

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 282: ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES
Spring 2024 – Explore: Culture (3 Credits) – MW 3:30-5 pm – Sage Hall 3218

Dr. Stewart Cole

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30-11:30 am in Sage Hall 3453

Environmental Studies Program Website: <https://uwosh.edu/es/>

*Please note that this course satisfies the 3-credit Intermediate Environmental Humanities requirement for the ES major and minor.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

ES 282 is an interdisciplinary humanities course that examines social, aesthetic, scientific, and philosophical ideas about nature and investigates how the attitudes and values that inform our relationships to nature can impact our understanding of environmental issues. Students will critically analyze current and past environmental issues, movements, and leading thinkers through personal essays, cultural critiques, philosophical arguments, and artistic media such as literature and film.

Why do the humanities matter? Because the natural and social sciences are not sufficient for meeting the challenges of our planetary crisis. Scientific data is interpreted by humans, policy recommendations are formulated by humans, and so all such activities are subjective in the sense that one's personal ideas, values, and priorities will inevitably shape how one interprets, recommends, formulates, etc. The field of the humanities – by which we mean an examination of human action and thought within the disciplinary frameworks of history, philosophy, literature, religion, and the arts – thus provides conceptual and ethical insights that help other disciplines decide how to approach and respond to environmental issues. In harboring values and priorities often overlooked within the more strictly data-driven methodologies of non-humanities disciplines – such as beauty, intrinsic value, justice, narrative coherence, historical and cultural awareness, inclusivity, etc. – the humanities are a necessary component of any environmentalism worthy of the name. Put simply, without the humanities, we cannot adequately answer the question: What is worth sustaining, and why?

Environmental issues are so controversial precisely because they often highlight the divergent attitudes and ideas about nature that prevail within a given society, and so the ability to think critically about a range of attitudes and to make informed choices about which ideas will inform our behavior is a fundamental skill of the environmental humanities and environmental studies more broadly. A stand of trees that looks to one person like a source of income, for example, might for another person serve as a place of beauty, reverence, or ecological study – and what happens to that stand of trees will often depend on which point of view is prioritized. It is one of the roles of the environmental humanities (and one of the goals of this course) to equip us with the conceptual and ethical means of weighing such points of view and making considered choices as environmentally engaged citizens.

This course has several additional objectives. One of these is to introduce you to the Environmental Studies Program at UW Oshkosh and to prepare you for a career dealing with environmental issues. To this end, we will be examining jobs in environmental fields, and students will be asked to prepare resumes and cover letters as if they were applying for these positions. We will also be participating in a resume and cover letter workshop and networking

with ES Alumni. Because writing is a necessary skill in the workplace (and for life in general), an additional goal of this class is to practice writing in both academic and professional modes in order to cultivate your preparedness for the world beyond the university.

THE UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM, EXPLORE COURSES, AND YOUR LIBERAL EDUCATION

The University Studies Program (USP) serves as the foundation of your university education. You will likely already be familiar with the Quest sequence (Quest I, Quest II, Quest III) that serves as the backbone of the USP; as an Explore: Culture course, this section of ES 101 affords you further opportunity to expand your learning across the disciplines as you prepare to pursue your chosen major(s) and minor(s). The broad interdisciplinary range of courses you take through the USP comprises what is referred to in educational circles as a *liberal education*. It's important to understand that a liberal education need not be politically "liberal": people of many political stripes believe in its importance. "A liberal education" (also often called a liberal arts education) is a way of designating a kind of education that provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (i.e., culture, science, and society) by exposing them to a diversity of fields and ways of thinking (while, of course, allowing them to focus on particular areas of interest by choosing majors). Its purpose is the creation of literate citizens, people with a sense of social responsibility who possess the practical transferable skills—e.g., critical thinking, written and spoken eloquence, problem-solving acumen—to effect meaningful change both in their communities and in their chosen field of endeavor. The goal of this class, then, is not just to convey specific information about environmental issues (although you will learn much about this) but to teach you how to interpret this information critically and how to understand modern environmental issues in their social, historical, and political contexts. In short, a liberal arts education provides the tools we need to be active citizens of our communities – and as we will learn this semester, active citizenship plays a key role in resolving the complex environmental dilemmas that we as a society face today.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (IN THESE EDITIONS)

- Aldo Leopold, *The Sand County Almanac* (Ballantine ISBN 9780691173900)
- Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (City Lights ISBN 9780872866690)
- Jenny O'fill, *Weather* (Vintage ISBN 9780345806901)

All additional required readings will be posted to Canvas.

