

ENVR 630 Course Description below:

In the winter term of 2010 this course takes as its starting point that humans are engaged, partly consciously, partly unconsciously partly by simple indifference, in an enormous biological experiment that involves radical modification of the earth itself with consequences that are potentially enormous, and enormously harmful to most life forms, including humans. It attempts to analyze not only the nature of human impacts, but also the intellectual apparatus through which humans have thought about (and often misunderstood) their position in the biosphere and their potential for harm. It begins by examining several of the most important manifestations of negative human impacts. (Climate change is NOT among them - it is the primary focus of a previous course, 610) Those chosen this year will likely include industrial agriculture, the state of the oceans (acidification and depletion), the spread of toxic chemicals by land, sea and air, and the global explosion in automobiles. It then assesses critically the tools used commonly to understand these impacts - e.g. cost-benefit analysis, risk management strategies, the concept of vulnerability, and "land ethic," and proposes that along with or instead of them, what is required is a way to re-envisage the relationship of the human economy to the larger natural world.