

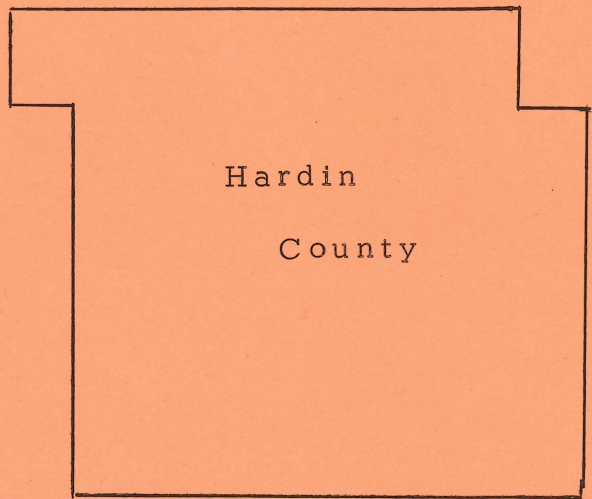
Environmental Quality in
Conducted by a Community

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

IN

THE 70'S

WILLIAM H. SCHMIDT



Hardin

County

1973

Adult Education Class
at

Ellsworth Community College

William H. Schmidt, Chair

Iowa Falls, Iowa.

FOR EVERYONE

Students, Teachers, Businessmen, Women,
Farmers, Wildlifers, Environmentalists, YOU.

NO REGISTRATION COST

Just come

WHEN

Starting Thursday, January 18, 1973
7:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M.
Continuing the next nine Thursday Nights

WHERE

Ellsworth Community College
McClure Hall, Room 204
Iowa Falls, Iowa

PURPOSE

You'll learn more about our Hardin County
natural resources.

This course is a series of ten independent
environmental education meetings. You may
attend one or all meetings. If you miss one
meeting, just come to the others.

The purpose is to create an awareness of
human involvement in the environmental structure
of the community and planning for its association
with the future.

SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speakers</u>
Jan. 18	Introduction	Ben Clausen
Jan. 25	Space and Land	Kermit Voy, Dick Bassett, Dean Miller, Joe Shore
Feb. 1	Water and Air Resource Development	Don Nolting & State Dept. of Health
Feb. 8	Management of Cultural, Social, Recreational Resources	Bob Moorman Roger Landers
Feb. 15	Prospective on Pollution	Panel, Local People
Feb. 22	Food and Fiber	Jim Johnson
March 1	Mineral Resources and Energy Sources for the Future	Fred Dorheim
March 8	Population Stress	Jim Francis
March 15	Home Grounds Beautification	Jim Johnson Gene Neven
March 22	Quality Environmental Planning	Panel, Local People

ABSTRACT

During winter 1973, over a 10-week period, an adult education environmental education course was offered through Ellsworth College.

Guidelines for the course were developed by a coordinating committee drawn from the community. Topics were developed on a unit basis with emphasis on local applications. Leaders included resource specialists and representatives of local civic and governmental groups.

Involvement of cooperating groups, including the County Extension Service, County Conservation Board and County Soil Conservation District made possible a free course, available to any interested persons in the community.

Why should a person living in a relatively small, agriculturally-oriented community in central Iowa spend two hours an evening once a week, January through March, attending an adult education course dealing with our environment?

One facet of the answer to this question evolves from the relatively short history of this area as an explored and settled region. Less than six generations ago, Lewis and Clark explored this raw, untamed wilderness, where today 20 million people are living in a mid-America converted to fields, super-highways, factories and shopping centers. The Iowa where Indian tribes once freely roamed is now 85% cropped and 99% privately-owned land. A kingdom of nature has become an empire of man, but our wilderness heritage still holds a special delight and fascination for us.

A second, related question might be asked. Is there any need for an environmental course in a farm-oriented community?

Certainly many members of a rural community are closely attuned to the land and are perhaps more likely than most citizens to appreciate their environment. It is very easy, however, to overlook the fact that among all of America's giant industries, the marvels of a machine-oriented world, none has undergone greater technological change or development than has agriculture. Those close to such rapid and massive change often come to share a basic concern of the professional ecologist, the possibility that continuous wholesale change can outstrip our abilities to adequately evaluate and understand complex chain interactions in the delicate balance of a living world.

Today the interest in environmental education of a small community in a predominantly agricultural setting is as great, and should be, as in any metropolitan area or, conversely, in any wilderness area. With differences in

locale, problems may vary in type and intensity, but there is no change in the need for educated solutions to them.

An Environmental Course

During the winter of 1973, a course, "Environmental Quality in the 70's," was offered through the Ellsworth Community College adult education program to interested persons in the Hardin County, Iowa, community area. Planned for a 10-week period, it drew enthusiastic support from students and participants.

