

NR 312 | **Critical Thinking for Natural Resource Challenges** | Winter 2022
Tuesday and Thursday 2:00 - 3:20, 123 Richardson Hall

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office hours: 1:00-2:00 Tuesday and Thursday, and upon request,
preferably via Zoom, but can be in person

"We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom. The world henceforth will be run by synthesizers, people able to put together the right information at the right time, think critically about it, and make important choices wisely."

~E.O. Wilson

OBJECTIVE

Natural resource policies, laws, management schemes, mission statements, etc. are all premised upon philosophical and ethical assumptions and arguments – though we are mostly unaware of, or unreflective about, this reality. Moreover, laws, policies, and management schemes all make claims about what we ought to, or ought not, do. Rarely, however, do we take seriously such philosophical and ethical dimensions of natural resource decision-making. Rarely do we work to rigorously understand and assess such decision-making. Any natural resource proposal concluding that we ought to take a given course of action (that is, *any* natural resource proposal) will, as a matter of necessity and logic, involve both appeals to facts and appeals to values. Such positions can be laid out, understood, and examined as formal arguments. In this course, we will use the formal skills of critical thinking and argument analysis to understand and examine conservation issues and policies.

TEXTS

There is no text for this course. Readings will be posted on the course Canvas site, as will in class handouts and any recorded lectures.

REQUIREMENTS

This is an active engagement class, students are expected to participate regularly and take an active role in classroom discussions. Students will also be responsible for more formal presentations in-class.

Students will be expected to prepare thoughtful, 1-2 page writing assignments on a regular (weekly) basis. The single lowest grade on those papers will be dropped. Each paper will have essentially the same elements: a summary of the reading in your own words (1-2 paragraphs, or ½ page), together with a response to the reading. Prompts for the reflective portion of each reading will be provided. Above all else, creative and thoughtful reflection is encouraged and prized.

The majority of the grade will be determined by a substantial and brilliant final group project. We will begin thinking and planning for your final project early in the term.

Students are expected to do all of the reading and attend all of the classes.

Attendance and Participation = Approx. 30%

Small Writing Assignments = Approx. 35%

Final Group Project = Approx. 35%

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance and active participation is the real core of this class. It is your responsibility to get caught up on material you missed, regardless of the reason for your absence. Your first recourse should be your fellow classmates. After having sought out and exhausted their assistance, you may avail yourself of office hours. Do not rely on email correspondence as a means of getting caught up on missed material, or as a venue for discussing substantive matters relating to the course material or grading.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE AND EXPECTATIONS

Education worthy of the name is, and always will be, fundamentally self-education. As your instructor, it is my job to facilitate this enterprise, but I cannot perform it for you. This means applying time, attention, ability, and perseverance to your education.

Class will begin promptly, and you are expected to arrive on time. Repeated tardiness will result in your being docked for the attendance and participation portion of your grade. Much of the material for this course – material that will be vital for you in completing your written assignments – will come from readings and class discussions, but also from your own independent reading and research.

The work and learning for the class will come from your own brain. Therefore, various electronic devices are nothing but a distraction to your learning in this class. Laptop computers will be allowed once we begin working in groups and building arguments for final presentations. Students with a documented learning disability who need an electronic device should speak with me to make accommodations.

Since the goal of this course is not the communication of answers, but rather the recognition of problems as problems and questions as questions, this will sometimes be best achieved through conversation or even lively discussion. **Encountering serious and intelligent individuals who might disagree with you in fundamental ways is thus essential to your education, and should be regarded as a great blessing. I ask that you adopt this attitude during all discussions, and so prepare yourself to have your views politely challenged (even by yourself), and to voice your own views with an appropriate tone – a tone that perhaps even invites the challenge.** Although what passes for debate and argumentation in the popular arena often mistakes volume for thoughtfulness and rudeness for intelligence, the problems we address in this class (and the problems we face as a society) are far too serious and important to be approached with bad manners, or a lack of a sense of humor, decorum, or empathy.

Lastly, there is work for this class outside of normal class time. Expect to have to dedicate time and energy to reading, writing, and researching for this class. Seek out study and conversation partners to pursue questions raised in class further. And by all means, attend office hours or make appointments with me if there are questions or problems. I am a teacher because your education

matters to me; I teach courses because the subject matter and questions prompted within those courses matter to me.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Your work should always be your own. It is your responsibility to understand how to properly document your sources. Likewise, group work should be the work of the group and should cite all group members. "Plagiarism" is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the wrongful appropriation...and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another." Penalties for academic misconduct are severe. Please take a moment to read OSU's policies on academic integrity (https://www.http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/sites/studentlife.oregonstate.edu/files/student_conduct_code_1.pdf). Please, if you have any questions about whether something would be considered cheating or plagiarism, or not, just ask.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (1/4, 1/6) – Introduction to Critical Thinking and Argument Analysis

Reading: "Environmental Ethics and Wildlife Management" Michael Nelson and John Vucetich

*See Canvas for writing assignment prompts, due on Tuesday of each week starting week 2.

Week 2 (1/11, 1/13) – The Value of Species and Killing in the Name of Conservation

Reading: "The Value of Species" Michael Nelson and Chelsea Batavia, "What are 60 Warblers Worth?: Killing in the Name of Conservation," John Vucetich and Michael Nelson

Week 3 (1/18, 1/20) – Trophy Hunting

Reading: "The Elephant (Head) in the Room: A Critical Look at Trophy Hunting" Chelsea Batavia et al., "What if Trophy Hunters Didn't Kill Their Trophies?" Michael Cove, "Is There an Elephant in the Room" Amy Dickman et al., "Animals are Not Trophies: A Response to Dickman et al." Chelsea Batavia et al.

Week 4 (1/25, 1/27) – The Wolves of Isle Royale

Reading: Should Isle Royale Wolves be Reintroduced? A Case Study on Wilderness Management in a Changing World" John Vucetich, Michael Nelson, and Rolf Peterson, "Exploring the ethical basis for conservation policy: the case of inbred wolves on Isle Royale, USA" Meredith Gore et al.

Week 5 (2/1, 2/3) – Science and Advocacy

Reading: "On Advocacy by Environmental Scientists: What, Whether, Why, and How" Michael Nelson and John Vucetich

Week 6 (2/8, 2/10) – Predator Control

Reading: "Wolf Hunting and the Ethics of Predator Control" John Vucetich and Michael Nelson

Week 7 (2/15, 2/17) – Ecological Forestry

Reading: Conceptual Ambiguities and Practical Challenges of Ecological Forestry: A Critical Review" Chelsea Batavia and Michael Nelson, "Ecological Forestry: Much More Than Retention Harvesting" Brian Palik, Anthony D'Amato, "The Logical and Practical Necessity

of Ethics in Ecological Forestry: A Reply to Palik and D'Amato 2016" Chelsea Batavia and Michael Nelson

Week 8 (3/8, 3/10) – Essays from Moral Ground

Reading: "The Givaway" Robin W. Kimmerer, "Worship the Earth" John Perry, "The Future I Want for my Daughters" Barack Obama, "Earth Toward Our Children's Future & To Commit a Crime Against the Natural World Is a Sin" Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

Week 9 (3/1, 3/3) – Prepare Group Presentations

Week 10 (3/15, 3/17) – Group Presentations

CONVERSION FROM % TO LETTER GRADE

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 63-66

D- = 60-63

F = 0-62