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ENST 230H.01C: Nature and Society

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ENST 230 H: Nature and Society Seminar

Course Syllabus

Missoula College – Fall 2018

Instructor: Ashley Preston

Email: ashley.preston@umontana.edu

Office: Missoula College, Room 430

Office Hours: TTh 10-11:00; MW 2:00 – 3:00; or by appointment



Required Texts:

- Quinn (1992). *Ishmael*. Bantam Books. ISBN: 0-553-37540-7
- Nash (2001, 2014). *Wilderness and the American Mind* (4th or 5th ed). Yale University Press. ISBN: 0-300-09122-2; 0-300-19038-7
- *Additional Readings will be posted on MOODLE*

Welcome to Nature & Society! This course explores the role and significance of *nature* in human history and examines how this has shaped our contemporary perspectives on environment issues. Beginning with ancient human societies, we will trace the idea of nature as it develops through the ages and gains complexity from the merging of diverse traditions (primarily Western). Our readings are drawn from multiple disciplines and authors, ranging from influential philosophers and historians to modern scientists and founders of the contemporary environmental movement. Students will consider how different concepts of nature have emerged from diverse cultural settings and belief systems, and how these in turn inform the ways that humans live and interact with nature. Through critical reading, class discussions and written work, students will draw connections between historic ideas of nature and contemporary environmental issues, and gain a larger understanding of nature and society.

This course satisfies General Education requirements for 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. Articulate their own ideas and opinions about nature and 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

Discussion Seminar. This class is designed to be a **discussion seminar** rather than a lecture class. That means students will be expected to participate regularly in classroom discussions and activities and your grade will reflect your level of participation. We will often begin class by sharing our initial reflections on or questions about the topic and then examine these more closely with the aid of readings or videos. This approach allows us to consider many perspectives but also work together towards a deeper understanding of complex issues and challenging questions. The instructor's role is that of a facilitator, raising questions and offering guidance and resources to keep the discussion focused and productive. The student's role is to participate responsibly and respectfully: come prepared, be willing to share your perspective or questions in class, listen and try to understand your classmates' perspectives, and be open to exploring how the readings inform or challenge our opinions about nature and environmental issues. This **collaborative** style of learning will challenge us to think critically and to develop skills for expressing ourselves clearly, listening well and working with others – essential skills for facing the challenges of responsible citizenship in the 21st century.

Preparation for Class: I will expect you to complete the assigned readings **before** class. Some texts are more challenging than others, so please give yourself enough time. Taking notes as you read will help you remember key passages or questions to share in class. Also, in the case of online readings, plan ahead in case of internet issues -- this is not an acceptable excuse for being unprepared! If you do not print a hard copy of the internet readings, you will need to bring some sort of electronic device to access those readings in class. The success and quality of our learning experience rests largely on the quality of preparation and positive attitude that you, the students, bring to class. Learning works best as a team effort. Please be on time to avoid causing interruptions or missing important information. You should also have a notebook for recording new ideas along with a copy of the reading so we can examine specific passages.

Participation: Students are expected to contribute regularly to classroom discussions and activities. These include talking circles, small group activities, break-out sessions and full group discussions. Your voice is vital to our classroom process as well as your own learning process! Your ideas not only enrich and strengthen our collective understanding of challenging texts and issues, but also make the class more interesting and relevant to you personally. Speaking up in class is very challenging for some students, so we need to be mindful and respectful of one another. Students who are comfortable talking need to be aware that others may be waiting for a quiet moment to chime in. I will expect each of you to do your best to contribute to each class and work to improve your skills as the semester progresses.

Mutual Respect: The key to any successful collaboration is **mutual respect**. This includes respecting oneself and others enough to come prepared and take up the work seriously. It also relates to how we deal with disagreement. Our class discussions will explore many questions and issues that do not admit of simple "right answers." At times we may encounter opinions and viewpoints with which you disagree. Some of these may evoke strong emotions. You may even find your own opinions being challenged by others. In these situations, you will need to maintain a civil tone and a friendly attitude. Always be courteous, speak in turns, listen carefully, and respond respectfully. We may not agree on every issue, but we can still work to understand one another and recognize the reasoning behind different viewpoints. And remember: you may disagree with a person's ideas and viewpoints without disrespecting them as a person.

