The Design and Use of This Book

The biologist Edward O. Wilson remarks, "If I learned anything in my forty-one years of teaching, it is that the best way to transmit knowledge and stimulate thought is to teach from the top down." In other words, begin by posing large problems, questions, and concepts of the highest significance and then later, once attention and curiosity are secured, "peel off layers of causation as currently understood . . . in growing technical and philosophically disputatious detail." Wilson warns, "Do *not* teach from the bottom up, e.g., 'first we'll learn some of this, and some of that, and we'll combine the knowledge later to build a picture of something larger.'" He concludes that in teaching and learning a large subject, this means to "put it up whole as quickly as possible, show why it matters . . . and will for a lifetime, then dissect to get as close to the bottom as possible."

We believe this is the best way to approach Environmental Studies. Part One of this book, "Concepts and Case Studies" (Chapters 1–10), asks large questions and presents significant challenges regarding high-profile, complex environmental topics that cut across disciplinary boundaries. Immediately following the Contents is an alternative table of contents called "Interconnections," a cross-listing of additional selections related to the topics for each chapter in Part One. These cross-listed selections come either from other chapters in Part One or from chapters in Part Two. These listings underscore how each concept and case study brings several different kinds of knowledge more deeply into play. These cross-listings may be of as much or more use to readers and teachers than the conventional, linear Contents.

Part Two, "Foundational Disciplines and Topics," comprises three sections. These present key environmental aspects of (I) the natural sciences (Chapters 11–15); (II) humanistic fields and their cultural, artistic, and personal values (Chapters 16–20); and (III) the social sciences, such as law, economics, and political science, that explore public policy and group behavior (Chapters 21–25).

Probably the *worst* way to use this book is simply to read it through doggedly chapter by consecutive chapter. Instead, treat the book like one giant Web site

with numerous internal links. (An appendix offers relevant Web sites associated with each chapter, too.) The *best* way to use this book is to start with a chapter or single selection, most likely from one of the case studies or concepts in Part One, and then group around that as many other relevant readings as seems practicable. "Interconnections," the cross-listed selections for chapters in Part One, should be useful in this regard. Many different combinations of readings will form larger units or virtual chapters not explicitly listed as such.

For example, one could make the following constellation on the dilemma of fossil fuels: the chapters on climate shock, nuclear power, air and water, and energy (two chapters from Part One and two from Part Two). One could combine readings from the chapter on species endangerment (Part One) with those on biodiversity (Part Two). Juxtaposing selections from the chapter on sustainable development with selections from chapters on urbanization, forests and deforestation, and soil and agriculture creates a set of nested concerns and problems about how we use land to grow crops, extract resources, and house large human populations. As another example, an understanding of some key environmental aspects of the American West would draw specific selections from the chapters on deforestation, wilderness, urbanization, soil and agriculture, air and water, history, and nature writing.

Countless other constellations could be constructed: for instances of the tragedy of the commons, for feminist perspectives, for countries and regions like India and sub-Saharan Africa, for the power of nature to teach life lessons. Selections can be chosen to illustrate opposing points of view: "rational" and "emotional" ways of apprehending the environment, technological optimism and pessimism, anthropocentric and biocentric perspectives, explorations of the transcendent and the bestial in human nature.

Readers and teachers will choose, mix, match, and constellate chapters and selections to suit their own needs. This book hopes to encourage varied courses of reading with variable emphases, depending which selections are drawn from the volume, and in what order. Chapter introductions distill and highlight vital information relevant to each concept, case study, or discipline. The Web sites listed at the back of the book provide added resources, as do references to further readings, widely available, given at the end of each chapter introduction.

A NOTE ON EDITORIAL PRACTICE

Texts were selected after extensive comparison. Due to space constraints, much that is worthy could not be included. This book contains some classic works of Environmental Studies but also some unfamiliar yet highly valuable additions. Selections met a test of clarity, brevity, and authority. Where selections represent excerpts, we hope that they will send readers to the full, original articles and books from which they are drawn. Spelling and punctuation have been stan-

dardized. Notes by the original authors containing citations for quotations and essential research references have been regularized. Authorial notes that are purely discursive or subsumed by generally known research in the field have usually been omitted. Editorial excisions in selections are indicated by ellipsis points (. . .) or, in the case of larger omissions, by an ornament between paragraphs. Clarifications and notes by the editors are set in square brackets.