Interacting Components

An environmental education program for adults offered by a community college may combine a number of basic ingredients. Obviously, the institution itself is important. The growth of the community college movement in our country and its unique commitment to serve the specific needs of the people in the community where it is found make it an ideal vehicle to translate the general educational needs of the nation into specific, problem-oriented, continuing education activities.

Founded in 1890, Ellsworth is a comprehensive community college in the Iowa Valley Community College District. Though a small institution (under 1,000 full-time students), its enrollment has more than quadrupled in the last 10 years, with adult education courses presently the fastest growing single segment of the total district offering. It has had a significant part in the maturation of the community's environmental concerns, boasting one of the first conservation courses offered by a community college in Iowa, an excellent natural history museum, and a superb 17-acre nature study area within two blocks of a midtown campus.

But a very important point must be stressed. Historically, many of the most important steps in development of elementary and secondary environmental

education evolved directly or indirectly as a result of dedicated individuals or conservation oriented groups (public and private), whose jobs were outside the formal education structure. Concerned citizens realized the need for environmental training for our youngsters, the leaders of tomorrow. Today, those same citizens and resource managers at every level are recognizing that we may not have time to wait until some of our children's environmental education rubs off at home; changing directions on a national scale requires educational effort at every level, including adult education.

The development of the course "Environmental Quality in the 70's" draws a parallel to previous experience. It was not an isolated achievement of Ellsworth College or the faculty involved. Rather, the faculty offered primarily a coordinating function; the institution made possible a forum for assembly and discussion of topics. Thus, in our experience, the second, and the indispensable ingredient in terms of organization and development of the course involved cooperative efforts of individuals and representatives of organizations in the community who had been working with the environment and environmental education for many years. The availability and quality of cooperation in the American community and the values inherent in using local resource agencies cannot be overstressed.

Organization

A brief outline of organization steps is illustrative, and for those concerned about the complexities of offering such an environmental course, may prove encouraging in the simplicity of overall approach.

Though inception of the course was the long-term result of many informal discussions between a number of persons, the first formal action involved the organization of a coordinating committee, all members of which had given

active support or had participated in previous environmental education programs. Key individuals included Emerson Calkins, Hardin County Soil Conservation District Commissioner; Dick Bassett, District ~~Soil~~ ^{Soil Conservation Service} Conservationist; Jim Johnson, County Extension Director; and Homer Calkins, Executive Director of the Hardin County Conservation Board; in addition to Ellsworth representatives.

Only two formal meetings served to bring consensus on the content and major thrusts of the course. A third and final meeting was devoted to basic mechanics of the course and decisions on preliminary publicity.

A very fortunate circumstance, which implemented the introduction of the course and influenced its pattern, was a working knowledge of the preliminary manuscript for the adult education teaching guide developed under the auspices of the Soil Conservation Society of America by Bernard L. Clausen and Ross L. Iverson. This basic guide, "Environmental Quality and the Citizen," conditioned development of most of the major topics utilized, and provided some of the major objectives of the course.

Developmental Principles

Several decisions of the coordinating committee provided a strong central fabric of guidelines which not only proved efficient in application, but also allowed certain adaptations within the course.

A sobering fact concerning environmental education is that no single person can become expert in all aspects, or even most aspects of the area. By its very nature interdisciplinary, the subject is problem oriented, and there are few simple solutions. Scientific and technological data must be tempered by insight into economics, human behavior, political science, sociology and many other non-science areas. Hence, it was agreed that no one person should be required to shoulder full responsibility for teaching such a course. Rather,

once general topics were agreed upon, the committee pooled knowledge of available specialists in each field. In some cases these resource people were state agency or extension experts; in others they were county or area personnel; in others they were panels of civic or group leaders (Table 1).¹ Specialists were grouped according to topic, and members of the coordinating committee volunteered to make the contacts necessary to complete the schedule. Though a simple procedure, this greatly reduced administrative workloads - reaching 5 or 6 speakers for three topics is much different from contacting 25 speakers for 10 topics.

A second unanimous consensus of the coordinating committee was that any adult education program which was to be viable and attractive, and yet fulfill needs in a community could not simply present state and national issues and problems. In recent years various agencies and groups have done an excellent job of reaching the public at large through the mass media, with a profusion of pamphlets and tracts, new magazines and books, special news coverage, and every form of television coverage from spot announcements to documentary films. These are necessarily of general interest and are beamed to the largest possible audience. It was felt that this course could be much more meaningful if it extended that interest into basic concerns on the local level. One of the few constraints placed on speakers in pursuing a topic was that they must gear the topic to the situation as it applied in Hardin County. Without exception the most intense discussions developed when students were able to become involved through direct question and answer exchange with policy makers at the local level.

Finally, a third major concern was to provide a saleable package in a marketplace which is furiously competitive for the attentions of potential

¹Speakers and their affiliations are listed to illustrate the variety and type of resource organizations and groups available in a community. They are the heart of such a course.

