

## **HONR 292C - Knowing Nature: Environmental Perceptions across Cultures**

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

#### *Knowing Nature*

Nature. Natural. Wild. Wilderness. Environment. We use these terms all the time, but what do they really mean to us? How does their significance vary with time and place, and among individuals, cultures, and societies? This course investigates the role of culture, tradition, gender, and politics in human understandings of the natural environment. This investigation will take us around the world and will include visions of the past as well as predictions about the future. Through this investigation, we will discover the ways in which human environmental understandings are constructed, communicated, manipulated, and transformed. We will ultimately gain a richer understanding of what our environment means to us and why.

#### *What are 'Ways of Knowing'?*

The seminar will engage students in the exploration of different ways of knowing across cultures by understanding different cultural perspectives and analyzing how cultural values differently inform research methodologies. The seminar considers how cultural values inform what counts as knowledge, and by whom; the methods employed to gain or affirm knowledge; the values attributed to knowledge; and moral implications of how knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and reproduced. Specifically, this course will provide experiences for students to critically and analytically reflect on how power, privilege, cultural identities, historical frameworks, social systems, and cultural backgrounds influence what we know about self, others, and the world. These reflections will involve examples of how social and historical gaps, omissions, and shifts in knowledge, including what is not known, what cannot be known, and what is unknown (which may have been disregarded, discarded, or forgotten) often reflect competing cultural perspectives and values. Students will also learn to understand the effects of cultural bias on the interpretation of facts, empirical data, observation, and experience, and how this shapes understandings of the possibility for certainty and objective knowledge. In this way, students will explore how cultural values inform and influence which research methodologies are used for knowledge production, construction, and acquisition. By analyzing contemporary case studies or issues on a theme, students will further integrate and evaluate different ways of knowing.

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course aims to increase students' awareness of what they know and how they know what they know. It also aims to expose the limits and subjectivities of knowledge. Finally, it encourages us to engage with and to value the knowledge of others, even when it challenges our own.

After completing this course, a successful student will be able to:

1. Identify and analyze how cultural values influence ways of knowing on individual, societal, and global levels in a diversity of academic disciplines and social contexts.
2. Apply and integrate diverse ways of knowing to analyze and interpret contemporary issues and topics.
3. Articulate how cultural frameworks and social systems influence what knowledge is produced and how knowledge is constructed, expressed, accepted, and contested.
4. Understand the limits of knowing, how knowledge changes, and the social, historical, political, and cultural influences that shape ways of knowing across cultures.

5. Critically assess issues of identity, culture, ownership, and power as they relate to the processes of knowledge production across cultures.
6. Recognize and apply interdisciplinary connections and intercultural overlaps among ways of knowing across cultures.
7. Describe and evaluate how different methodologies influence ways of knowing and what is known.

### **EVALUATION SYSTEM**

The requirements that will be used to evaluate student learning are:

1. Journal assignments (10% of grade total).
2. Two critical analysis writing projects (30% of grade total).
3. Formal speech (15% of grade).
4. Final research paper (20% of grade).
5. Participation (10% of grade).
6. In-class work and homework (15% of grade total).

#### **Evaluations in detail:**

1. *Journal assignments:* Students will keep a journal on assigned readings, collected periodically. Each weekly journal entry should include the following:

- a. Notes on and personal responses to assigned readings for each week, including key passages.
- b. At least one question that the reading raised.
- c. At least one thing you didn't understand or one critique of the text.
- d. At least one thing that you learned from or enjoyed about the text.

The length of each entry will vary on the reading assignment, journal size, and individual handwriting, but aim for one full page, single spaced, per week.

2. *Critical analysis essays:* Students will write two 5-7 page papers critically engaging the assigned readings for one or multiple weeks. These papers may be turned in at any time, but the first one is due no later than Week 7 (Tuesday) and the second no later than Week 12 (Tuesday).

3. *Formal speech:* A 7-minute extemporaneous speech to the class related to content. These speeches will take place in the last few weeks of class and will allow students to present their research project.

4. *Final critical research project:* Students will conduct research on a course-related subject of their choice, culminating in a final paper. This assignment includes preliminary requirements during the semester.

