What Can Ecological Footprints Tell Us about Our Consumption Habits?

UN1001 Perspectives on Inquiry
Sections 19 & 48 Fall 2004

Denise Heikinen Ph.D.

Office: 316 Walker
Office Hours: MW 10:00 to 11:00 & 12:00 to 1:00
Phone: 487 3239
or by appointment or by chance

216 EERC MWF 11:05 - 11:55 Section 19
Footprints19-L@mtu.edu (for section 19)

226 EERC MWF 13:05 - 13:55 Section 48
Footprints48-L@mtu.edu (for section 48)

Purpose and Description of Perspectives on Inquiry

The goal is to engage students in active college-level inquiry through which they will develop fundamental intellectual habits of critical thinking, critical reading, accuracy and thoroughness, creativity, and the use of reason and evidence to support arguments. An additional goal of Perspectives is to help students understand how to integrate various perspectives on knowledge and learn how to meet the changing needs of a global, technological, diverse, and environmentally sensitive society. To attain these goals students will be asked to give thoughtful consideration of others’ ideas and positions, make effective oral, written, visual, textual, empirical, and/or other kinds of research, as well learn effective learning strategies and time management practices. (from the Perspectives Handbook)

In this class we will look at the concept of environmental sustainability as measured by a particular indicator known as Eco-Footprints, a method that measures resource consumption in terms of amount of land used to produce those resources. Among the questions we will address are the following: What is sustainability? How can it be attained, and at what costs to our individual freedoms, to our ability to choose our own lifestyles, to the economy, to the quality of our lives, and to America’s political standing in the world? Is the method of “footprints” a good tool for determining sustainability? You will consider these questions in the course of calculating your own ecological footprints, and you will approach this topic from multiple and sometimes contradictory and certainly complicated perspectives—with political, social, individual, scientific, philosophic, and hopefully, comic twists. You will learn how best to communicate your own informed and ethical conclusions both verbally and in writing. Expect to do a substantial amount of college-level reading and writing as well as independent research work. Students will give presentations to the class and produce about 20 pages of formal and 20 pages of informal writing. But we hope to do this work in the spirit of cooperation and good humor.

Required Texts


Several additional articles online and/or on reserve at the Van Pelt Library
Class participation = 15%
Response papers = 35%
Presentations = 20%
Final group paper = 30%

Class participation means enthusiasm, discussion, enthusiasm, humor, cooperation, enthusiasm, & enthusiastic attendance. There will be about 5 response papers due that will be evaluated for their insight, development of ideas, attention to audience, focus, organization, and humor. You will give 3 presentations judged on ideas, logic, persuasiveness, preparation, audience interest, humor, organization, & delivery (including timing). In your final group paper I will look for logical points or arguments, evidence and support, originality, organization, literature review, development of ideas, humor, and grammar. All late assignments will be marked down. Save all papers and sources during the term as I sometimes ask to see your drafts and/or your sources.

Helpful MTU Sources

MTU Van Pelt Library's Online catalog is accessible at http://www.lib.mtu.edu
MTU Academic Integrity Policy handbook: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/dos/policies.htm
MTU Environmental Sustainability Committee: http://www.esc.mtu.edu/
MTU Sustainable Futures Institute: http://www.sustainablefutures.mtu.edu/

Information about citing sources and style & grammar guides
APA http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html
Help on grammar questions can be found at www.webgrammar.com
Tons of different kinds of dictionaries http://www.webgrammar.com/dictionaries.html
A cool thesaurus-- http://www.visualthesaurus.com/online/index.html

A Few Sustainability links
Sustainability index report http://www.ciesin.columbia.edu/indicators/ESI/
The Global Footprint Network: www.FootprintNetwork.org
Environmental Organizations and links: http://www.envirolink.org/
World Resources Institute: http://www.wri.org/index.html
Info about Other Sustainability Indicators: http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/

MTU complies with all federal & state laws & regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability & need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Dean of Students (487 2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action office (487 3310).
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