“We are the most dangerous species of life on the planet, and every other species, even the earth itself, has cause to fear our power to exterminate. But we are also the only species which, when it chooses to do so, will go to great effort to save what it might destroy.” ~Wallace Stegner

WHY THIS COURSE?

Parks and protected areas have a proven track record for conserving species, habitats, and ecosystems around the world. Yet parks are the focus of hotly contested debates among conservationists. How are park boundaries drawn, and who decides--biologists, politicians, indigenous leaders, oil companies? Who creates park rules and regulations, and who enforces them? Should people be allowed to live in parks? Which people, and under what circumstances? If people are removed from parks, should they be compensated? How and by whom? What happens to lands and resources outside of parks?

WHAT WILL WE LEARN?

Through reading, writing, lecture, and lots of discussion, we will:

★ Discuss the ways in which protected areas reflect human values about nature;
★ Identify stakeholders in and around protected areas, and explore the ways in which their interests either conflict or coincide with each other; and,
★ Evaluate social, economic, cultural, and ecological trade-offs of approaches to conservation.
★ Interpret the above points through a diversity of cultural, personal, and disciplinary lenses.

HOW WILL WE LEARN?

Parks are relevant to all of us, whether it’s because they protect the water we drink, the mountains we climb, the wildlife we hunt, or the landscapes we photograph. In some way or another, all of us are connected to parks, and all of us have important perspectives to contribute to this class. With that in mind, everyone will be responsible for what we learn and discuss throughout the semester. I will begin some classes with a lecture, and then encourage each of you to jump in with your own perspectives, questions, and analyses of the readings. Other days will be devoted entirely to discussion. This class aims to foster an active learning environment. So, if you prefer just listening, this class may not be for you!

WHAT'S EXPECTED?

1. **Reaction papers:** In addition to reading the assigned material, you will be responsible for preparing a total of five reaction papers. These will be due weekly at the beginning of Tuesday classes. In 500-600 words each, these papers summarize your thoughts about the readings, including any conclusions you have made or key points you feel warrant discussion. Please also include a provocative question for the class and a sentence or two about why you would like to hear the question discussed. We will use your writings to fuel our discussions.
2. **Book Review:** Each of you will write a review of Alston Chase’s book, Playing God in Yellowstone. Your review will explain what the book is about, what the author attempts to achieve, and what you think about it. Please start reading the book early in the semester! The review will be due on Nov. 12, and we will spend that week discussing your reactions.

3. **In-class participation:** You are responsible for completing all of the assigned readings and coming to class prepared to discuss the materials in a well-informed and analytical manner. Regular attendance is important and excessive absences (more than 2-3 classes) will result in a lower grade.

4. **Group Project:** Increasingly, parks around the world are “co-managed” by alliances of actors who share different backgrounds and perspectives. One goal in our class is to mirror that process. You will have the opportunity to work in a group with your peers to evaluate resource management in a protected area of your choice anywhere in the world. I will provide details about the project in the second week of class.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>5 Reaction Papers</td>
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<td>Book review</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Group Project</td>
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<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
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Grading: A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69, F=below 60%.

*Writing Quality:* Failure to earn a passing average grade on the writing requirements precludes the assignment of 'W' credit, regardless of a passing grade for the rest of the course.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

All other articles and chapters will be available throughout the semester in the TAMU ecampus website (accessed either through your Howdy portal at [http://howdy.tamu.edu](http://howdy.tamu.edu) or by going straight to [http://ecampus.tamu.edu](http://ecampus.tamu.edu)).

**RECOMMENDED (OPTIONAL) TEXTS:**


WEEKLY TOPICS & READINGS

Sept. 2, 4: PEOPLE AND NATURE: In the first week, we will set the stage for our discussions about protected areas. How are ecosystems and social systems connected? In what ways is nature a social construction?

What is a “W” Course? (http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/certifying-a-w-or-c-course/checklist-of-w-course-requirements)

Reading:

VIDEO: Why Truly Innovative Science Demands a Leap into the Unknown. “While studying for his PhD in physics, Uri Alon thought he was a failure because all his research paths led to dead ends. But, with the help of improv theater, he came to realize that there could be joy in getting lost. A call for scientists to stop thinking of research as a direct line from question to answer, but as something more creative. It's a message that will resonate, no matter what your field.” (http://www.ted.com/talks/uri_alon_why_truly_innovative_science_demands_a_leap_into_the_unknown#t-276055)

Sept. 9, 11: AMERICA’S BEST IDEA: Parks are one kind of interface between social systems and ecosystems, or between people and nature. This week and next, we’ll read and discuss the history of parks in the United States, with a particular eye to values about untrammelled wilderness and scenic beauty.

Writing: Reaction papers: Expectations and guidelines

Readings:

Sept. 16, 18: SEEING THE CULTURE IN NATURE: Roderick Nash once said, “Wilderness is a state of mind. It doesn’t really exist. It was created by civilization.” This week, we’ll discuss this idea in depth.

