256-01 Bicycling Our Bioregion

Kathleen Smythe
smythe@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/history_syllabi_fall_2014

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/history_syllabi_fall_2014/27
HIST 256: BICYCLING OUR BIOREGION (3 cr.)
Xavier University
October 4-5 (Sat-Sun) and 9-13 (Thurs-Mon) 2014
Kathleen R. Smythe Schott 508
smythe@xavier.edu x 3279

This course counts as an ECOS and ENSC elective.
I have office hours Wed. 12-2

WHY THIS COURSE?
This course, like all my courses, comes out of my professional and personal commitment to continue to
learn myself. Bicycling Our Bioregion represents my boldest experiment to date in education—combining
my love of biking, exercise, seeing the world at a slower speed with my passion for creating a better
world by first understanding who we are as humans, what our past has been like (because of how it shapes
us now and in the future but also as a laboratory for what is possible in the future), and how people in
different regions are addressing the large-scale economic, ecological, social problems that we face. This
course will literally require your and my full engagement, something that all pedagogical literature attests
to as a highly effective way to learn—inheriting intellectual, emotional, and physical learning (among
others). The expectation is that we will all give our full attention to the course for the seven days that we
are together biking and learning. In addition, there will be assignments, readings, and additional meetings
to learn about bike safety, to take advantage of related on-campus events and to do to a test ride for the
course together.

QUESTIONS AT THE HEART OF THE COURSE
1. What does it mean to be human and why does it matter for a sustainable future?
2. How are humans and their societies shaped by nature and how have they shaped nature? (civilization
   and nature)
3. What was the Ohio River Valley landscape like prior to European settlement and how have humans
   (Native Americans, Europeans and recent generations) shaped it and been shaped by it? (Ohio River
   valley landscape and humans)

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Students will be able to
a. analyze complex environmental challenges facing human society by integrating a variety of
   perspectives and learned disciplines. (CEI Goal 1a; Core SLO 1a, 1b, 5a, and 5b)
b. identify and explain multi-causal mechanisms for change over time (CEI Goal 1b; Core SLO 2a)
c. begin to articulate a coherent ecological ethic as an integral part of human wellness. (CEI Goal 1c; Core
   SLO 3a, 3b, and 4b)
d. travel with ease by bicycle in both urban and rural settings and be able to cook and camp (CEI Goal 2a;
   Core SLO 5a and 5b)
e. think of themselves as residents of a region with a particular ecology, geography, history, set
   of opportunities and limits while being aware of the global scale (CEI Goal 3b; Core SLO 5a and 5b)
### SCHEDULE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 25 (Mon.)</td>
<td>XU</td>
<td>Bike safety and check with Jim Lindner; equipment check</td>
<td><em>What it means to be human: clash of technology</em> <a href="http://www.cincinnaticycleclub.org/safety.html">http://www.cincinnaticycleclub.org/safety.html</a>; Baskind, “12 Reasons to Start Using a Bicycle for Transportation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30—6:30 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td>Milford</td>
<td>Practice ride: Ride to Kings Mills and back (30 miles)</td>
<td><em>Ohio River Valley Landscape and Humans</em> Finsh Hedeen, <em>The Little Miami: Wild and Scenic River Ecology and History</em> (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sunday) 4-7 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pick out one piece of history between Milford and Loveland or an interesting facet of the river’s ecology or geology that you would like to look for, recall, pay attention to as we bike there and back. I will expect you to share it with the group and explain why you chose it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>XU</td>
<td>All 4 One Symposium</td>
<td>Discussion of water from a variety of perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>Cincinnati/XU</td>
<td>Cincinnati tour (Eden Park, Park+ Vine and Eco-history) Food prep</td>
<td><em>Civilization and nature</em> (Mark presents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>Burnet Woods Lunch in Northside Mill Creek</td>
<td><em>What it means to be human: Technology, Scale and Biking</em> (Maddy presents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Su) 9:00-5:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E.F. Schumacher, “Technology with a Human Face” <em>Small is</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each student is responsible for presenting three main ideas learned from the course (tied to the learning objectives and/or questions) to those in attendance at the Ecovillage dinner. A final paper (8 pages in length) is due two days before expounding on the three main ideas learned in the course and how the riding, guest presentations, group living, readings, etc. contributed to your understanding of these ideas.
ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS:

The Questions at the Heart of this Course:
I am a big question person and the only way I know how to figure out how to live more sustainably and create the world I want is figure out who we are as a species (what we are capable of and what we are not capable of) (question one), how our ancestors have lived in relationship to nature and technology generally (question two) and in specific landscapes (question three). I trust these questions (and related ones that occur to us as we progress through the course) will be of use to us and help provide a framework for the information and experiences that we will be having.

