi-Fu Tuan's cultural geography of place
- John Muir & the American wilderness movement
- The American lawn
- Native American environmental history

HIST 396 – Historical Perspectives on Social Thought

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the contributions of selected social, economic, or political thinkers to an understanding of contemporary social life and the nature of social change.

- Founding visions: Marx, Weber and Durkheim
- Fuel for the 1960s: Christopher Lasch, Philip Slater, C. Wright Mills
- The Frankfurt School of Social Theory
- Jacques Ellul and the technological society

- Peter Berger and neo-capitalism
- African-American social thought: W. E. B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Cornel West, bell hooks
- Second- and third-wave feminism: where we are now
- Rene Girard and violence in mimetic theory

LIT 396 – Literary Perspectives on Society

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining a specific writer or writers in a literary period or genre, with special concern for their insights into the shape and meaning of their own social milieu and human society in general.

- Literature of the American West: Edward Abbey, William Kittredge, Cormac McCarthy
- Toni Morrison: literary theory in her novels
- The social vision of Wendell Berry
- Post-colonial women writers: exploring justice through novels
- Walker Percy: death as social principle
- Virginia Woolf: from “A Room of Her Own” to “Three Guineas”
- Commodification of the body in Chuck Palahniuk
- Family relationships in David Duncan's The Brothers K
- Nick Hornby and the isolated self

PHIL 396 – Selected Social Issues in Philosophical Perspective An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the ways selected philosophers have thought about specific social issues or human society in general.

- Susan Bordo: construction of the body in capitalist consumerism
- Kierkegaard's “simple life”
- Emmanuel Levinas' approach to the “other”
- Hegel's “Philosophy of Right”
- Buddhist mindfulness as a path to social engagement
- Simone Weil: social “affliction” and the “need for roots”
- Paul Ricoeur and the ethics of oneself as another
- Charles Taylor on the emergence of secularism

POL 396 – Topics in the History of Political Thought An

individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining theories of selected political thinkers as to the dynamics of human political organization and the implications of their theoretical perspectives for political change.

- Radical Muslim political writing
- Women and development in the developing world
- International responses to genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia
- Rousseau and Democratic Theory
- Carol Pateman and Participatory Democracy
- Readings in Liberalism
- Michael Novak on democratic capitalism
- John Kenneth Galbraith and the liberal society
- Reinhold Niebuhr’s political thought
- Veiling and unveiling: the meaning of the veil in Muslim and western culture
- Postdating the origins of modernity: Oliver O’Donovan
- How do institutions think? Hugh Heclo and Robert Bellah

PSYC 396 – Selected Social Issues in Psychological Perspective

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the ways selected psy-chological theorists have thought about specific social issues and human society in general.

- The rise of a “second family” in adolescent culture
- Exploring male violence through object relations theory
- D. W. Winnicott and “good enough” mothering
- Carol Gilligan: development of self and voice in adolescent girls
- Consumerism and the addictive society
- Eating disorders: understanding a cultural epidemic
- Changing historical meanings of masculinity
- Psychological effects of poverty

REL 396 – Topics in the Relationship of Religion and Society

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the contributions of selected religious thinkers to an understanding of specific current social issues and/or the underlying dynamics of human society.

- Brian McLaren’s “postmodern” Christian faith
- Womanist, mujerista and Asian women theologians
- Christian perspectives on war
- Gay marriage in theological perspective
- Theological approaches to women and ordination
- Social and political implications of atonement theories
- Liberation theology
- Neo-Calvinism and the common grace of social forms
- Political realism in the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr

SOC 396 – Topics in the Study of Society

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the contributions of selected social thinkers to an understanding of the dynamics of human social life and the nature of specific social issues.

- Emile Durkheim & founding concepts of sociology
- Globalization and its discontents
- Sigmund Freud and civilization’s discontents
- Weber on the ‘protestant’ capitalist ethic
- Marx and his disciples
- Michel Foucault and disciplinary power
- Unmasking gender, race and class relations via feminist theory
- “Bowling Alone”: The loss of civic community in America
- Vandana Shiva and the mobilization of women in the developing world
- Ernest Becker and death denial as shaping human culture
- *(and many of the topics listed above under HIST 396)*

INST 396 – Directed Study

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining a topic of critical interest to a student in an academic area not otherwise included in the “What Is Community” course listings. Topic will be approved by the student’s academic advisor and the Oregon Extension faculty.

Segment Three: What Is a Sustainable World?

This course is an introduction to sustainability based on areas of research, social movements, and the practices that make it lived. Sustainability is a concept at the crossroads of how we think about resilient ecosystems and economies, and just and inclusive societies. It is a moral concept that upholds the value of conserving—rather than exhausting—the balance of energies that allows these things to exist together and thrive. We will read and think about practices, about the theory of tacit knowledge by which the hands teach the head, and then turn to practicing some skills that will actually give our hands a chance to teach our heads ways to live more sustainable lives.

