

Environmental Conservation

Geography/IES 339, Spring 2009

Syllabus for FIRST HALF of the course

Lecturer: Travis Tennessen
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Office Hours: Friday 11:00-12:00, 2:25-3:30 *in the Rathskeller of the Memorial Union* (I just hang out at an easily visible table) or by appt. in 418 Science Hall

Teaching Assistants:

Jake Fleming Office hours: 2:15-4:15 M (Office 416)

Chris Limburg (Head TA) Office hours: 12-1:20 M in Rathskeller and 3:30-4:10 M in Room 480-a

Emma Schroeder Office hours: 11-12 M, 10-11 T (Office 409)

Course Description: In the first half of the course, we will explore the history of conservation efforts in the United States. Our goal for the class is to investigate and think about “environmental conservation” as a many-pronged, ever-changing social movement and to explore particular contemporary issues in detail. Our goal is to help you become better able to understand the context and complexity of socio-environmental issues in the U.S. and beyond. Be an active learner, make the connections, and you will succeed.

Grading: Grades for the first half of the course will be determined by two in-class examinations (each 50 points), one discussion question essays (20 points), an essay on the value of learning U.S. conservation history (30 points), and discussion section attendance and participation (25 points). Attendance in discussion section is mandatory. The exams will cover lectures, readings, and films.

Exam Schedule: Students must take the exams at the scheduled times (Feb 13 and Mar 13). Make-up exams can only be arranged if Travis is notified in advance and given a legitimate reason (except in case of family or health emergencies).

Readings: There is one recommended book for the first half of the course, which is available at the University Bookstore:

- Benjamin Kline, *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement* (3rd ed. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007)

There is also a required course packet of readings available at the Humanities Copy Center (northwest corner of basement in Humanities building). The course packet readings and syllabus are available online : <http://www.geography.wisc.edu/classes/geog339/index.html>

Reading Schedule/Strategies: Each week you must complete the readings before your discussion section. You will be tested on the readings and videos on the exams. Focus on the main ideas in each reading, read critically, and think about the connections between the readings and the lecture themes.

Lecture Schedule and Readings

Week 1

Wednesday, Jan 21 Course Introduction
Friday, Jan 23 Visions of a New World: Religion, Science, and Capitalism
No Discussion

Week 2 (Kline, Ch. 1-5)

Monday, Jan 26 For the Greatest Good: Utilitarian Conservation
Wednesday, Jan 28 Ideas of Nature and Womanhood in America
Friday, Jan 30 Film: "The Wilderness Idea"

First Discussion Meeting: Why are you taking a class called "Environmental Conservation"?

- Jennifer Price, "Missed Connections : The Passenger Pigeon Extinction" in *Flight Maps : Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (1999), p. 1-56

Week 3

Monday, Feb 2 (Re)creating American Wilderness: Aldo Leopold
Wednesday, Feb 4 American Wilderness and National Parks
Friday, Feb 6 Preserving "People and the Land": New Deal Conservation

Second Discussion: Which conservation philosophy is more useful in the twenty-first century, John Muir's or Gifford Pinchot's?

- John Muir, "Selections from 'Our National Parks' (1901)" from *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, eds. J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson (1998), p. 48-62.
- Gifford Pinchot, "Principles of Conservation" (1910) from *The Fight for Conservation* (1967), p. 40-52.
- Dave Foreman, "Rewilding North America" (1998) from *Rewilding North America: A Vision for Conservation in the 21st Century*, p. 128-143.
- U.N. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)

Week 4 (Kline, Ch. 6-7)

Monday, Feb 9 The Balance of Nature Upset?: Post-War Environmental Anxieties
Wednesday, Feb 11 Fallout from Silent Spring: The Green 1970s
Friday, Feb 13 Exam 1

Third Discussion: Is the concept of wilderness socially just and environmentally wise?

- Aldo Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use (1925)", from *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, p. 75-84.
- William Cronon "The Trouble with Wilderness (1995)" from *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, p. 471-499.
- Michael Pollan, "The Idea of a Garden" in *Second Nature* (1991), p. 176-204
- Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness: A Third World Critique (1989)" from *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, p. 231-245.
- Recommended: J. Baird Callicott, "Contemporary Criticisms of the Received Wilderness Idea" from *Wilderness Science...Conference, Missoula, MT* (1999)

Week 5 (Kline, Ch 8-end)

Monday, Feb 16 Monkeywrenching, Sagebrush Rebels, and the Birth of Earth First!
Wednesday, Feb 18 The Wise Use Movement and Environmental Deadlock in the 1990s
Friday, Feb 20 Alaska: Environmental Prize or Debacle?