5. *Participation:* The participation grade includes both attendance and involvement. A perfect participation grade requires regular and meaningful engagement in all class discussions.

6. *In-class work and homework:* This category includes:

- a. Leading discussion twice during the semester (discussion leader assignments will be made in class)
- b. Leading a themed debate (this assignment will be explained in class)
- c. Miscellaneous assignments and activities, TBA.

#### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

D. Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017).

J. Sprague and D. Stuart, *The Speaker's Handbook* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2016).

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (Touchstone, 1990).

Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), E-book available.

Additional readings comprise a variety of scholarly and primary sources and will be posted on Canvas. Reading assignments are due in class on the first class day of each week.

### GRADING

Assignment	Percentage
Homework & In-class work	15%
Participation	10%
Journal assignments	10%
Writing projects (2)	30%
Final research paper	20%
Formal speech	15%
Total	100%

#### Grade distribution:

99%-100% = A+

93%-98% = A

90%-92% = A-

87%-89% = B+

83%-86% = B

80%-82% = B-

77%-79% = C+

70%-76% = C\*

60%-69% = D

<60% = F

*\*CSU does not assign a plus or minus for grades below C+.*

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

CSU's policy on Academic Integrity is found in the University's General Catalog, Section 1.6, pages 8-9: <http://www.catalog.colostate.edu/Content/files/2013/FrontPDF/1.6POLICIES.pdf>. As outlined in this policy, students found responsible for acts of academic dishonesty such as cheating or plagiarism will receive a score of zero on the assignment or evaluation in question, and they may fail the course and face further disciplinary action. In any case of academic dishonesty, the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services will be notified. Citing your sources correctly and completely will help you avoid plagiarism issues. All of your references for this course should use proper CMS citation methods. The CSU Writing Center offers free consultations, and its website provides a number of helpful resources. For CMS citation, see: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=11>. For more information about plagiarism, see: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/plagiarism/students.cfm>.

**COURSE SCHEDULE: TOPICS AND READINGS**

(may be subject to change)

**Weeks 1 through 5 – The Nature and Values of Knowing****Week 1: What is Knowing? (1/21 – 1/23)**

Lecture: What is Knowing?

Video: “The Meaning of Knowledge”

Readings:

1. Wallace Stevens, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”
2. Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?”
3. Gerry Callahan, “Chimera”

**Week 2: How Do We Know and What Are the Challenges of Knowing? (1/28 – 1/30)****PICC Entry Due by Sunday** (Canvas)

Lecture: Nature and Narrative

Video: Kathryn Schulz, *On Being Wrong*, TED Talk[https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn\\_schulz\\_on\\_being\\_wrong?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_on_being_wrong?language=en)

Readings:

1. William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative”
2. *Words that Change the World* – Radiolab Presentation (<http://www.radiolab.org/story/91728-words-that-change-the-world/>)

**Week 3: What Do We Know and How Is It Expressed? (2/4 – 2/6)**

Lecture: Scientific Knowing

Video: “Karl Popper, Science and Pseudoscience”

Readings:

1. Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles,” *Signs* 16, no. 3 (1991).
2. Eula Biss, “The Pain Scale” from *Seneca Review*, 2005.

**Week 4: Who Owns Ways of Knowing? (2/11 – 2/13)**

Lecture: Knowledge, Power, and Foucault

Video: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” TED Talk

**Homework: Take at least one Implicit Association Test:**<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.

Readings:

1. Michael Foucault, “Power/Knowledge.”
2. Eli Clare, *Exile and Stones* excerpt.
3. Podcast: “Radio Replay: The Mind of the Village,” *Hidden Brain*, <https://www.npr.org/2018/03/09/591895426/the-mind-of-the-village-understanding-our-implicit-biases>.

