

Environmental Practicum: The Upper Altamaha Initiative

JURI 5290/ ECOL 8710



Fall 2005 Syllabus

The class meets in the seminar room at the Institute of Ecology from 12:30-3:30 p.m. on Fridays.

Mission Statement:

To help protect the ecological integrity of the Oconee and Ocmulgee River Basins by working with stakeholders to reduce the impact of human activities on water quality and biodiversity.

The Upper Altamaha Initiative is a service learning course that provides a structured and supportive format for students to apply policy, design and ecological principles learned in the classroom to the real world of people and policy.

Initiative Philosophy and History

The Upper Altamaha Initiative matches graduate students from the University of Georgia with community stakeholders facing specific environmental challenges. Students from law, ecology, environmental design, wildlife ecology, scientific illustration and agricultural engineering may participate in the course. Water quality and the protection and restoration of aquatic species through the best available science, design and policy concepts are key goals for this hands-on program. The course presents a holistic approach to land use planning from the perspectives of our interdisciplinary faculty and guest lecturers.

Previous Environmental Practicum courses have included the Etowah, Altamaha, and Satilla Initiatives. Students in earlier Environmental Practicum classes drafted a conservation subdivision ordinance adopted by the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners, promoted the use of transferable development rights to protect water quality resulting in enabling legislation adopted by the Georgia General Assembly, and developed a system of water withdrawal to protect endangered aquatic species which was adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For more information about these and other Environmental Practicum projects, see our website at <http://www.rivercenter.uga.edu/education.htm>.

Note: We strongly encourage Law students to take this course AFTER they have taken the environmental law survey course

Faculty:

Laurie Fowler, rm 23 Institute of Ecology (coordinator)
(w) 542-3948; (h) 613-0181; lfowler@uga.edu

Ron Carroll, rm 139 Institute of Ecology
(w) 542-6018; rcarroll@uga.edu

Mark Risse, rm. 617 Driftmier, Ag. Engineering
(w) 542-6510; mrisse@enr.uga.edu

Alfie Vick, rm. 202 Denmark Hall, School of Environmental Design
(w) 542-6550; ravick@uga.edu

Staff:

Christine Rodick, Institute of Ecology, 353-3466,
christine.rodick@gmail.com

Graduate Assistant:

Becca Haynes, Institute of Ecology, beccahay@uga.edu

Practicum Goals:

1. Provide an educational environment where students can apply skills learned in the traditional classroom to pressing community concerns and problems;
2. Provide an opportunity for students and faculty to work with other disciplines in integrated environmental decision-making and problem-solving thus improving their ability to understand, communicate with, and influence other disciplines;
3. Increase awareness of the importance of addressing environmental issues proactively within the university community and the broader community;
4. Respond to community concerns and problems in the Oconee and Ocmulgee River Basins;
5. Build capacity for service learning at the University of Georgia.

Class Format:

- Two or three class meetings in first two weeks of semester to select projects and develop work-plans;
- Approximately four to six lectures (Fridays from 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.) on ecological, design and policy issues affecting the watershed;
- One paddling trip on the Oconee River;
- Periodic group meetings to develop particular projects;
- Project presentation (either to stakeholders or to the class and other interested parties at the University) with dress rehearsal;
- A journal logging each student's activities and reflections on the meaning of the service learning experience and ecological design and policy implications;
- At least one meeting between faculty and each individual student to reflect on and evaluate course progress and issues and concerns.

Expectations (students):

Attend class lectures and field trip, read assignments prior to each lecture, work together to define class projects, attend group meetings and work cooperatively to develop a work plan and to complete the project, attend individual meetings with professors, and keep a journal of work completed

and associated reflections. Students will be graded on class participation and project substance and presentation.

Students are expected to adhere to the University Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Expectations and grading policy are spelled out more specifically in the course rubric, which is available in the class notebooks (located at the Institute of Ecology and the Law Library) and on the class web site at http://www.rivercenter.uga.edu/education/upper_altamaha/main.htm.

Required readings are available in the class notebooks and on the web site.

Expectations (faculty):

Coordinate informative lectures and field trip; facilitate interaction between students and stakeholders in the Upper Altamaha Basin; provide support to students in identifying and completing particular projects; facilitate dress rehearsals and project presentations; facilitate publication of projects and provide a forum for students to reflect on their experiences in the course.

Potential Projects:

- drafting model stormwater management and other land use/ environmental ordinances;
- developing or supplementing Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation plans;
- identifying development/protection scenarios for a particular county;
- designing a park or parking lot or a right-of-way;
- identifying septic management strategies;
- developing a land protection plan;
- determining the costs and effectiveness of various best management practices;
- documenting the economic value of natural resources in a jurisdiction

Please note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructors may be necessary.