Table 1. Environmental Quality in the 70's

Moderator: William H. Schmidt

Coordinated by: Ellsworth Community College, Hardin County Extension Service,
Hardin County Conservation Board, Hardin County Soil
Conservation District

Topic	Instructor
Introduction to Conservation Education	Ross Iverson, Staff Member, U. of Northern Iowa Summer Conservation Camp Joe White, Agriculture Instructor, Ellsworth Community College
Space and Land	Kermit Voy, Soil Scientist, Soil Conservation Service Dick Bassett, District Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service Dean Miller, Soil Conservation Technician, Soil Conservation Service Joe Shore, Soil Conservation Aide, Hardin Soil Conservation District
Water and Air Resource Development	Don Nolting, County Sanitarian, Hardin County Board of Health F. R. Pfeiffer, Regional Engr., State Dept. of Environmental Quality Edward J. Stanek II, Regional Representative, State Dept. of Environmental Quality
Management of Cultural, Social, Recreational Resources	Bob Moorman, Extension Wildlife Conservationist, Iowa State University Roger Landers, Plant Ecologist, Iowa State University Robert Walker, State Administrator, County Conservation Board Activities Homer Calkins, Executive Officer, Hardin County Conservation Board
Perspective on Pollution	Peter Cotton, City Manager, Iowa Falls, Iowa Charles Davis, Editor, Iowa Falls newspaper; Chairman, Waterfront Committee Jerry Welden, local businessman; member, County Conservation Board Kenneth Eldred, Manager, Iowa Falls Waste Disposal Plant
Food and Fiber	Jim Johnson, County Extension Director, Hardin County Extension Service
Mineral Resources and Energy Sources for the Future	Fred Dorheim, Economic Geologist, State Geological Survey
Population Stress	Jim Francis, Resource Development Specialist, Extension Service.
Home Grounds Beautification	Jim Johnson, County Extension Director, Hardin County Extension Service Gene Neven, County Extension Director, Marshall County Extension Service Irwin Burns, Assistant to Executive Officer, Hardin County Conservation Board
Quality Environmental Planning	Jake Whitehead, Chairman, Hardin County Board of Supervisors Leo Knight, Member, Hardin County Board of Supervisors Carl Lettow, Member, Hardin County Board of Supervisors Harold Luiken, Hardin County Conservation Board Caleb Knutson, Vice Chairman, Hardin County Soil Conservation District

students. One rather basic idea intended originally as a promotional concept allowed for several modifications that resulted in a more adaptable course.

In many instances resource agency personnel, elected officials, and other specialists involved in teaching one or more sessions donate their time. It was suggested that the rather minor expense incurred in offering the course could be defrayed by sponsoring organizations, making possible a free course for students.² Educationally, and in terms of organization, this pattern allowed for ramifications that would otherwise have been rather difficult.

(1) Much of the busywork involved in registration, enrollment, and payment of fees was eliminated. A relatively informal, friendly, townhouse-meeting sort of atmosphere was possible from the outset. In addition, elimination of paperwork problems made possible a minimum waste of time and dilution of effort. The ability to get directly to the heart of the subject was a key factor in attracting and holding attention.

(2) It is generally agreed that adult learners represent a great variety of backgrounds and experiential exposure and, consequently, could be expected to exhibit varying degrees of interest in the range of topics presented. Acting on this assumption, essentially self-contained units were developed for each topic. Since no fees were involved, it was possible for students to attend any or all sessions with little problem concerning loss of continuity or level of understanding. While one might logically fear that a lack of commitment would lessen attendance, the opposite seemed to hold true. Sampling seemed to prove an enticement rather than an inhibition.

²In terms of replication or extension of a course, such a procedure must be recognized as somewhat hazardous, but it should be considered as an effective opening wedge in developing a course.

Evaluation

At every available opportunity during the progress of the course informal evaluation was solicited from participating speakers, discussion leaders, and the coordinating committee as well as the students. In addition, a simple, one-page questionnaire was handed to the group during the last class. Replies were very positive in endorsement of structure, educational value and practical application of the sessions. Even more encouraging was the almost unanimous endorsement of continuation of this type of offering and the variety of suggestions for additional topics to be included in succeeding courses.

Evaluation of learning outcomes is often difficult, but an interesting example might be cited. In many years' experience teaching a college class in environmental biology, one of the most difficult goals has been to achieve a teaching strategy that would involve more than a superficial student realization of the fact that economics, politics and social factors are important in the formulation and finalization of environmental decisions. Thus, one of the most satisfying aspects of the course involved the discussions which developed when panels of local officials and civic leaders spoke to the group. It is a commentary on the modern impact of mass media that the men and women who determine and carry out policy on the local level --County Boards of Supervisors, Iowa's unique County Conservation Boards, Park and Planning Commission members, even city managers and councilmen--are less well known to the public than state and federal representatives.

