Syllabus

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. –Winston Churchill

What kind of world do you want to live in? Advocate the changes that will get us there, instead of focusing on change simply as a way to avoid disaster. –David Backes summarizing Sigurd Olson

Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up. –David Orr

Introduction
This course will increase your environmental literacy by exposing you to some of the greatest hits of the modern environmental movement, important books that have influenced environmental thinking and policy-making in America and the world. As a capstone course, this course is interdisciplinary, and we will approach the readings from literary, historical, scientific, and ethical perspectives. The goal of many of these books is to alert the public to serious environmental problems. But, as we will highlight—and as some of the books themselves point out—problems are opportunities. Hence, one focus of the class will be on positive trends and ways that you, in your chosen discipline or profession, can be part of creative solutions.

Prerequisites for Capstone courses are junior or senior standing and completion of all General Education courses that build Core Objectives 1-3 and satisfy Core Objectives 4-8.

Student Learning Outcomes
Students will be able to:
• analyze the challenging ethical conundrums of such issues as climate change, biotechnology, GMO foods, biodiversity, and ecological restoration (CO 12)
• assess your own relationship to the competing ethical claims and positions within environmental movements (CO 12)
• identify and summarize current scholarly conversations (e.g., challenges, opportunities, trends) that exist within conversations on environmentalism (CO 13, CO 3)
• produce a well-supported argument that makes an original contribution to the field and could be submitted for publication in an undergraduate journal. (CO1)
• critically examine how your position within intersecting social forces impacts your worldview relative to environmental issues (CO 13)
• communicate your position on an environmental issue (CO 1, CO12, CO 13)

Core Objectives
This course satisfies CORE OBJECTIVE 13 – Integration & Synthesis
Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

**This course develops CORE OBJECTIVE 1 - Effective Composition & Communication**
Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

**This course develops CORE OBJECTIVE 3 – Critical Analysis & Use of Information**
Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.

**This course integrates CORE OBJECTIVE 12 – Ethics**
Students will demonstrate understanding of the ethical principles in general or in application of specialized knowledge, results of research, creative expression, or design processes.

We will incorporate ethical issues throughout the semester in our discussion of the required texts, which themselves raise ethical issues, often directly. The assignments that will require you to apply ethical principles to environmental issues are the ethical debate and the essay questions on the midterm and final exam. I also encourage you to explore ethical issues, such as environmental justice, in your cogitations.

**Required Texts in the order we’ll read them (see ASUN Bookstore for recommended editions)**
Essays by Aldo Leopold, on WebCampus
*Green Fire* (film)
*Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson
*A Sense of Wonder* (film)
*Ecotopia*, by Ernest Callenbach
*Turtle Island*, by Gary Snyder
*Desert Solitaire*, by Edward Abbey
*The End of Nature*, by Bill McKibben
*Carbon Nation* (film)
*Natural Capitalism*, by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins
*Food, Inc.* (film)
*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, by Michael Pollan
“The Birthing Rock,” by Terry Tempest Williams (WebCampus)

**Grading**
35% Quizzes and Cogitations
15% Ethical Debate and discussion leading, with annotated bibliography handout (CO 13, 1, 3, 12)
15% Midterm
15% Report on a green organization, company, or career (CO13, 1, 3, 12)
15% Final exam
5% Participation

We will use the plus and minus system for the final grades: 93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-; 67-69 = D+; 63-66 = D; 60-62 = D-; below 60 = F.
Participation, Attendance, Paper Format, and Late Papers

- This class aims for excellent discussion. Participation will be evaluated as follows: 5 = excellent contributions to class discussions, 4 = good contributions, 3 = fine contributions, 2 = occasional contributions, 1 = respectful listening.
- Attendance matters. Perfect attendance will raise your final course grade by a step (ex. “B” becomes “B+”). 1-3 absences has no effect on your final grade. More than three absences lowers your grade, the more absences the lower the grade. 2 tardies = 1 absence.
- All work for this class should be typed, double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font or an equivalent, with 1” margins. Pages after p. 1 should be numbered in the upper right corner, and the piece stapled in the upper left corner.
- Papers must be ready at the beginning of the class period in which they are due. Late papers will not be accepted.

Quizzes, Cogitations, and Extra Credit

A discussion class works well only when everyone has done the reading attentively. I have found that classes are much better when there is an incentive for students to do the reading on time. Accordingly, 35% of your grade will be based on your performance on reading quizzes and “cogitations” (reading response papers). Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class; missed quizzes may not be made up. Cogitations should be one page, typed, double-spaced. (On your debate day, you are excused from a cogitation.) Cogitations should not be a summary of the piece; rather, you should respond to and analyze the assigned pages in the text. To cogitate means to think. Use your cogitation to digest the reading, explore the ethical issues raised by environmental problems, and generate ideas for worthwhile, probing class discussions. Unless otherwise announced, each cogitation will be worth a maximum of three points: 3 = good job, 2 = acceptable job, 1 = weak. Cogitations are due at the beginning of class. Late work will not be accepted. We will announce Extra Credit opportunities from time to time that will help you make up missed points in the Quizzes and Cogitations category.

