

San José State University
College of Social Sciences / Environmental Studies Department
ENVS 150, Introduction to Environmental Thought and Philosophy
Spring 2025

Instructor: Dr. Will Russell
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Class Format Asynchronous Online



Course Description

An introduction to significant works in the field of environmental studies. Topics covered include preservation, conservation, biocentrism, environmental justice, eco-feminism, deep ecology, and environmental activism.

Course Overview and Organization

This course will be taught entirely online using Canvas! Readings, discussions, and assignments will be required twice weekly. This course is designed to provide upper division students with an opportunity to investigate the historic and cultural context of environmental thought, history, and philosophy. The evolution of our society has direct and profound influence on our attitudes toward nature. These attitudes are reflected in science, literature, government, religion, art, and our management of natural resources.

Department Program Learning Outcomes

The Department Program Learning Outcomes for all Environmental Studies undergraduates and graduate students are found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/EnvStudies/assessment/>. This course will be used to promote undergraduate student learning for the following outcomes:

SLO 1 - Qualitative Environmental Literacy: Students are able to write a logical analytical paper using good writing style and construction supported by appropriate research.

SLO 3 - Content Environmental Literacy: Students will develop proficiency in the interdisciplinary sustainability principles that are the foundation of environmental studies; they will know the key environmental challenges facing the planet, know relevant interdisciplinary information about these challenges, and be able to develop/identify feasible solutions

Required Texts

- American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau. Bill McKibben, Editor. Library of America. 2008.
- Additional readings are linked to each course module on Canvas, and urls for you tube movies are given in the course modules.

Dropping and Adding

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Information on add/drops is available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html>. Late drop information is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/policies/latedrops>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Please read the following assignment descriptions carefully. Failing to comply with the specific directions given below will result in a loss of credit points for each assignment. Please note that all assignments will be due by 11:59pm (PST) on the date due, and **no late work will be accepted under any circumstances.**

Personal Introduction

On the first day of class post a 300–word personal biography that includes your academic major, year, and a brief description of the people and experiences that have shaped your world-view. For full credit, respond to at least two other student's personal introductions with comments and questions.

Reaction Assignments

Post a 500-600 word 'Reaction' to the week's readings to Canvas. The Reaction should address all of the discussion questions posted by the instructor for that week, and include cited quotes (author, and page number) from the text to support your ideas. Be certain to use your own words, and avoid AI. These assignments will be due on Tuesdays.

Topic Activities

For each week's readings there will be an activity and discussion assignment due on Thursdays. Instructions for each activity should be followed carefully, and are to be posted to the Discussions in Canvas. In addition, each student must post at least two 'Responses' to other students' posts. For full credit Responses will encourage dialog by challenging assumptions and asking questions. The Topic Activities and Responses must both be posted by the end of the day on the date that the assignment is due.

Personal Environmental Philosophy

A 1000-1500 word personal environmental philosophy will be required from each student. The philosophy should describe your personal environmental perspective in direct reference to the course readings and class discussions. Also include how your personal lens - cultural identity, gender, family history, life experience, etc. influence your philosophy. Be sure to answer the question "How do I as an individual relate to the natural world – am I a part of it, or apart from it?" Include a bibliography with referenced material in APA style that includes at least five outside references (not from the course text). You may include as many references from the text as you like. See course schedule for date due.

Grading Rubric for Personal Environmental Philosophy

Word Count	10
References (APA)	10
Personal Lens	10
Connection to Course readings	10
Style and Grammar	10
Total	100

Selected Reading Assignment

For this assignment, you will choose one of the readings from American Earth that was not assigned by the instructor, or choose another academic article that relates to the course topics, and write a 500-600 word post on the topic of the reading, the life and influence of the author, and how the ideas presented by the author relate to the topics discussed in class. Each student will also post two at least two 'Responses' to other students' posted Reactions. For full credit Responses will encourage dialog by challenging assumptions and asking questions.

Final Exam

The final exam will be online on Canvas, and will cover all course material up until the day of the exam including: readings and module content, discussions, and assignments. The exam will include short answer, multiple-choice, and essay style questions.

Grading

Your grade in this course will be based on your essays, discussion postings, and exams as follows, with 90-100 % =A; 80-89 % =B; 70-79 % =C; 60-69 % =D; and less than 60 % = F:

Assignment	% of Grade
Personal Introduction	10%
Reactions	20%
Topic Activities and Discussion	20%
Selected Reading Essay	10%
Environmental Philosophy	20%
Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The policy on academic integrity can be found at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

ENVS 150 / Environmental Thought - Course Schedule
Spring 2025

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
1/23 Th	Personal Introduction		<i>Introduction Statement Due</i>
1/28 T	Traditional Ecological Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Law of Peace (linked file) • Chief Seattle (linked file) • Winona LaDuke (linked file) 	Reaction 1
1/30 Th	TEK, cont.		Topic Activity (TEK)
2/4 T	Roots of Environmentalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marsh 71-80 (textbook) • Thoreau 1-2; 26-36 (textbook) 	Reaction 2
2/6 Th	Roots, cont.		Topic Activity (Roots)
2/11 T	Preservation vs. Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muir 84-85; 104-112 (textbook) • Pinchot 172-180 (textbook) 	Reaction 3
2/13 Th	Preservation vs. Conservation, cont.		Topic Activity (Pres. vs. Cons.)
2/18 T	Ecology and the Early Environmental Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carson 365-376 (textbook) • Abbey 413-433 (textbook) 	Reaction 4
2/20 Th	Env. Movement, cont.		Topic Activity (Rachel Carson)
2/25 T	The Tragedy of the Commons and the Population Bomb!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardin 438-450 (textbook) • Ehrlich 434-437 (textbook) 	Reaction 5
2/27 Th	TOC & Pop Bomb, cont.		Topic Activity (Pop Bomb)
3/4 T	Satire and Irony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marquis 235-238 (textbook) • Brower 554-558 (textbook) • Alice Walker 659-670 (textbook) 	Reaction 6
3/6 Th	Satire and Irony, cont.		Topic Activity (Satire and Irony)
3/11 T	Racism within the Environmental Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Reaction 7

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
3/13 Th	Racism, cont.		Topic Activity (Racism)
3/18 T	Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chavez 690-695 (textbook) Climate Change and the Border Crisis (linked file) Dolores Huerta (linked file) Mustafa Ali video (linked file) 	Reaction 8
3/20	EJ cont.		Topic Activity (EJ)
3/25 T	Selected Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook 	
3/27 Th	Selected Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook 	<i>Selected Reading Posts Due</i>
3/31-4/4	<i>Spring Break</i>		
4/8 T	EcoFeminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vandana Shiva (linked file) Judi Bari (linked file) 	Reaction 9
4/10 Th	EcoFeminism, cont.		Topic Activity (EcoFeminism)
4/15 T	Deep Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naess and Sessions (linked file) 	Reaction10
4/17 Th	Deep Eco, cont.		Topic Activity (Deep Eco)
4/22 T	Direct Action and Civil Disobedience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hill 907-919 (textbook) Thoreau's Civil Disobedience (linked file) 	Reaction 11
4/24 Th	DA, cont.		Topic Activity (DA)
4/29 T	Current Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from Evo Morales (linked file) Encyclical (linked file) Green New Deal (linked file) Greta Thunberg (linked file) Haaland (linked file) 	Reaction 12
5/1 Th	CD, cont.		Topic Activity (CD)
5/6 T			<i>Environmental Philosophies Due</i>
5/8Th	Final Exam		