ENST 231H.01C: Nature and Society

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ENST 231 H: Nature and Society Seminar  
Course Syllabus  
Missoula College – Spring 2015

Instructor:  Sue Bradford Ed.D.  
Office:  Missoula College, Room HB 02  
Office Hours:  Tuesday before or after class; and by appointment  
Email:  sue.bradford@umontana.edu

Required Texts:  
•  *Additional Readings posted on MOODLE*

Welcome to Nature & Society!  This course will explore the role and significance of nature in human history and examine how this has shaped our contemporary perspectives on environment issues.  Beginning with the earliest traces of human societies, we will trace the idea of nature as it develops through the ages and gains complexity from the merging of diverse traditions.  Our readings will include excerpts from some of the most influential thinkers in human history and selections from seminal authors of the contemporary environmental movement.  Together, we will consider how different concepts of nature have emerged from diverse cultural beliefs and social forms; and how these in turn have influenced social institutions, practices, and technologies of different historical periods (primarily Euro-American).  You will be encouraged to participate in lively discussions, to make connections between ideas and thinkers of the past and the emergence of contemporary environmental thought, to develop and express your own ideas about nature through writing, and to contemplate your role in nature and society.

This course satisfies General Education requirements for Writing (W) and Historical and Cultural Studies (H).

Learning Objectives:  Students completing this course should be able to:  
1.  Identify distinct concepts of nature from major historical periods and cultural settings;  
2.  Explore diverse perspectives concerning texts, ideas, historical events, and environmental issues;  
3.  Evaluate the effects of ideas on different societal interactions with the natural world;  
4.  Recognize the importance of historical factors on contemporary environmental thought, particularly scientific advancements, technology, and changes in social organization;  
5.  Synthesize ideas and events, from prehistory to the present, that led to several major shifts in the dominant societal views of the place of humans in nature;  
6.  Analyze current environmental issues utilizing historical ideas, thinkers, and events;  
7.  Express personal perspectives on human-nature interactions and relate these to historical ideas, thinkers, and events.  
8.  Use informal writing to develop and learn new concepts, and to formulate opinions and ideas;  
9.  Compose essays and papers that exhibit appropriate English language usage and writing conventions;  
10.  Evaluate and revise written work based on constructive feedback.
Course Structure & Expectations

Seminar Course: This course is structured as a discussion seminar where students are expected to complete readings and come to class ready to discuss these. This approach will allow us to explore a variety of viewpoints and share ideas as we learn to work together towards a deeper understanding of complex issues and challenging questions. This is not a lecture class where the instructor explains everything; you will have to think for yourself and explain your ideas to others. This style of collaborative learning will challenge you to think critically and develop skills for communicating and working with others – essential skills for facing the shared challenges of responsible citizenship in the 21st century.

Preparation for Class: In order to have a vibrant and interesting class discussion it is absolutely critical that students complete the assigned readings before class. Taking notes to develop your thoughts and questions is also very helpful. The quality of class discussions varies directly with the quality of preparation that you, the students, bring to class. Think of this as a team effort where everyone has a responsibility to pull their own weight. It’s also important to be on time, stay for the full discussion, and bring a copy of the reading to refer to during class.

Participation: Your participation during class is also important; we cannot read your mind. Again, think of this as a team effort – your ideas will enrich and strengthen our collective understanding. Getting involved in class activities also improves learning and will make the class more interesting and relevant to you. Communication and collaboration skills also improve with practice. Therefore, I will expect you to do your best to participate and work on improving your skills as the semester progresses.

Mutual Respect: All students will be expected to practice mutual respect. Our discussions will explore many questions that do not admit of a simple “right answer.” At times you may encounter controversial opinions or disagreements that bring out strong feelings. You may find your opinions challenged. In these situations it is important to maintain a civil and friendly attitude: be courteous, speak in turns, listen carefully, and respond respectfully. The goal is to advance the discussion. We may not agree, but we can work to understand each other better and recognize the reasoning behind diverse viewpoints.

Writing Assignments: A significant part of your grade will be based on written work. The Missoula College section of this course is an approved “W” course that meets the general education writing requirement. Students taking this course are expected to have already completed WRIT 101. Our writing assignments will include reading response journals, two reflective essays and a comparative paper. For both the essays and paper, you will be required to submit a re-write after I have graded your initial version. Detailed guidelines, essay prompts and grading criteria will be handed out in class and posted on Moodle.

*All writing courses must also participate in the University-wide Writing Program Assessment. This will require you to submit a blinded copy (i.e., name removed) of one paper, probably the second essay rewrite, to the writing committee via Moodle. I will provide more details when these become available.

Online Course Components

Course Supplement: This course has an online supplement in Moodle where I will post copies of course documents and provide a weekly agenda with any online readings. This will also include digital dropbox features for submitting assignments online.

