

IE HUMANITIES

IE University

Professor: **DANIEL LEWIS WUEBBEN**

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Degree course: FIRST

Semester: 2^o

Category: COMPULSORY

Number of credits: 6.0

Language: English

PREREQUISITES

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Many of us have wild experiences; less often are we immersed in nature, engulfed by wilderness, existing beyond the clear imprint of human activity. Nevertheless, real and imagined wilderness has powerfully shaped modern art, philosophy, literature, and environmentalism. Indeed, in this age of anthropogenic climate change, the remaining biological diversity of wild spaces offers glimmers of hope that humankind might again be part of a balanced, sustainable ecosystem. Yet how is wilderness recognized and defined? What is “wild” about modern wilderness areas? What social, cultural, and ecological values does wilderness preserve and project? For whom is wilderness demarcated and who reaps its benefits? And finally, how is wilderness written and how might our care and creation of wilderness balance with the ongoing capture and commodification of the natural world?

In this course, we will search for answers and explore Wilderness writ large. We will investigate how wilderness has been constructed through a range of creative and academic texts: eye-witness reports, travel narratives, landscape paintings, nature novels, philosophical essays, ecological manifestos, peer-reviewed journal articles, etc. Through reading, listening to, engaging with, and discussing diverse perspectives of wilderness, we will further develop our collective knowledge and be better prepared to engage the corresponding science, actors, politics, and futures that impact wilderness in this age of startling environmental change. We will also take excursions to sites near the Segovia campus to explore, observe, and, ideally, commune with the wild.

Course work will include short weekly readings, short reading responses, a mid-term exam, reading a novel as part of a “wilderness book club,” and a final essay of approximately 1,250 words.

IE IMPACT- HUMANITIES is the first Pillar course in the IE Impact Learning Journey.

IE IMPACT is a multi-bachelor, multi-school mandatory academic program for all IEU students whose mission is to foster the skills, mindsets, and knowledge we at IE University believe our future graduates need to develop into leaders of positive change.

IE IMPACT includes three “pillar courses”: the Humanities, Technology and Entrepreneurship. It culminates in a fourth, hands-on course called the IE Challenge, whose design embodies IE’s value of Diversity and its commitment to Sustainability.

The IE Impact Learning Journey aims to help IEU students transform into leaders of positive change by developing:

- humanistic approaches to interpersonal relations, decision-making and critical thinking;
- familiarity with the technologies that are applied to solve some of the world's greatest challenges, as well as understanding the implications of applying such technologies;
- entrepreneurial mindsets, know-how, and skills to identify and solve problems worth solving, and to create validated business models that enable solutions to be enduring and scalable;
- a curiosity and an awareness about how sustainability-driven enterprises are sources of positive change; and
- adaptive leadership skills, as well as personal and team-based skills to foster innovation through diversity.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

The course will focus on the development of the following skills:

- Development of analytical, critical, and creative thinking.
- Comprehensive reading of complex texts.
- Writing and argumentation.
- Research and information competence.
- Sensitivity to other cultures and human experiences.

Upon completion of this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Understand wilderness as ecosystem and a social construct
- Recognize some of the main approaches to the wilderness, including some of the values it offers particular groups and cultures
- Differentiate, analyze and evaluate the key terms in wilderness debates.
- Evaluate different socio-historical approaches to wilderness.
- Read a novel that touches on wilderness themes and actively participate in discussion
- Compose meaningful, ethical, and conscious arguments about specific aspects of wilderness

METHODOLOGY

The course will be taught employing IE's Liquid Learning methodology, which combines three essential elements for a complete and dynamic learning experience: synchronous interactions, asynchronous interactions and individual inquiry and discovery. Synchronous Interaction is learning that happens in live, in real-time. For example, attending classes (lectures, discussions, labs, studios) in-person or virtually, working with classmates on team projects in a work-room or video-conference platform, or getting help and feedback from professors in-person or online. Asynchronous Interaction and Individual Inquiry and Discovery are learning experiences that happen interactively and asynchronously using collaboration tools and digital platforms.

When we meet face to face, I expect you to be present, both in body and attention. We'll be working with complex issues and sometimes difficult texts. This means you can expect me to be encouraging and supportive as you explore new ideas. You can also expect me to challenge you take fresh perspectives and to back up your arguments with textual evidence. During lectures and class discussions, we'll each work on active listening and, when appropriate, we will return to the text at hand.