REQUIRED FILM RENTALS

- Bong Joon-ho, dir. *Okja* (2017)
 - *Okja* is available to stream on Netflix. If you do not have a Netflix subscription (and for some reason cannot sign up for a free trial to watch the film), let me know, and I will try to make other arrangements for you to watch the film.
- Myron Dewey, Josh Fox, and James Spione, dirs. *Awake: A Dream from Standing Rock* (2017)
 - *Awake* is available to watch here: <https://awakethefilm.org/>. A \$5 donation is suggested – and I encourage you to make this donation in order to support the independent filmmakers – but there is also an option to watch it for free.

Required Event

You are also required to attend the ES Alumni Event one evening this semester (date TBA).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Apply *critical thinking* skills to environmental issues, including the ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate evidence and to construct well-supported, clearly articulated, and sustained arguments.
- Communicate the role of *values and ethics* in creating and addressing environmental issues and the role of the humanities in the discipline of Environmental Studies.
- Elaborate the significance of *historically important works* in the environmental humanities (such as the writings of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson).
- Define and deploy *key terminology* relevant to the environmental humanities and the discipline of Environmental Studies more broadly.
- Effectively *communicate* their own analytical conclusions about environmental issues in oral and written form.
- Think actively and proactively about *their own path* toward an “environmental” career.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Class Participation	20%
Environmental Autobiography (Feb. 19)	10%
Resume/Cover Letter	P/F
Two Short Essays (Mar. 11, Apr. 29)	40% (15%/25%)
Final Exam (Week of May 13)	30%

Course Readings

In addition to the course readings from our textbooks or posted on Canvas, I will also post to Canvas a set of discussion questions for each class session. You should use these questions to guide your reading before class, as they will form the basis of our discussion in class.

Class Participation

Class participation is a crucial element of your grade. First of all, you are expected to be in class; attendance will be taken at every session, and after two unexplained absences your grade will be lowered (this means you should email me if you’re not going to be in class). Secondly, when in class you are expected to be actively taking notes, asking and answering questions when appropriate, and contributing to an overall environment of intellectual exploration and discussion. I keep close track of who participates in class and who does not, and this will be reflected in the 20% of your grade dedicated to this category. (Just to give you an idea: if you were to come to every class but say only one or two things all semester, you would receive a C- in Class Participation.)

ENGAGEMENT IN THE ES PROGRAM

Because of its broad interdisciplinarity, the Environmental Studies Program is both one of the most challenging and one of the most rewarding programs at the university. The key to meeting the challenges and gaining the rewards of our program is embracing the idea of *community*. Just as environmental problems cannot be solved without communities coming together in dialogue and action, our classes in ES require you to come together as a community characterized by open participation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. *Participation* means actively contributing both your voice in class discussions and your work to build knowledge together.

Respect means listening and making space for your peers' voices while also feeling free to disagree (as the best forms of understanding often arise out of what begins as disagreement). And *responsibility* means holding ourselves accountable for being curious, engaged, and informed members of our shared community.

The issues we discuss in ES classes are often difficult, but if we see each class as a community in which we are actively engaged, we will gain not only the rewards of knowledge and capacity for action, but a sense of feeling supported, both academically and emotionally – of confronting the problems we face together.

YOUR FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Your first assignment is to write a short essay of 600 to 700 words that answers the following questions (not necessarily in this order – try make your essay flow as a narrative):

- What caused you to major or minor in Environmental Studies?
- What has been your experience with nature (in all the many ways this term can be understood) and/or environmental issues, and how have those experiences impacted your view of the world?
- Who has influenced your views on nature or environmental issues, and how?
- Do others in your life (parents, friends, etc.) support your interest in ES? Why or why not?
- How have your views on nature or environmental issues changed over time, and what were the major influences in those changes?