Fourth Discussion: If you could pass one U.S. federal law to improve the quality of the environment, what would it be?

- No readings, just bring your brain and enthusiasm for debate!

Week 6

Monday, Feb 23 The Search for Sustainable Sustenance: Food Systems
Tuesday, Feb 24, 4:30 pm **Kim and Dick Cates, Wisconsin rotational grazing pioneers**
Wednesday, Feb 25, 7:00 pm Film: "King Corn"
Friday, Feb 27 Environmental Justice: The Death/Rebirth of Environmentalism?

Fifth Discussion: How would you define "radical environmentalism"—its perspective, goals, and strategies—and (by that definition) do you think it is helpful toward efforts to improve the environment?

- Rosemary Radford Ruether, "EcoFeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature" from *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives* by Christopher Chapple (1994), p. 155-168.
- Dave Foreman, "Principles of Earth First!" (1987)
- Robert Bullard, "Environmental Justice in the Twenty-first Century" in *The Quest for Environmental Justice* (2005), p. 19-42.
- Jeffery Luers, "A Brief Description of Radical Environmentalism" (2005) from www.4strugglemag.org
- Recommended: Bron Taylor, "The Religion and Politics of Earth First!" (1991) *The Ecologist*, 21(6) p. 258-266.

Week 7

Monday, Mar 2 Tragedy of the Commons: Industrial Fisheries
Wednesday, Mar 4 Saving the Seas: Fishery Conservation
Wednesday, Mar 4, 7:00 pm Film: "Everything's Cool"
Friday, Mar 6 Killer Whale Ecotourism: Environmental Friend or Foe?

Sixth Discussion: Imagine Congress is considering passing the Sustainable Agriculture Act, a bill requiring 80% of all food in the U.S. to be organic and sold within 500 miles of its origin by 2015, and that you are called to give testimony as a sustainable agriculture expert. Would you be supportive of this law as stated as the best way to encourage more sustainable agricultural practices? Why? If you believe it's imperfect, how should this law be reframed/changed in order to most effectively encourage a sustainable food system in the United States?

- Michael Pollan, "No Bar Code," *Mother Jones*. May/June 2006. Vol. 31 (2)
- "Trying to Connect the Dinner Plate to Climate Change," Claudia H. Deutsch, *New York Times*, August 29, 2007

Week 8 (Kline pp. 116-173)

Monday, Mar 9 American Environmentalism in the 21st Century
Wednesday, Mar 11 "And this is all relevant because?": lessons of conservation history
Friday, Mar 13 Exam 2

Seventh Discussion: What role should the environment play in President Obama's reform efforts? How should it factor both rhetorically and in policy mandates? Which environmental reforms are most pressing, and how should they be approached?

- Bill McKibben, "Reversal of Fortune" *Mother Jones*. March/April 2007. Vol. 32 (2)
- Michael Pollan, "An Open Letter to the Next Farmer in Chief" *NY Times*, October 9, 2008

Discussion Question Essay Assignment

Overview: The weekly discussion questions are designed to help frame your thinking about the assigned readings and to stimulate conversation during discussion section, but this assignment offers you the opportunity to construct a coherent and compelling 3-4 page essay in response to one of those questions. Our goal is to help you think deeply about some of the most important philosophical debates and policy issues facing humanity today, and to help you construct an argument stating your position on an issue using information from lectures, course readings, and other sources that you find through your own research. In the end, we hope to help you be more able to construct a factually based and coherent opinion about any important socio-environmental issue you encounter in the future, and make a convincing argument supporting your opinion. Each essay is worth up to 20 points, which contribute to your discussion section grade. You may choose to write on the question from Week 3, 4, 6, or 7. *For your essay, you should complete the following steps:*

Step 1: Critically read the assigned articles on that topic. Of course, you should do this every week, but for questions that you plan to write on it's especially important to think about what the readings signify and how their information and arguments compare with each other. Taking notes on the key arguments of each piece is especially important so that you don't have to go back and completely reread and reanalyze each article once you sit down to begin outlining your essay. After completing the readings, sketch out a few opinions you have on the subject or questions you'd like to ask in discussion section. This method of preparation will not only set you up well for your essay, but will help you can contribute substantially to your discussion and prepare you for our exams. Make this process your goal every week!