Writing: Reading critically as preparation for writing critically

Readings:

Optional Reading:

Sept. 23, 25: WHAT DO WE VALUE? Protected areas are created for a variety of management goals that reflect the needs and desires of a variety of people. Though the purposes of parks may change over time, they always reflect certain values over others. This week we will explore a range of stakeholder values upheld by protected areas, focusing special attention on biodiversity conservation.

Writing: Getting started through free-writing
Readings:


Sept. 30, Oct. 2: CONFLICTING VALUES This week we continue our discussions of stakeholder values. Moving beyond management considerations, we consider challenges to ethics, spiritual and religious beliefs, knowledge systems, and environmental justice.

Writing: Research sources, citations & references

No Readings. FILM: In the Light of Reverence “Devils Tower, The Four Corners, Mount Shasta--All places of extraordinary beauty--and impassioned controversy--as Indians and non-Indians struggle to co-exist with very different ideas about how the land should be used. For Native Americans, the land is sacred and akin to the world's greatest cathedrals. For others, the land should be used for industry and recreation. The film portrays the struggles of the Lakota in the Black Hills, the Hopi in Arizona and the Wintu in California to protect their sacred sites” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/inthelightofreverence/)

Oct. 7, 9: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND INTELLECTUAL POWER Environmental concerns affect people of different racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds differentially. This week, we explore the inequalities and ask: Who benefits from, contributes to, and pays for conservation?

Writing: Defining audience and message

Reading:


Oct. 14, 16: USE IT OR LOSE IT! Some conservationists have argued that unless people are allowed, or even encouraged, to use natural resources and derive value from them—i.e., for hunting, fishing, tourism, logging, etc, there are too few incentives to protect these resources. This week, we discuss the idea that exploiting natural resources may be the best way to protect them.

Writing: Drafting and revising

Reading:


Oct. 21, 23: EXPORTING YELLOWSTONE? This week we consider what happens when the “Yellowstone model” of parks is applied to different social, cultural, and economic settings. How should management goals worked differently in places where people depend directly on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods?

Writing: Group project, team writing

Readings:


Oct. 28, 30: ECOTOURISM AND CONSERVATION Ecotourism has been called a “win-win” solution for meeting people’s economic needs while also providing support and incentives for natural resources management. This week, we’ll examine how ecotourism works for sustainable development in protected areas of Brazil and Peru.
**Writing:** Peer review

**Readings:**

**Nov. 4, 6:** COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION Many indigenous and local peoples around the world have become managers or co-managers of parks and reserves within their own communities. This week, we explore several of examples, and assess the pros and cons of this model.

**Readings:**

**Optional Readings:**

**FILM:** *Milking the Rhino* “The clichés of nature documentaries ignore a key landscape feature: villagers just off-camera, who navigate the dangers and costs of living with wildlife. The Maasai of Kenya and Namibia's Himba - two of Earth's oldest cattle cultures - are in the midst of upheaval. After a century of "white man conservation," which displaced them and fueled resentment towards wildlife, they are vying to share the wildlife-tourism pie. Community-based conservation, which tries to balance the needs of wildlife and people, has been touted as "win-win.' The reality is more complex. Charting the collision of ancient ways with Western expectations, *Milking the Rhino* tells intimate, hopeful and heartbreaking stories of people facing deep cultural change” ([http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1273225/plotsummary](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1273225/plotsummary))

**Nov. 11, 13:** TBD

**Writing:** Group projects

**Nov. 18, 20:** BOOK REVIEW AND DISCUSSION We devote the entire week to our discussion of Alston Chase’s book, *Playing God in Yellowstone*

**Nov. 25, 27:** REVIEW and PEER REVIEW

no readings

**THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

**Dec. 2, 4:** GROUP PRESENTATIONS

**Dec. 9:** EVALUATION

no readings
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room B118 of Cain Hall or call (979) 845-1637. For additional information visit http://disability.tamu.edu.

Academic Integrity
“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”
Know the Aggie Honor Code: http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/.

Academic Misconduct
Texas A&M University student rules Section 20 outlines official policies on scholastic dishonesty and academic misconduct (http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/). Section 20 declares, “It is the responsibility of students and instructors to help maintain scholastic integrity at the University by refusing to participate in or tolerate scholastic dishonesty.” Further, Section 20 defines a variety of categories of academic misconduct. I strongly encourage you to read the rules and definitions; they are a good resource of critical information (http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/Student%20Rules/definitions.html). You are responsible for complying with them; ignorance of these rules is not an acceptable excuse for not doing so.

University Writing Center
Each student at Texas A&M University pays for the services of the University Writing Center (http://writingcenter.tamu.edu). Not only does the Center’s we site have many helpful tips for improving your writing, but the consultants at the University Writing Center are well-trained and would be happy to help you improve your writing skills. You may find all the help that you need on the web site or you may schedule appointments with writing consultants at the two Center locations: 1) on main campus on the second floor of Evans Library and 2) on the 2nd floor of the West Campus Library. You may schedule appointments using their web site or by telephone (458-1455).