Please use specific incidents and anecdotes as relevant to the topic, and try to draw out a theme for your own story – almost like a thesis (e.g., “I have always cared more about animals than people,” or “My views have changed as I developed deeper awareness”) to add coherence to your reflection. If your ES classes up to this point have influenced the shape of your environmental autobiography, be sure to mention that: we’d like to know! As indicated in the Course Schedule below, this assignment is due to the appropriate Canvas assignment folder by midnight on Monday, February 19th.

SHORT ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to the Environmental Autobiography assignment outlined above, you will produce two Short Essay assignments. The distribution and due dates for these assignments are listed in the Course Schedule below.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam will test your knowledge of the material we will study throughout the semester and your ability to place elements of that material into meaningful dialogue. You will take it on Canvas during the last week of class. Full details will be given as the time approaches.

GRADING POLICY

Any assignments you submit will be returned in two weeks. Assignments will be graded according to the standard grade scale: A = 93 and above, A- = 90-93, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C=73-76, and so on.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Late assignments lose 5% per day and will receive less detailed comments than usual, but penalty-free extensions are always negotiable provided they are requested before the assignment due date. Remember, it's much better to reach out to us than to simply not hand something in!

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICIES AND PROCESSES

See the following URL: <https://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/university-policies-procedures/academic-misconduct>. The use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is prohibited in this class. Their use will result in a grade of zero on the assignment.

EMAIL POLICY

Please allow 24 hours for email response, as I only check email several times per day. When I do respond, however, I will do so with thoroughness and care.

CANVAS

In addition to the course syllabus and the required scholarly articles, any assignment details or important slides displayed or distributed in class will be posted to Canvas.

STATEMENT OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is the policy and practice of UW Oshkosh to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, please notify me as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 920-424-3100 or dean1@uwosh.edu. For more information, visit the Services for Students with Disabilities website at <http://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/disability-services>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Please note that you need to arrive to class having carefully read anything listed as “To Read” for that day. (“To Do” works in a similar way, indicating things you need to submit or attend to for the class in question.) Assignment distribution and due dates are highlighted in yellow. Any changes to our regular in-person class schedule (these are rare) are highlighted in green.

WEEK ONE – Introduction to the Environmental Humanities

Monday, February 5th

- An introduction to the course and each other

Wednesday, February 7th

- To Read: Robert Emmett and David Nye, Introduction to *The Environmental Humanities: A Critical Introduction* (Canvas)
- To Do: Use the discussion questions posted to Canvas to guide you as you read before class, and be prepared to take up these questions both in pairs and as a full group while in class. This applies to just about every class from now on!

WEEK TWO – Conservation, Preservation, and the Rise of the Environmental Movement

Monday, February 12th

- To Read: Henry David Thoreau, “Walking” (Canvas)

Wednesday, February 14th

- To Read: John Muir, from *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Canvas)
- To Read 2: Muir, “Hetch Hetchy Valley” (Canvas)
- To Read 3: Gilbert Pinchot, “Prosperity” (Canvas)

WEEK THREE – Rachel Carson and the Rise of the Environmental Movement

Monday, February 19th

- To Read: Rachel Carson, from *Silent Spring* (Chapter 1 “A Fable for Tomorrow” and Chapter 2 “An Obligation to Endure”) plus Linda Lear’s Introduction and Edward O. Wilson’s Afterword (Canvas)
- To Do: Submit your Environmental Autobiography Assignment to the Canvas assignment folder by midnight tonight.

Wednesday, February 21st

- Prompts for Short Essay #1 distributed in class today.
- Time permitting: review of key elements of essay writing plus some outdoor time (weather permitting—bundle up!) in preparation for upcoming Photo Assignments.

WEEK FOUR – The End of Nature?

Monday, February 26th

- To Read: Bill McKibben, from *The End of Nature* (Canvas)

Wednesday, February 28th

- To Read: William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness” (Canvas)

WEEK FIVE – Kinship and Animality

Monday, March 4th

- To Read: Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Learning the Grammar of Animacy” (Canvas)

Wednesday, March 6th

- To Read: Val Plumwood, “Being Prey” (Canvas)

WEEK SIX – Animal Ethics and Food Politics

Monday, March 11th

- To Do: Create an account on the EcoJobs database (linked on Canvas). Identify one job that interests you and be prepared to discuss with the class what skills you would need to get this job and how you might be able to acquire these skills.
- To Do 2: Submit Short Essay #1 to the Canvas assignment folder by midnight tonight.

