

Reform of Introductory Science Courses for Non-Majors

Interim Report for “*Earth Science and the Silver Screen*”

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Institution: Furman University

Title of Project: Earth Science and the Silver Screen

Date(s) of Project: 5/2006 – 5/2007

Amount Awarded: \$3,539

1. Original Goals and objectives (from the proposal):

The primary goals and objectives of the project are to:

- re-invent and invigorate an existing introductory Earth and Environmental Sciences (EES) general education course currently offered for non-science majors (EES 16 Earth Systems History) by taking a more mainstream, media-based approach to teaching introductory earth sciences.

- engage students in discussions of the world’s most pressing environmental issues by exploring the entertainment industry’s often distorted and inaccurate portrayal of science and the facts.

- improve the scientific literacy, global awareness, and overall understanding of undergraduate students, particularly non-science majors, on leading environmental issues in an effort to make them better stewards of the environment and allow them to rationally evaluate these often complex topics.

2. Any changes made in goals/objectives to date

The goals and objectives remain the same, and the project is on track as laid out in the original proposal. I taught the new revised course for the first time this fall term. Although I am still awaiting the student course evaluations, discussions with students in the course and my personal assessment of the course lead me to believe that the course was well received, and, for the first time through, was a success with respect to achieving its goals. I will be teaching the course again in the spring.

3. Activities underway and/or completed to date.

Original Timetable	Description	Status
May – July 2006	Purchase DVDs; Pre-screen for Environmental Content	<i>Completed</i>
August 2006	Assemble Course Reader, Select Video Clips Begin to Prepare Course Content Design of Environmental Questionnaires	<i>Completed</i>
Fall 2006	First Offering of the New Course *Web Site Design and Questionnaire Development Continue With Preparation of Course Content	<i>Completed</i>
Spring 2007	Second Offering of New Course Fine Tune Course Content and Web Site Design	<i>Not Yet Completed</i>

4. Any snags or unanticipated delays encountered

*This term I utilized Furman's blackboard site as the vehicle for distributing course materials and information including the virtual textbook, course assignments, course questionnaires, and course feedback. I do still plan to develop a course web site to be posted on our EES departmental web site that would be accessible to those outside of Furman's internal campus network. The web site will be completed and posted by the spring term class offering. Otherwise, there are no anticipated snags or delays.

5. Approved budget

Equipment

Purchase of Films on DVD	\$500 (20 films at ~\$25 per DVD)
WinTV-PVR-350	\$149
Video Editing Software	\$130
External DVD Burner	\$260

Stipend

Faculty Stipend	\$1500 (one month of summer stipend)
GSA Conference Support	\$1000 (travel, registration, presentation fees)

Total Approved: \$3,539

6. Financial Accounting from receipt of funds through December 15, 2006, showing amounts spent to date and for what it has been spent.

Amounts Spent to Date		
Date	Description	Cost
6/15/06	Salary	\$1500
6/15/06	DVD Purchase	\$48.14
6/15/06	DVD Purchase	\$168.04
6/15/06	DVD Purchase	\$294.84
7/30/06	FICA	\$111.08
8/2/06	TV Tuner Card	\$136.04
8/2/06	Fraps Software (Video Capture)	\$39.35
8/2/06	Photoshop Premier Elements (Video Editing)	\$48.85
10/06	Conference – Geological Society of America	\$1000
Total to Date:		\$3,346.34
Amount Left:		\$192.66

7. Any other information you think will be helpful to include.

With the announcement of this course and its first offering this fall, there was a large buzz among non-science students across campus. Even with short notice and some limited marketing, I had a waitlist for this course (>25) that was larger than the total course enrollment (25 students)! The EES department has never had a waitlist this large for any of its courses. I still await the student's evaluations, but assuming they are good as anticipated, the department is considering adding additional sections of the course for future terms.

I presented the premise / preliminary experiences of this course at the annual Geological Society of America meeting in late October in Philadelphia and received a lot of interest from other faculty from other institutions wanting to offer a similar course at their institutions.

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