In this segment students choose one of four “skills tracks” that are all experience-based. Credit area is determined by the track they join. Track-determined course titles are:

(Credit: 3 semester hours. Choose one.)

BUAD 397 – Sustainable Business

After a week of lectures, readings, and discussions on the broader topic of sustainability, tacit knowledge, and community development, this track meets for 12-days with a consultant who works with businesses in retail, IT, and marketing. Students will learn ways to envision developing and leading a business through the use of various jigs and branding narratives that help to incorporate a commitment to sustainability into business practices. There are site

visits to local businesses that practice various approaches to sustainability. **Final Project:** Students produce a two-phase business plan that is written out, complete with graphics, and pitched to established business practitioners who provide a similar product/service.

ENVS 397 – Toolcraft for a Sustainable World

After a week of lectures, readings, and discussions on the broader topic of sustainability, tacit knowledge, and community development, student in this track meet for 12-days to practice furniture building. Students are introduced to the concepts of sustainable harvest and selective harvest. Each student fells a tree in our forest, mills it into dimensional lumber, then builds writing desks in the OE woodshop out of seasoned lumber harvested last year from our forest. Students do the work, learning as they go how to identify good lumber trees and to grade lumber, how to operate equipment including an outdoor sawmill, table saws, planers, jointers, drill presses, routers, and clamps. They will learn and practice techniques of joinery, drawer construction, sanding and finishing. **Final Project:** finished writing desks that are be placed in the students’ cabins. Students perform every step involved in transforming a living tree into a sturdy piece of furniture.

LIT 397 – Nature Writing for a Sustainable World

After a week of lectures, readings, and discussions on the broader topic of sustainability, tacit knowledge, and community development, this track meets for 12-days taking three day trips and one overnight campout, to practice observing and writing "in the wild." None of these trips require strenuous exercise, and instead focus on slowing down and connecting deeply with the natural world. Students then return to the beauty of Lincoln's hundred acres to take walks, hone craft, workshop with each other, watch a couple films, and read excerpts from a short selection of quintessential nature writers. **Final Project:** works of creative nonfiction, poetry, or short fiction to be decided individually through consultation with the instructor. Finished projects are expected to be ready for submission to an online journal of the student's choosing; for example, see Terrain.org

BIO 397 – Forest Management for a Sustainable World (Lab Science)

After a week of lectures, readings, and discussions on the broader topic of sustainability, tacit knowledge, and community development, students in this track meet for 12-days in the woods examining how fire changes soil and vegetation. Students work alongside ecologists, visit several test plots where prescribed burns have occurred and study the differences between the test plots. Prescribed burns are used by many federal agencies as a management technique: both to study how forest fire affects ecosystems and to reduce the amount of fuel in a forest in the event that a wildfire occurs. Students learn how fire affects ecosystems by identifying soil types and by recording vegetation differences between each prescribed burn. The data collected by students will be compiled and used over time for monitoring and measuring the impact of prescribed burns. **Final Project:** Students will present their results and their interpretation of the results in a presentation style that would be suitable for a scientific conference setting.

As an alternative to one of the four tracks, students may petition OE professors to do a more traditional Research Project. Research Project course titles are:

ART 396 – Artistic Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of selected aspects of sustainability as interpreted by the work and/or thought of a major artist or artists.

BIST 397 – Biblical Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of sustainability by means of careful, detailed exegesis of selected, pertinent biblical texts.

HIST 397 – Historical Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of sustainability in light of selected significant historical events and/or thinkers.

PHIL 397 – Philosophical Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of sustainability as understood by selected philosophical thinkers or systems of thought.

PSYC 397 – Psychological Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of sustainability as understood by selected psychological theorists or systems of thought.

REL 397 – Religious Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of sustainability as understood by selected religious thinkers or systems.

SOC 397 – Sociological Perspectives on Sustainability

An examination of sustainability in light of the scientific study of human social behavior and social theory.

INST 397 — Directed Study

An individualized course of study, examining a topic of critical interest to a student in an academic area not otherwise included in the “What Is a Sustainable World” course listings. Topic will be concurrently approved by the student’s academic advisor and the Oregon Extension faculty.

Segment Four: What Does It Mean to Be Human?

In this course we reflect on what it means to be human. We begin this under the guidance of Dostoevsky’s masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Each of the major characters in *BK* represents a fundamental orientation to life—in response to nature, society, oneself, and God. As the novel unfolds, Dostoevsky allows each main character opportunities to explain his/her view of the human condition, and as the plotlines evolve, he sketches out what kind of life arises from each view. We also spend time thinking about how the writing and reading of fiction can be understood as inherently moral exercises, and how fiction can be used as source material for assembling an understanding of what it means to be human. In the Independent Research half of the course students dwell on the “question” drawing on additional perspectives—respected thinkers, movements, narratives—to fill out an answer to this question that rings true to their own experience.

