

9/25/13

**GLOBAL SURVIVAL 101:
A PROPOSED UNIVERSAL UNIVERSITY COURSE***

By David Krieger**

A missing element in the standard university curriculum is a course that provides awareness of the global nature and dangers of the world's most serious problems and the attendant global solutions that are needed to solve these problems.

The most serious dangers confronting humanity are those that endanger species survival. Falling into this category are nuclear weapons with their potential for triggering an intentional or inadvertent nuclear war, and climate change resulting in global warming. These dangers are directly affecting the survival potential of the human species and other forms of complex life on the planet.

Other global dangers include population growth; pollution of the oceans and atmosphere; scarcity of safe drinking water; food shortages and famines; continued reliance on fossil fuels; creation of nuclear wastes; spread of communicable diseases; disparity in resource distribution; the ill-effects of poverty; international terrorism and war.

In today's world, all borders are permeable to people, pollution, ideas and disease. No country, no matter how powerful militarily, can protect its citizens from the global threats confronting humanity. Without cooperation among nations, the problems will not be resolved and people everywhere and the planet will suffer. Destruction of civilization and extinction of the human species are within the range of possibility.

University students need a grounding in the global dangers that confront humans as a species, as well as a sense of the interconnectedness of these dangers and the ways forward to solutions that alleviate and reverse the dangers.

I propose the creation of a multi-disciplinary course entitled "Global Survival 101." The course would be a foundation for global concerns in the 21st century. I envision this as a mandatory course for all college students regardless of discipline that would be aimed at creating an awareness of global dangers, an understanding of their interconnected nature, and what courses of action would increase or decrease global well-being and improve the odds of human survival.

Course content could include:

1. The uniqueness of planet Earth
2. Global dangers
3. Species responsibilities
 - a. To pass the planet on intact to new generations

- b. To take into account the rights of future generations
 - c. To be good stewards of the planet for ourselves and other forms of life
- 4. Nuclear weapons and the Nuclear Age
 - a. The power of our technologies
 - b. The flaws in nuclear deterrence theory
- 5. Climate change
- 6. Protection of the Common Heritage of Humankind
 - a. The oceans
 - b. The atmosphere
 - c. The Arctic and Antarctica
 - d. Outer space
- 7. Population growth
- 8. The right to clean water
- 9. Food insecurity and famine
- 10. Nuclear wastes
- 11. Epidemic diseases
- 12. Resource distribution and disparity
- 13. Poverty
- 14. International terrorism
- 15. War
- 16. Peace
- 17. Human rights and responsibilities
- 18. Changing our modes of thinking
- 19. A new global ethic: justice for all
- 20. Changing the world
 - a. The role of education
 - b. The role of the individual
 - c. The role of civil society
 - d. The role of technology
 - e. The role of the arts

The World Academy of Art and Science, possibly in partnership with The Club of Rome, the World Future Council, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and other select civil society organizations, would be well positioned to develop the specific course content and initiate its implementation as an online course available to students throughout the world.

*This paper was prepared for the World Academy Forum on Global Higher Education, 2-3 October 2013, UC Berkeley, California.

**David Krieger is a founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org). He has served as president of the Foundation since 1982.