**Week 5: What are the Purposes of Knowing? (2/18 – 2/20)**

Lecture: The Archeology of Knowledge

Video: Wade Davis, “The Worldwide Web of Belief and Ritual,” TED Talk,

[https://www.ted.com/talks/wade\\_davis\\_on\\_the\\_worldwide\\_web\\_of\\_belief\\_and\\_ritual#t-1136462](https://www.ted.com/talks/wade_davis_on_the_worldwide_web_of_belief_and_ritual#t-1136462)

Readings:

1. Richard Feynman, “The Value of Science”
2. Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, Chapter II
3. Primo Levi, “The Sorcerers”

## Weeks 6 and 7 – Ownership and Integration of Environmental Knowledge

### Week 6: Knowing Nature (2/25 – 2/27)

First Critical Analysis of Readings Due by Sunday (Canvas)

Reading: Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

### Week 7: Environmental Knowledge and Power (3/3 – 3/5)

Lecture: Politics, culture, and the history of conservation

Debate: Nature preserves should be made more accessible.

Readings:

1. Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 87-104.
2. Arun Agrawal, “Environmentality,” *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 2 (2005): 161-190.
3. Tiya Miles, “Black Bodies, Green Spaces,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/15/opinion/sunday/black-bodies-green-spaces.html>.

### Week 8: Preserving Nature and Wildlife (3/10 – 3/12)

Final Research Project Topic & Abstract Due by Sunday (Canvas)

Lecture: The development of national parks in Africa

Debate: Game parks represent an effective way to manage and preserve wildlife.

Readings:

1. Rachel Slater, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Contested Livelihoods in Qwaqwa National Park, South Africa,” *The Geographical Journal* 168, no. 2 (2002): 116–29.
2. Raf de Bont, “‘Primitives’ and Protected Areas: International Conservation and the ‘Naturalization’ of Indigenous People, ca. 1910-1975,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76, no. 2 (2015): 215–36.
3. “The Rhino Hunter,” Radiolab Podcast: <http://www.radiolab.org/story/rhino-hunter/>.

## Weeks 9 and 10 – Case Studies in Environmental Knowledge and Ignorance

### Week 9: Nuclear Energy and Fukushima (3/24 – 3/26)

Lecture: Japanese environmental history and culture

Debate: Nuclear energy should be pursued as an alternative energy source.

Readings:

1. Simon Avenell, “From Fearsome Pollution to Fukushima: Environmental Activism and the Nuclear Blind Spot in Contemporary Japan,” *Environmental History* 17, no. 2 (2012): 244–76.
2. Sara B. Pritchard, “An Envirotechnical Disaster: Nature, Technology, and Politics at Fukushima,” *Environmental History* 17, no. 2 (2012): 219–243. <https://doi.org/10.1093/envhis/ems021>.

### Week 10: Human Environmental Impact and the Global South (3/31 – 4/2)

Lecture: The green revolution in India

Debate: The benefits of the green revolution outweigh its costs.

Video: “Mythology of the Green Revolution”

Readings:

1. Peter Gwin, “The Ship Breakers,” *National Geographic Magazine* (May 2014).
2. Simone M. Müller, “The ‘Flying Dutchmen’: Ships’ Tales of Toxic Waste in a Globalized World,” *RCC Perspectives*, no. 1 (2016): 13–20.
3. Vandana Shiva, “Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis,” *Alternatives Journal (AJ) - Canada’s Environmental Voice* 35, no. 3 (June 2009): 18–23.

**Week 11: Anthropogenic Climate Change (4/7 – 4/9)**

Lecture: The history and science of climate change

Video: *Climate Refugees*

Debate: We all need to work actively and immediately to address human-caused climate change.

Readings:

1. John McNeill, “Can History Help Us with Global Warming?” *Climatic Cataclysm: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Climate Change*, edited by Kurt M. Campbell (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2008).
2. Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, “Chapter 6: The Denial of Global Warming,” in *Merchants of Doubt* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), pp. 169-215.

**Week 12: Environmental Knowledge and Ignorance in Action (4/14 – 4/16)**

Reading Journals Due

Final Research Writing Projects Due by Sunday (Canvas)

Video: *Merchants of Doubt*

Reading: Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago, 2017).

**Weeks 13 and 14: Student Presentations**

**Week 15: Conclusion and Wrap Up (5/5 – 5/7)**

Second Critical Analysis of Readings Due by Sunday (Canvas)