Teaching methodology	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	23.33 %	35 hours
Discussions	20.0 %	30 hours
Exercises	16.67 %	25 hours

Group work	13.33 %	20 hours
Other individual studying	26.67 %	40 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150 hours

PROGRAM

SESSIONS 1 - 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Ascending: Dawn Sky](#) Introduction and course overview

During the first session we will preview the course structure, objectives, content, and key deliverables. We will then review some of the overarching concepts and themes in the development of wilderness and share our own experiences with wilderness. These personal experiences will help us in developing keywords to which we will return throughout the course.

Supplemental Reading: The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology

Article: *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology*

SESSIONS 3 - 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Californication](#): Wilderness on the West Coast

During this session we will discuss the opening chapter of Synder's *Practice of the Wild* and Wallace Stegner's "Wilderness Letter." These will help us to discuss two of the common, modern, and sometimes overlapping approaches to wilderness: Creation/Care and Control/Commodification. They will also help us to critique the canonical and often North American and even California-centric views of the environmental movement (which might be epitomized by the Roderick Nash's excellent book, *Wilderness and the American Mind*). Therefore, we'll compare this California view and evaluation of wilderness with European definitions and practices. We will also determine groups and select titles for your "Wilderness Book Club" as well as select two entries from Keywords for Environmental Studies

Read before class:

- 1) "The Practice of the Wild," Gary Synder
- 2) Wallace Stegner's "Wilderness Letter"

Suggested Reading:

<https://wilderness-society.org/european-Wilderness-definition/european-Wilderness-quality-standard-audit-system/>

Technical note: *Wilderness Letter*

Article: *Practice of the Wild*

SESSION 5 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

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Small group activity: Meet with your book club group, selected three of the Keywords for Environmental Studies, and write 500 words about how you interpret them and how they intersect

SESSIONS 6 - 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Society](#): Wilderness and the Colonial Gaze

The romantic concept of a pristine and opulent wilderness constructed by explorers, conquerors, and many early naturalists tended to erase the indigenous communities who lived within and cultivated these landscapes for centuries before they are captured by what is called the “colonial gaze.” In this class, we will explore the ways in which Anglo Europeans perceived “unknown” and “blank” spaces and how wilderness became a site of erasure.

Read before class: Robert Nelson, "Environmental Colonialism: Saving Africa from Africans" in Independent Review and

["Myth of a Wilderness Without Humans"](#)

Article: Environmental Colonialism

Technical note: Myth of Wilderness Without Humans

SESSIONS 8 - 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Eyes Wide Open](#): Seeing Wilderness

What are some of the common features and actions that we adopt when we gaze upon the wilderness? How do painters, poets, documentary filmmakers and writers select, highlight, name, and capture wilderness? In this class we will review how wilderness has been envisioned and what may be erased by the act of looking upon wilderness.

Read before class: Burroughs “The Art of Seeing” and “Wild Spain” by Jan Morris

Book Chapters: Seeing Things

Book Chapters: Wild Spain

SESSION 10 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Small group activity: Purchase your book, set a reading goal, and meet with your book club group to share initial impressions of the book. Together, write a 300 memo of your meeting including the questions each member presented to the group and what you discussed.

SESSIONS 11 - 12 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[The Hunter](#): Ecofeminism and Women in Wilderness

Extending from an ethics of living in the landscape rather than upon it, this class will examine female incursions into the wilderness and what kinds of gender norms and power struggles are central to our understanding of wilderness as a cultural construct.

Read before class: Selection from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard and "There are Colors" by Molly Gloss

Technical note: Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

Article: "There are Colors"

SESSIONS 13 - 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Mother Nature's Son](#): Growth in Wilderness

From *The Jungle Book* to *Into the Wild* to "Semester in the Wild," Western cultures have seemed to fixate on the idea of the innocent child who either is raised in the wilderness or ventures into it as a rite of passage. We'll explore this trope in Western culture and critically examine what, if any, personal growth and development is germane to wilderness.

Read before class: "Wilderness" by Dean Koontz and selection from *The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook

Article: *Wilderness*

Book Chapters: *The New Wilderness*

SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Midterm Exam

SESSIONS 16 - 17 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[S.O.S. \(Mother Nature\)](#): Wilderness and Cli-Fi

Read before class:

[Bathsheba Demuth](#), "The Empty Space Where Normal Once Lived"

and [Ursula Le Guin](#) "The New Atlantis"

SESSIONS 18 - 19 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Animal Needs](#): Beyond Anthropocentrism

Read before class: "Everything is about Animals" Francine Prose, and "Willi" by E.L. "Doctorow"

Book Chapters: *Everything is About Animals*

Book Chapters: "Willi"

SESSION 20 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Small group activity: Conclude or almost conclude reading and prepare your final discussion of the book

SESSIONS 21 - 22 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[\(Nothing But\) Flowers](#): Ecotourism's promise and peril

We may have noble intentions for wilderness exploration and conservation, and yet what is "ethical" wilderness and animal tourism? In this week, we'll review some common ecotourist destinations (Botswana safari, Galapagos islands, Great Barrier Reef, Ecuador, Costa Rica, etc.) and understand what experts say about the personal benefits and potential ecological impacts of our journeys to see wild animals and places.