Summer paper (5%)
Before the end of the first week of classes, August 29, you will turn in a two-page paper that ponders at least one of the questions at the heart of the course (listed above) in one of these ways:

1. One particular question at the heart of this course sounds like something that I have studied in my major or in a previous class and based on that experience, I would answer the question in this way...

2. One particular question at the heart of this course that I have never considered is... I think this might be an important question for me, for sustainability, for my career, for my future (pick one) because...

3. One particular question at the heart of this course that makes me curious to learn more is...

Journal (20%)
This course is designed to get you out of your normal routine and, therefore, out of your comfort zone. But it is also designed to ask big, broad questions to help guide you as an Earthling, resident on a threatened planet, to a heightened awareness of what is most important about our humanity and our species’ relationships to other species and to water, air, and soil. This interdisciplinary course will require you to integrate what you already know with what you are learning, through reading, presentations, visits to historical sites, conversations with members of the class, guest riders, your professor, and others we meet along the way. One of the best ways to process what you are learning is through a journal.

The expectation is that the journal will daily include references to course questions and/or learning objectives, to specific readings and to specific sites visited and people with whom we interacted as one means of keeping track of what happens during this intensive experience. You will turn the journal in to me Friday, Oct. 17 and I will return it to you within ten days so that you can use it to prepare your final paper presentation.

You will write in your journal every day of the course and then for at least two days after the course (within the week). These last two entries will obviously not focus on the course activities for that day but the ways in which you experienced on the course influences your first days back on campus. There will be three parts to each journal entry. You don’t necessarily need to keep them distinct but just keep them in mind as you write and seek to address all three:

1. The three questions at the front of the syllabus can be a starting point for your journal entries if you find yourself at loose ends as to what to journal about.
2. Questions that are related and might feel salient:
   a. What in my readings seems relevant to these bigger questions?
   b. What in the experience of riding a bike around the bioregion, meeting people who live and work along the river relates to the readings? The class questions?
   c. How is learning in this way different than in my more traditional classes? Is there something that makes learning easier? Is there something that makes learning harder?
   d. What is contributing the most to my learning (being on a bicycle, being in a small group, meeting so many different people, being outside, having to integrate and make sense of information on my own or at least in a different way than in the classroom, etc.)

Every day I want you to write in your journal and try to tackle one of the questions at the heart of the course, one of the questions above and something about how you are feeling, responding to this experience emotionally, physically, spiritually. Part of being human is being a physical, spiritual person. I want us all to pay attention to this aspect.

**Attitude, participation, engagement (15%)**
This includes the typical class participation—reading and discussion but also cooking, cleaning up, setting up and taking down camp, taking care of your bicycle, equipment, needs. etc. Doing a reasonable share of the classroom and maintenance work is required; above average performance will make for a better experience for all.

This is a community learning experience and your positive and respectful interact with the other members of the course, the guests on the course with us, the site tour leaders, and your instructor-learner are all essential to the success of the course. For extroverts this will be easier than introverts. I am an introvert, so I know. There will be hours and days when you don’t want to be with anyone any more or when you don’t want to ride another mile or discuss another facet of bioregion history. We all need to appreciate that there are some times when all that can be managed is a weak smile or an accomplishment of the tasks at hand without being able to engage in conversation or meaningful dialogue. In addition, every day you may choose an hour to be on your own (say, sitting alone during lunch or breakfast or even leaving the group for a bit or if necessary, trading a chore with someone to buy you some alone time or biking ahead for awhile agreeing to meet us at a certain point on the trail or at a certain time) without any explanation except to notify us that you are taking “your hour”. If you find that this is not enough time at some point, please let me know and we can arrange something.

**Presentation of material (20%)**
Four times during the course you will be expected to help lead a discussion or at least set us up for the day’s activities with a summary of the reading material for the day and some indication of how you see the material connected to the key questions of the course and the learning objectives. A short 1-2 page paper will be the written foundation for your presentation of the material for the course (except for the last one at the Ecovillage dinner). I will expect all of them to be turned in prior to your session. I would encourage you to write a draft of your introduction to the material before you leave for the course. It will be a handy reference as you prepare for the presentation.

**Final paper (eight pages) (25%)**
This paper will attempt to answer one of the questions at the heart of the course by integrating:
1. course readings
2. course discussions (this includes both formal and informal discussions, discussions with the full class and side or one-on-one conversations with students, teacher-learners, site guides, etc.)
3. journal reflections (particularly ones regarding your physical and spiritual experiences)

This will be due November 13.

**Final presentation (15%)**
The final reflection is an oral presentation (with a 6-page accompanying written document (above)) to a group of students, faculty and staff about what you learned in this course. You are expected to present three personal learning outcomes from the course and to demonstrate to those who did not participate how your previous knowledge and interests, course reading materials, course activities (site visits, discussions with professionals, guest riders, classmates, professor, others), and your own experiences, emotions, physical exertion, etc. contributed to what you learned/experienced/questioned/gained in reference to the questions and/or learning outcomes of the course.