(Credit: 3 semester hours. Choose one.)

ART 398 – Artistic Perspectives on the Human Person

An individual course of study, with lectures and reading in related disciplines and culminating in a research project examining the human person as interpreted by the work and/or thought of a major artist or selected artists.

- Artistic responses to the Holocaust
- Humanism in Renaissance art
- The meaning of the Face: reading portrait photography through the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas
- Historical depictions of the crucifixion
- The “people’s art” of Komar and Melamid

BIST 398 – Biblical Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience by means of careful, detailed exegesis of selected, pertinent biblical texts.

- Authentic humanity in light of the Sermon on the Mount
- Contrasting gospel portraits of the life of Jesus
- Slavery and freedom in John 8
- Gender roles in I Timothy
- Friendship in the Book of Ruth
- Matthew 16:21-28 and Girard’s mimetic theory
- Guilt and sacrifice in the Old Testament
- Body, flesh, and spirit in the writings of Paul

COMM 398 – Critical Interpretation of the Human Person in the Media

An individual course of study, with lectures and reading in related disciplines and culminating in a research project examining the role of the mass media in reflecting and/or shaping perspectives of the human person.

- Construction of the self in social media
- Studies in Media Bias
- Social Media and “False News”

- Media framing and narrative critique
- Environmental Communication
- History of the Free Press
- Political Communication in Capitalist Societies

ENVS 398 – The Natural Sciences on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience as understood by selected major scientific thinkers or systems of thought.

- Digital devices and transhumanism
- William Kittredge on the myths of Western identity
- E.O. Wilson and sociobiology
- Biophilia hypothesis
- The Darwinian revolution
- Richard Dawkins and the selfish gene
- Environmental education as character formation

HIST 398 – Historical Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human person in light of selected significant historical events and/or thinkers.

- The Cherokee struggle for identity
- The demise of the family farm and despair in the rural community
- Emergence of modern understandings of the self in the early modern period
- The Romantic concept of *Bildung* and the formation of the self
- Evolution of the concept of human rights

LIT 398 – Literary Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience as reflected in the writings of one or more authors, supplemented by pertinent biographical and critical sources.

- Humanity as interpreted by Greek drama
- C. S. Lewis and Nikos Kazantzakis on “being human”

- Shusaku Endo and Elie Wiesel on human suffering
- Boyhood in Tobias Wolff, Dan Wakefield and J. D. Salinger
- Native Americans in the stories of Louise Erdrich
- Cormac McCarthy: living on the border
- The Catholic visions of Graham Greene and Francois Mauriac
- Asian-American women writers
- The Beat poets
- Identity construction in contemporary Young Adult Fiction

PHIL 398 – Philosophical Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience as understood by selected philosophical thinkers or systems of thought.

- Albert Camus and French existentialism
- Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*
- Death and life in Heidegger
- Kierkegaard's "dialectical self"
- Self and community in philosophical perspective
- Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of modernity

PSYC 398 – Psychological Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience as understood by selected psychological theorists or systems of thought.

- Shame and anger in therapeutic perspective
- Attachment theory
- The psychology of death row inmates
- Rollo May's existential psychology
- Paul Tournier and the true self
- Cognitive therapy
- Separation and attachment in mother-daughter relationships
- Jacques Lacan & neo-Freudianism

REL 398 – Religious Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience as understood by selected religious thinkers or systems.

- What can we believe after the Holocaust?
- Jean Vanier and human brokenness
- God's "yes" and "no" in the doctrine of election
- Life and theology of Julian of Norwich
- Jesus and Buddha on the human condition
- Dorothy Soelle and Douglas John Hall on human suffering
- The doctrine of original sin and the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr
- Feminine imagery for God and the shaping of personhood

SOC 398 – Sociological Perspectives on the Human Person

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining the human experience in light of the scientific study of human social behavior and social theory.

- Does capital punishment lower the crime rate?
- Peter Berger's sociology of knowledge
- Erving Goffman and the rituals of everyday life
- The Frankfurt School's critique of modernity
- Embodied contradictions: shaping gender in boys and girls
- The culture wars and the rise of the religious right
- Cultural studies and the elevation of the ordinary

INST 398 – Directed Study

An individualized course of study, which includes lectures, readings in related disciplines and a research project, examining a topic of critical interest to a student in an academic area not otherwise included in the "What Does It Mean to Be Human" course listings. Topic will be approved by the student's academic advisor and the Oregon Extension faculty.