Online Course Components

Course Supplement: This course has an online supplement in Moodle where I will post copies of course documents, online readings and resources. This will also allow you to submit assignments online (optional).

Electronic Readings: Some of our readings will be posted on Moodle and formatted as PDF files. Please download weekly readings well in advance of class. If you do not have **Adobe Acrobat Reader** on your computer, you can download it for free from this website: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

Assignments & Grading

- **Attendance is required.** You need to be in class to be part of the discussion; there is no way to make this up. There is also no opportunity to make up any in-class work you may miss during your absence. If you must miss class, you are still expected to complete readings and assignments on time, unless an extension has been requested and granted *in advance* (it must meet the University requirements for an excusable absence if you expect an extension). Tardiness may counted as an absence if it is excessive and/or persistent. In accordance with UM's attendance policy, unavoidable absences will be excused if documentation is provided.
 - On your **5th absence**, your course grade will drop one full letter (A>B; B>C; etc.)
 - On your **6th absence**—excused or unexcused—you will fail the class.
- **Participation.** Your participation in class will be evaluated based on three criteria: (1) being present, (2) being prepared, and (3) participating actively. **Class participation is worth 120 points of your overall grade.**
- **Journal Entries.** These are 1-2 page (double-spaced, typed), responses to the readings or topics we are discussing in class. Journaling will help you develop your thoughts and process new ideas through exploratory writing. **Journal entries (8) are worth 10 points each.**
- **Reflective Essay: Historic ideas of nature.** (Week). This 3-4 page essay will consider how different historical conditions or cultural beliefs have influenced ideas of nature. You will examine a specific author and idea of nature from history and consider how different features of the author's setting may have influenced this way of thinking. **Reflective essay worth 60 points.**
- **Comparative Paper** (Week 12). This 5-6 page paper is the capstone of our course. You will describe and compare two distinct perspectives on "nature" from very different historical periods, including a historic text (this may draw on Essay 1) and a more recent text (from one of the 19th or 20th century authors on our reading list). **Comparative essay worth 80 points.**
- **Final Creative Project & Presentation** (Finals week). TBD **This project is worth 60 points.**

Late Work Policy: All assignments and essays are due at the beginning of class (12:30) on the date indicated on the Syllabus/Course Schedule or Essay Guidelines. **Late work is not accepted for any reason.** (I encourage you to use the submission link in Moodle if you are concerned about being late to class and thus missing the deadline.) Plan well ahead. **If you foresee a conflict with an assignment due date/time, you must get with me in advance to arrange for an alternative time (usually BEFORE the deadline) to submit your work.**

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 (values are tentative and subject to change):

Approximate Point Values		
Participation	=	120 points
Reading Journals	=	80 points
Reflective Essay 1	=	60 points
Comparative Paper	=	80 points
Final Project	=	60 points
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TOTAL	=	400 points

GRADING SCALE	
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70% - 79%	C
60% - 69%	D
0% - 59%	F

Additional Information

- Getting Help:** Please let me know if you have any questions. Come by during office hours, or I am happy to arrange a time to discuss your progress, assignments, or any special circumstances that may affect your performance in class. Please see me at the end of class or contact me by email to arrange a meeting.
- Writing Center:** The Writing Center offers free tutoring at several locations across campus to help students become more effective writers. For more info, see: <http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/>
- Students with Disabilities:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students \[DSS\]](#). Please contact me as soon as possible if you already have a disability letter and would like to make arrangements for specific course modifications. For more information, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154, call 243-2243 (voice/TDD), or see <http://www.umt.edu/dss/>.
- Student Conduct:** Respectful conduct and academic integrity are expected in all of your communications and academic activities during this course. Please be advised that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any conduct violations will be handled in strict accordance with the University of Montana Student Conduct Code: http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php.
- Email policy at UM:** According to the University email policy effective on 1 July 2007, an “employee must use *only* UM assigned student email accounts for all email exchanges with students, since such communication typically involves private student information.” This means that you *must* send any correspondence through your official UM student email account. For more information on setting up and using your official UM email account contact tech support.