Wednesday, March 13th

- To Read: Michael Pollan, “An Animal’s Place” (Canvas)

WEEK SEVEN – Animal Ethics continued, plus Student Photo Presentations

Monday, March 18th

- To Read 1: Rory Cockshaw, “The End of Factory Farming: Alternatives to Improve Sustainability, Safety, and Health” (Canvas)
- To Read 2: Syl Ko, from *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters* (“Addressing Racism Requires Addressing the Situation of Animals” and “Revaluing the Human as a Way to Revalue the Animal”) (Canvas)

Wednesday, March 20th

- NO CLASS TODAY – Use this time to rest and recharge from a busy first half of the semester!

WEEK EIGHT – NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

WEEK NINE – *Okja* and Career Materials

Monday, April 1st

- To Watch: *Okja* (dir., Bong Joon-ho)

Wednesday, April 3rd

- To Do: Come prepared to actively engage with Kari Meszaros from UW Oshkosh Career Services as she leads you through a resume and cover letter workshop.

WEEK TEN – Aldo Leopold

Monday, April 8th

- To Read: Aldo Leopold, *The Sand County Almanac*, pp. xii-25 (the Preface and Foreword plus “January,” “February,” and “March”) and pp. 101-124 (“Wisconsin”)

Wednesday, April 10th

- To Read: Leopold, *The Sand County Almanac*, pp. 237-295 (“The Land Ethic” and “Wilderness,” and “Conservation Esthetic”)

WEEK ELEVEN – Environmental Justice

Monday, April 15th

- To Read 1: Robert Bullard, from *Dumping in Dixie* (Canvas)
- To Read 2: Bullard, “Confronting Environmental Racism in the Twenty-First Century” (Canvas)
- To Read 3: People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, “Principles of Environmental Justice” (Canvas)

- To Read 4: James H. Cone, “Whose Earth Is It, Anyway?” (Canvas)
- Prompts for Short Essay #2 distributed in class today

Wednesday, April 17th

- To Read: Kyle Powys Whyte, “The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and US Settler Colonialism” (Canvas)

WEEK TWELVE – Indigenous Environmental Justice

Monday, April 22nd

- To Watch: *Awake: A Dream from Standing Rock* (dir., Myron Dewey, Josh Fox, and James Spione)

Wednesday, April 24th

- To Read: Dina Gilio-Whitaker, “(Not So) Strange Bedfellows: Indian Country’s Ambivalent Relationship with the Environmental Movement” from *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to Standing Rock* (Canvas)

WEEK THIRTEEN – The Anthropocene

Monday, April 29th

- To Read: Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (Introduction “Coming Home” and Chapter One “Human Ecologies”)
- To Do: Submit Short Essay #2 to the Canvas assignment folder by midnight tonight.

Wednesday, May 1st

- To Read: Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (Chapter Two “A Wicked Problem,” Chapter Three “Carbon Politics,” and Chapter Four “The Compulsion of Strife”)

WEEK FOURTEEN – The Anthropocene and Cli-Fi (i.e., Climate Fiction)

Monday, May 6th

- To Read: Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (Chapter Five “A New Enlightenment” and Coda “Coming Home”).

Wednesday, May 8th

- To Read: Jenny Offill, *Weather* (Chapters One and Two – pp. 1-108)
- Discussion of exam format (along with sample questions)

WEEK FIFTEEN – Cli-Fi, Climate Anxiety, and Exam Week

Monday, May 13th

- To Read: Offill, *Weather* (Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six – pp. 109-201)

- To Listen: Climate One Podcast – “Storytelling through the Climate Crisis” (<https://www.climateone.org/audio/storytelling-through-climate-crisis>)

Wednesday, May 15th

- **NO CLASS – Complete the Final Exam on Canvas by midnight**

SOURCES FOR COURSE READINGS

For single-author texts, I have included the copyright information in the PDF file uploaded to Canvas. You may need this information for your paragraph and essay Works Cited lists. In addition to single-author texts, however, I have also drawn upon several excellent anthologies in constructing our reading list, MLA-formatted bibliographic information for which is given below. Beyond its usefulness for your Works Cited, you should also take this source list as a suggestion for further reading!