Electronic Readings: Some of our readings will be posted on Moodle and formatted as PDF files. Given the fact that online networks can drop or malfunction at inconvenient times, I strongly encourage you to download weekly readings to your own computer, tablet, or flash drive well in advance of class. Some of you may also need to install Adobe Acrobat Reader (freeware) on your computer to open these documents: http://get.adobe.com/reader/
Assignments & Grading

1. **Attendance is required.** You need to be in class to be part of the discussion as we build on ideas from week to week. There is no way to make this up. Please show up consistently, be on time & stay for the full duration. If you must miss class, you are still expected to complete the readings and assignments on time (unless an exception has been explicitly granted). Tardiness may be counted as a partial absence. Unavoidable absences may be excused if appropriate documentation is provided.

   - More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a lowered overall grade for the course
   - Each additional unexcused absence will reduce the grade by 1/3 grade level: B > B- > C+ > C

2. **Participation.** Your participation in class activities and discussions is vital to the learning process. In view of this, I will award 3 points for each day that you (1) attend, (2) come prepared, and (3) participate actively. **Class participation is worth 75 points of your overall grade.**

3. **Journal Entries.** Weekly journal entries will help you explore ideas from our readings by relating these to your own experiences and viewpoints. Each journal submission should be approximately one-page in length (2-3 paragraphs, typed). These are intended to be open-ended responses to one or more of our weekly readings. Journals may be submitted online via Moodle or turned in at class. There will be no journal required during weeks when essays are due. **Journal entries are worth 10 points each.**

4. **Reflective Essay 1:** Exploring ideas of nature (week 3/5). Our first 3-4 page essay will ask you to explore how your own idea of nature relates to the ideas set forth in the novel, *Ishmael*. I will ask you to choose a specific passage or parable to explain and then evaluate; drawing on your own experience of nature to explain whether you agree or disagree with the ideas in text. I will return graded essays during week 4 with edits and comments to guide your re-write. **The initial draft and the revised essay are worth 30 points each.**

5. **Reflective Essay 2:** Historic ideas of nature. (week 7/9). Our second 3-4 page essay will consider how historical conditions or cultural beliefs may influence people’s ideas of nature. I will ask you to select one of our readings to explore in depth, describe the author’s idea of nature and then consider what features of the author’s historical period, culture or environment that may have influenced this. I will return graded essays during week 8, with edits and comments to guide your re-write. **The initial draft and the revised essay are worth 30 points each.**

6. **Comparative Paper** (week 11/13). This 6-8 page paper is the capstone of our course. Building on your previous essay, you are asked to describe and compares two distinct perspectives on “nature” found in our readings. One of these can be the historic perspective you described in Essay 2, while the other should be more contemporary. After describing each perspective and considering historical influences, you will compare similarities and differences and then draw on this to evaluate which seems more beneficial for nature and society. I will return graded essays during week 13, with edits and comments to guide your re-write. **The initial draft and the revised paper are worth 50 points each.**

7. **Final Creative Project & Presentation** (Finals week). Create a poster, collage, essay, artwork, or poem to share with the class. This should express “what nature means to me.” **This project is worth 25 points.**
**Note on Re-Writes:** Writing is a process that contributes to learning by enabling us to explore and develop ideas and review our present understanding of a subject. The process of re-writing is an opportunity to correct errors, refine and rethink ideas, and improve your ability to express yourself clearly and effectively.

**Late Work Policy:** Turning work in late will affect your grade.
- The maximum point value of assignments will drop by 10% for each day late.
- Extensions may be granted at the instructor’s discretion

**Extra Credit:** There will be extra credit options offered near the end of the semester. This will include the opportunity to earn points by participating in a “green” community service project.

**Overall Grades**

Traditional letter grades (A-F) will be awarded based on each student’s earned percentage of the total points possible. A summary of the approximate course points from graded work and the traditional grade percentages are shown in the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Point Values</th>
<th>GRADING SCALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation = 75 points</td>
<td>90% - 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Journals = 80 points</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Essay 1 = 60 points</td>
<td>80% - 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Essay 2 = 60 points</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Paper = 100 points</td>
<td>70% - 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Presentation = 25 points</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL = 400 points</td>
<td>60% - 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0% - 59%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Additional Information**

- **Getting Help:** Please let me know if you have any questions. I am happy to arrange a time to discuss your progress, assignments, or any special circumstances that may affect your performance in class. Please speak to me at the end of class or contact me by email if you’d like to set up a time to meet. I also have a mailbox in HB 02 where you can leave a written note.

- **The Writing Center:** The Writing Center is an excellent resource offering professional tutoring in writing for UM students at both the UM-COT Campus and on the Main Campus. Weekly hours for the new semester will be posted on campus and announced in class.

- **Reasonable Accommodations:** Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations in this course. To request course modifications, please contact me as soon as possible. I will work with you and Disability Services (DSS) in the accommodation process. You can contact DSS at 243-2243 or view their website at [http://www.umt.edu/dss/](http://www.umt.edu/dss/).

- **Ethical Conduct:** Respectful conduct and academic integrity are expected in all of your communications and academic activities during this course. Be advised that plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be handled in accordance with the [University of Montana Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/dss/).