Read before class: Poul, Adamson, et al "[Humanities for the Environment—A Manifesto for Research and Action](#)"

Podcast: "[Ethical Wildlife Tourism](#)" at *Into the Wilderness*

SESSIONS 23 - 24 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

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Class excursion TBD

SESSION 25 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Small group activity Finalize your book club discussion and prepare presentation

SESSIONS 26 - 27 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Sprawl II](#): Book Club Presentations (8 minutes for each group)

SESSIONS 28 - 29 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Peer Review Day

Before this session you will submit full drafts of your final, 1,200-word essay for Peer Review

SESSION 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

[Peak](#): Submit Final Essay and Course Recap

EVALUATION CRITERIA

I. PREPARATION, PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE LEARNING

ATMOSPHERE (15%): Students are expected to participate in class and to actively contribute to enrich its intellectual climate. The participation grade will be based on the quality and quantity of class contributions, on the engagement with the readings and assignments, on class attendance and the overall attitude in class.

II. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT (30%): This includes all graded assignments done as homework or asynchronous sessions. Students who do not submit at least 50% of the assignments will not be able to pass the course.

III. MIDTERM EXAM (20%): Students will be tested on their familiarity with the readings and their ability to use the theories to analyze current cases through an open-book exam. Further instructions will be provided in class.

IV. BOOK CLUB PRESENTATION (15%): At the beginning of the course, students will be placed into groups of 4-5 and select a novel to read together. They will then meet synchronously in lieu of our own asynchronous meetings. Students will be required to submit discussion questions before the meetings and, when they finish the book, make a presentation to the class.

V. FINAL ESSAY (20%): Students will need to write a 4-page research paper about a topic of their choice related to Wilderness. Further instructions will be provided in class.

Wilderness Book Club; Possible Selections (Each group will select ONE book to purchase and read)

Theme: Care/Creation of Wilderness

“Our nature is all nature – wild, mysterious, and full of grace”- Donna Seaman

1. My Antonia, Willa Cather
2. Ceremony, Leslie Marmon Silko
3. Surfacing, Barbara Kinglover
4. The Living Mountain, Nan Shepard
5. Independent People by Halldór Laxness
6. The Wild Places, Robert McFarlane

7. Stonefish, Keri Hulme
8. Lost in the Taiga, Vasily Peskov
9. All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis, edited by Ayana Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson

Theme:Controlling/Commodifying Wilderness

“Plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men; the tame for our use and provision; the wild, at least for the greater part, for our provision also, or for some other advantageous purpose, as furnishing us with clothes, and the like.”—Aristotle

1. The Word for World is Forest, Ursula Le Guin
2. The Beach, Alex MacDonald
3. Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail, Cheryl Strayed
4. Blood Meridian, Cormac McCarthy
5. Ministry for the Future, Kim Stanley Robison
6. The Vorrrh, Brian Catling
7. The River, Peter Heller

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
Final Exam	20 %	
Group Presentation	15 %	
Midterm Exam	20 %	
Preperatio and Participation	15 %	
Continous Evaluation	30 %	

PROFESSOR BIO

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Daniel Wuebben holds a Phd from the City University of New York Graduate Center and has held full-time teaching positions at the City College Center for Worker Education, the University of California Santa Barbara, and the University of Nebraska Omaha, where he co-founded the Nebraska Post-Secondary Prison Education Project. His creative non-fiction and academic research have appeared in publications such as MAKE: A Literary Magazine, Victorian Literature and Culture, Energy Research and Social Science, Symplok?, and Sustainability, among others. His research and writing in the history of technology and energy humanities extend from two publications on Nikola Tesla and his first book, Power-Lined: Electric, Landscape, and the American Mind (University of Nebraska Press, 2019). In Spain, he has held a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship with a project focused on multimodal communication and energy communities. He is the manager of the Communication Working Group of the International Smart Grid Action Network and he teaches writing at IE University and NYU-Madrid.

OTHER INFORMATION