The Muir, Pinchot, Bullard (“Dumping in Dixie”) and Hogan readings are drawn from:

McKibben, Bill, editor. *American Earth: Environmental Writing since Thoreau*. Library of America, 2008.

The Kimmerer and Bullard (“Confronting Environmental Racism”) readings are drawn from:

Deming, Alison H. and Lauret E. Savoy, editors. *Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*. Milkweed Editions, 2011.

The Cone and People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit readings are drawn from:

Ammons, Elizabeth, and Modhumita Roy, editors. *Sharing the Earth: An International Environmental Justice Reader*. U of Georgia P, 2015.

IMPORTANT CAMPUS RESOURCES

Polk Library

Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and integrate information in your classes. Contact him at 920-424-7329 or mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at rap@uwosh.edu.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help students understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers to learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available.

For more information, please see their website at <http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>, call 920-424-1152, email wcenter@uwosh.edu, or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

Center for Academic Resources

The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Tutor List page on CAR's website at www.uwosh.edu/car for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, stop by SSC 102 or call 424-2290. To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let her/him/them know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet.

LGBTQ+ Resource Center



UWO's LGBTQ+ Resource Center "aims to create awareness across our campus and community by identifying and responding to the concerns and needs of LGBTQ+ students, staff, faculty and allies" and "to create an innovative and fully equitable community of all genders and sexualities that is free of discrimination and strives for knowledge, challenges barriers, and seeks to empower agents of social change" (LGBTQ+ Resource Center). The

Center is located in the Campus Center for Equity and Diversity (717 W. Irving Ave.); it's open M-Th 10am-5pm and Fri 10am-3pm (email: lgbtqcenter@uwosh.edu) (phone: (920) 424-3465). Center events are posted by month on its website (<https://uwosh.edu/lgbtqcenter/>). Students needing immediate support can call 1-866-488-7386.

Dean of Students Office

Whether you need an advocate to help you work through a problem related to one of your courses or an interpersonal matter with a peer or whether you're in need of more immediate support (for example, if you're low in funds and can't afford everyday necessities, from food to toiletries, or if you're otherwise in crisis), you should feel comfortable reaching out to the Dean of Students office for help. The mission of the office of the Dean of Students is to support students and work to identify solutions to whatever problems they may face. So, for instance, if you need food and supplies, you can contact the Dean of Students office and request access to its food pantry or its supplies closet. If you've been the victim of sexual violence, you can speak to one of its three Title IX coordinators, and they will assist you and clarify what kind of support and protections are available to you. In addition, the Dean of Students office website includes links to a number of valuable reporting resources, from the Student Care Team (whose function is to provide help to students in crisis) to the COVID-19 Reporting Concerns form (see <https://uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/>). The Dean of Students office is located in Dempsey 125 (Phone: (920) 424-3100). Students in an emergency may call UW Oshkosh's Police Department at (920) 424-1212.

Additional Campus Resources

Given that this is a course for established majors, I am assuming that all of you know how to access (or are capable of finding out how to access) such crucial campus resources as Academic Support of Inclusive Excellence, the Accessibility Center, Bias Incident Support and Reporting, The Cabinet (Food Pantry), the Counseling Center, Information Technology, the Reading and Study Skills Center, the Title IX Office for Support for Victims/Survivors of Discrimination and

Sexual Misconduct, the Women's Center, the Undergraduate Advising Resource Center (UARC), and the Veterans Resource Center. If you would like to access any of these resources and would like my help in doing so, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

Undergraduate Bulletin Description – Environmental Studies 282 Environmental Humanities

This interdisciplinary humanities course examines how social, religious, aesthetic, and philosophical values are interwoven in the context of environmental problems. Students critically analyze classic environmental literature, ethical arguments, current movements and leading thinkers in light of relevant case studies. This course also offers students the opportunity to hone their writing skills and make positive steps toward career preparation.

Prerequisite(s): Environmental Studies 101, 102, or 103 and Environmental Studies 164, 230 or 243 or consent of instructor.