Ethical Debate and Discussion Leading, with Annotated Bibliography handout (CO 12, 13, 1, 3)

Small groups will sign up to lead discussion on a given day. Leading discussion includes preparing a debate that your group will perform for the class. You will construct the debate to explore ethical sides of an issue. The debate topic must spring from the assigned text. Distribute and discuss a one-page annotated bibliography that lists and summarizes at least three recent sources that pertain to the issue that your debate explores. In addition to staging the debate, your group will lead class discussion that day. We will explain this requirement and take sign ups on the second day of class.

Report on a green organization, company, or career (CO 12, 13, 1, 3)

This assignment ends the semester on an optimistic note. Research an environmentally related non-profit organization, an eco-friendly company or business, or a career that contributes to environmental sustainability. Write a report about your chosen topic and present your findings to the class. We’ll talk more about this assignment in class.

Exams (CO 12)

There will be a take-home midterm and final exam, consisting of several essays in response to selected questions. Throughout the semester you will have input into formulating exam questions. These questions will ask you to synthesize and reflect on the readings, analyze the rhetoric of popular science writing, evaluate the environmental justice issues, and the organically developing concerns we raise in
Half of the exam questions will ask you to analyze how environmental issues (seemingly science-based) raise ethical issues (the purview of the humanities).

**UNR-Mandated Statements**

Statement on Academic Dishonesty: “Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog.”

Statement of Disability Services: “Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.”

Statement on Audio and Video Recording: “Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.”

Statement for Academic Success Services: “Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (775) 784-4422, Tutoring Center (775) 784-6801, and University Writing Center (775) 784-6030. These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.”
Schedule (subject to change)*
* Through environmentally-focused course readings and in-class researched debates, the day-to-day practices of this class address COs 12, 13, 1, and 3.
Page numbers are keyed to recommended editions.

T 8/26  Introduction
R 8/28  Quiz over the syllabus, clarify requirements, debate sign-ups, debate teams meet

Ethical Foundations and Scientific Principles
T 9/2  Aldo Leopold essays (on WebCampus) quiz: “Thinking Like a Mountain,” “The Land Ethic,” “Wilderness”
R 9/4  Green Fire (57-min. film)

T 9/9  Leopold cogitation and debate
R 9/11  Silent Spring quiz (i-xix, 1-61)

T 9/16  Silent Spring cogitation (63-152)

Special Guest
R 9/18  Beth Terry, activist and author of Plastic-Free

T 9/23  A Sense of Wonder (55-min. film); Silent Spring quiz (154-243)
R 9/25  Silent Spring cogitation (245-297, 357-363) and debate

Visionaries and Poets—Justice and Technology in an Ideal Society
T 9/30  Ecotopia cogitation (169-172 + 1-54).
R 10/2  Ecotopia quiz (55-115); candidate essay questions for midterm due

T 10/7  Ecotopia cogitation (116-167) and debate; midterm handed out
R 10/9  midterm review and reflection; bring Turtle Island to class

T 10/14  midterms due; bring Turtle Island to class; instructions for Report assignment
Wilderness and the West—Whose Wilderness?
R 10/16  *Desert Solitaire* cogitation (1-94)

T 10/21  *Desert Solitaire* quiz (95-195)
R 10/23  *Desert Solitaire* cogitation (196-269) and **debate**

The Ethics of Climate Change—Who will be hardest hit?
T 10/28  *The End of Nature* cogitation (xiii-xxiv, 1-60)
R 10/30  *The End of Nature* quiz (60-124)

T 11/4  *The End of Nature* cogitation (124-185) and **debate**
R 11/6  *Carbon Nation* (86-min. film)

T 11/11—NO CLASS—VETERAN’S DAY

Green Entrepreneurs and Opportunities—Earning a living by doing good
R 11/13  *Natural Capitalism* quiz (i-xiv, 1-61) and presentations; **Reports due**

T 11/18  *Natural Capitalism* cogitation (skim 62-259, reread a chapter that interests you) and presentations
R 11/20  *Natural Capitalism* quiz (260-322) and presentations

Food for Thought—Changing the World with Every Bite
T 11/25  *Omnivore’s Dilemma* cogitation (1-11, 123-133, 185-207); *Food, Inc.* (94-min. film)
R 11/27—NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING

T 12/2  *Omnivore’s Dilemma* (15-119) quiz + Thanksgiving food journal
R 12/4  *Omnivore’s Dilemma* (277-363) cogitation and **debate**; candidate final exam questions due

T 12/9  Terry Tempest Williams, “The Birthing Rock” (WebCampus) quiz; final exams handed out
W 12/10  DEAD DAY
T 12/16  5:00-7:00 p.m. **final exams due**