Step 2: Actively participate in discussion section. Your classmates and TA will be great resources in helping guide your thinking process and honing your opinion on a particular topic, as well as opening you to different perspectives and information that you might not have known before. Discussion section is your best opportunity to ask questions, clarify the content and arguments of different readings, and try out your opinions on other people. Taking notes during discussion so that you can remember the opinions and information discussed is a good idea—these can be fodder for the essay you're preparing. After discussion section is over, find some time to reflect on what you heard and learned (Travis recommends a walk down the lakeshore path, but suit yourself ☺), and then make it your goal by that evening to have a rough idea of (1) what your opinion is on the answer to the discussion question, (2) how you can most convincingly articulate that opinion, and (3) what new information you need to bolster your argument or respond to counterarguments.

Step 3: Select readings (and then read them). Find at least two (2) outside readings (or films) that will substantially help bolster your argument. Material you select might provide a corroborating opinion, additional information, or even a counter-opinion that you will use as a foil to help bolster your argument. Choose your material carefully—it's unlikely that the first two items you find are the best, and if the best characteristics of a resource you locate are that it is short and simple, we strongly recommend finding something better. We expect most readings to be article length, but reading sections of books or entire books is allowed. You can also use films, newspaper op-eds or articles, magazine articles, and web sites as sources, but remember—quality is what matters most—you are required to include a paragraph explaining the process by which you found the readings and the reasons you selected them. The skill of finding information-packed and thought-provoking material that helps you thoroughly understand an issue is, in our opinion, one of the most valuable skills you will learn at this university. Travis and your TA are both happy to help if you have trouble, and we'll be even happier to help if we can tell that you've already made a substantial effort to find material on your own ☺.

Step 4: Outline, write, and turn in your essay. Begin outlining your essay *after* you have gathered all of the material you plan to use. *Outlining is essential*, because your argument has to be well organized to be persuasive. Know what you are arguing, what information you are going to mobilize to bolster your argument, and how you're going to deploy that information before you start typing your essay. Your essay should leave the reader with a sense that you have a deep understanding of the topic and your opinion has a strong philosophical and factual foundation. You must turn in your essay in during discussion section the week after you discuss that topic. For example, if you write on the Muir/Pinchot question and your discussion section meets on Tuesday, the due date is Tuesday, February 10. **Notice: Late papers will lose 5 points per day, including weekends (unless in case of emergency). Contact your TA more than 48 hours before the deadline if you require an extension.**

The papers will be graded according to the following criteria:

- Source citations, both in-text and reference list **(2 points)**
- Paragraph explaining source location and selection process **(2 points)**
- Clarity, style, and organization **(4 points)**
- Quality and integration of outside readings into argument **(4 points)**
- Mobilization of course material (lecture, readings, discussion) in argument **(4 points)**
- Persuasiveness and robustness of argument **(4 points)**

Use the following to guide your writing and your grade expectations (of course, many papers fall between these categories):

- **20 points (A+):** Author has engaged with topic critically and thoughtfully, and has integrated outstanding outside readings and course material to construct a highly persuasive argument that goes beyond the opinions provided in the readings. Author engages with potential counterarguments and successfully diffuses them. Reader finishes paper and thinks, "Wow! I've never thought about this issue like this before, and I'll never think about it the same way again!" Paper is free of grammatical and spelling errors, and is written in an organized and engaging style.
- **17 points (B):** Author has clearly followed the assigned steps and has found relevant outside material to mobilize alongside course material. Argument is persuasive but somewhat thinly supported in places, and fails to acknowledge and refute potential counterarguments. Though essay succeeds in affirming certain opinions presented in the readings, it fails to provide new insight into the issue. Paper may contain a few grammatical and spelling errors, but is generally well written and logically organized.
- **15 points (C)** Not clear that author followed the assigned steps and/or understood the main goals of the assignment. Outside readings are marginal and not well integrated, and not clear that author has engaged fully with assigned readings or in discussion section. Paper shows little insight beyond the obvious, making a narrow and thin argument with very little factual basis. Grammatical and spelling errors distract the reader.
- **13 points (D):** Author has clearly not done assigned readings (or seriously misunderstood them) and made little or no effort to find outside readings and integrated them with course material. Essay contains 3 pages of words, but shows little effort with no clear argument, many grammatical errors, and very poor organization.

Details:

- Essay should be 3-4 double-spaced pages, using 12-point standard font and standard margins. Essays that exceed 6 pages (not including ref. list) will lose points.
- Include your name, section number, and TA's name on the top of essay.
- Use parenthetical citations (Naughton 2006) in text where appropriate, and include a citation list at the end of paper. You may use any standard reference list format (see UW writing center website for assistance, or example papers on course website).

