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Journalism

FINAL STORY IDEA FOR BASIC REPORTING CLASS (JOU 1100), SPRING TERM, 08-2:

Precautionary Principle Academy: Walking the Green Line

The Precautionary Principle Academy is designed to engage members of the legal and environmental communities in discussions about the Precautionary Principle and to outline the practical implications of the Precautionary Principle as the basis for local and state laws.

The Precautionary Principle provides essentially that, where threats of serious or irreversible damage exist, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective action to prevent environmental harm (Rio Declaration, Principle 15, UNCED 1992). In recent years this important legal principle has received greater attention in the U.S. For instance, in 2003, the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco became the first government body in the U.S. to make the Precautionary Principle the basis for its environmental policy.

Three national experts from the Science and Environmental Health Network (SEHN) lead the Precautionary Principle Academy: Carolyn Raffensperger, M.A., J.D., Ted Schettler, M.D., M.P.H., and Joseph Guth, J.D., Ph.D.

Sources:

Carolyn Raffensperger, M.A., J.D., is executive director of the Science and Environmental Health Network (SEHN). An archaeologist as well as a lawyer, she worked for many years for the Sierra Club on issues including forest management, river protection, pesticide pollutants, and disposal of radioactive waste. She joined SEHN in 1994. Raffensperger is co-editor of *Precautionary Tools for Reshaping Environmental Policy*, published by MIT Press (2006) and *Protecting Public Health and the Environment: Implementing the Precautionary Principle*, published by Island Press (1999). She has served on editorial review boards for several environmental and sustainable agriculture journals, and on U.S. EPA and National Research Council committees. From 1999 until recently, she wrote a bimonthly column for the Environmental Law Institute's *Environmental Forum*.

Ted Schettler, M.D., M.P.H., SEHN's science director, received his M.D. from Case-Western Reserve University and a master's degree in public health from the Harvard School of Public Health. He practiced medicine for many years in New England and has worked with community groups and non-governmental organizations throughout the U.S. and internationally, addressing many aspects of human health and the environment. He has served on advisory committees of the U.S. EPA and National Academy of Sciences and continues to work closely with Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility. Schettler is co-author of *Generations at Risk: Reproductive Health and the Environment*, about the reproductive and developmental health effects of exposure to environmental toxicants; and of *In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development*, about the impact of environmental exposure on neurological development in children. His current projects include heading the science work group for the Collaborative on Health and Environment (CHE) and active participation in the Health Care Without Harm coalition.

Joseph H. Guth, J.D., Ph.D., SEHN legal director, received his legal training at NYU and also holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry. Guth has worked on Clean Water Act citizen's suits and toxic chemicals regulatory policy for the Natural Resources Defense Council, and on environmental torts, intellectual property, and products liability as a litigator in the private sector. He served as executive director of the California League for Environmental Enforcement Now, a coalition of environmental groups and law firms, and as senior policy analyst for the Center for Environmental Health, both in California. Guth is currently a member of Cal/EPA's Cumulative Impacts and Precautionary Approaches Workgroup, working to implement California's Environmental Justice Action Plan. In addition to advocating the reform of chemicals policy in the U.S. and California, Guth works toward the transformation of law to promote the preservation of the Earth, rather than accept environmental destruction as a byproduct of economic growth; in this, he concentrates on property law, the public trust doctrine, law of the commons, ecological economics and the precautionary principle.

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Additional sources: Faculty, staff and students at Miami Dade College (off-campus sources can also be utilized).