Interaction with these groups occurred on the broadest scale, ranging from sharp exchange on such specific topics as septic tank pollution and real estate promotions to rather erudite philosophical and historical considerations of government's role in local problems and long range city and local planning. Confrontations such as this brought the role of politics into sharp focus, but

also immeasurably broadened the students' understanding of federal and state regulations and the local economic constraints within which even the most visionary and dedicated public servants must work. Interesting as student reactions to confrontations such as these were, reactions of panel members were equally gratifying. There is something electric in groups of voters and their representatives probing and thinking through common problems of a community with a view toward cooperative change rather than the impersonal, but more typical, "write a letter" or "go through channels" approach.

Extension and Implementation

A single successful experience should not be interpreted as an indication of overall expertise, but it can sometimes reinforce germinating ideas and add emphasis to formed opinions. Within that premise, some suggestions may be considered.

(1) Do offer a course on the environmental concerns of your community; there is little question that there is a need. It is often unrealistic to wait for state and regional coordination or direction. The local community is the key. A coordinating committee can prove a very effective tool.

(2) Do use resource people who are already available in every community. A number of speakers and discussion leaders can give needed depth to topics under consideration if they have expertise born of special training, or have special knowledge, interests, or responsibilities in an area. Many speakers can provide topic overlap. This is one rather effective way of achieving an interdisciplinary approach and at the same time can be used to promote balance and perspective in the points of view presented. Each speaker will bring a distinctive style, personality and technique to everything from general topic approach to audio-visual methods employed. Representatives of resource

agencies or special interest groups often can obtain brochures, pamphlets and other materials germane to their topic. All of this will contribute to interest and educationally provides a rather satisfactory answer to the diverse needs and learning styles of the typical adult audience.

(3) Do coordinate carefully. Overstructuring and slavish attention to detail can frighten even the most stalwart advocates during the early stages of development of a course in a field as complex as ecology, and too much dominance and direction will dull speaker motivation and stifle fresh approaches.

However, with a confederation of leaders such as our program utilized, there must be at least an outline or pattern which indicates how the whole course fits together and which directs attention to those common elements which must be emphasized to provide cohesion and promote desired learning outcomes.

One of our leaders in his evaluation suggested that as a long-range goal a comprehensive study book be developed for student as well as leader use. A particular benefit of such an approach would be the ease with which a progression of courses or special projects might be developed in response to participants' requests. In addition, topic leaders could more easily make suggestions in the direction of their interests and participants might well be motivated to move from environmental awareness to environmental action programming.

(4) Do publicize. A cross-sectional analysis of our students was revealing in its extreme variety. All age levels were represented, from 15 to 75. (One regular in attendance was a babe in arms--the favorite of the whole group.) High school and college students, housewives, teachers, local businessmen, farmers, and even professionals in various environmental areas were among the regulars. Adjoining small towns and their outlying areas within a radius of 20 miles were consistently well represented in the group, even with the problem of winter weather. The key to such diversity, especially in smaller communities, is effective publicity.

In addition to normal college news releases, local radio and news media will often provide free publicity. One ingenious member of our coordinating committee, by emphasizing the independent unit course concept, was able to secure front page listing of topics and speakers in local newspapers and spot radio announcements for the entire ten weeks of the course. Well known speakers often merited special news coverage. Additional or alternate communication outlets may be developed through coordinating committee contacts or groups and their news releases. Finally, the pipeline of person to person interaction should not be overlooked.

The simple teaching device of providing a short preview of the next week's activities at the close of each session was intended primarily to maintain continuity, motivate, and sustain interest for students already in the course. It was discovered, however, that it also served to develop "missionary" students who brought friends with special interests corresponding to the upcoming topic.

The Outlook

The development of a new environmental awareness in a nation of hurried people is a slow process. In our community a sense of pride and cooperation has grown gradually as new milestones have been reached--new classes in environmental education in the high schools, coordination of annual field days for over ⁵⁰⁰ ~~4,000~~ Hardin County ^{6th} ~~5th~~ graders, the successful fight to prevent a Corps of Engineers dam across the scenic Iowa River gorge, the continued effort to preserve a bit of historic Iowa through a "Green Belt" along a beautiful segment of the Iowa River--all of these have deepened the resolve and concentrated the efforts of individuals in our community.

But catalytic reactions are necessary if voters are to make those

intelligent environmental decisions which not only affect our nation today but will determine the world of tomorrow.

The concept of evening classes on environmental quality can be such a catalytic reaction in your community. A combination of local and state leaders, teachers and students, businessmen, politicians and farmers working through complex problems to preserve their common heritage is a challenge. But it is an experience that will strengthen community interaction and understanding at every level, and it can consolidate community spirit as citizens work together, not only for the benefit of this generation, but for future generations as well.