

NRSM 373 Wilderness & Civilization

Meeting times: Thursdays from 10:00 – 11:50 plus multiple Friday and weekend field trips.

Meeting location: Schreiber 303

Instructor

Charles B. Hayes, PhD. – Adjunct Instructor in Philosophy

Office: Eck Liberal Arts Building – LA153

E-mail: charles.hayes@mso.umt.edu

Office Hours: M, W 1:30-3pm; Th 2-4pm

Course Description

The idea of **wilderness** is the most influential, as well as the most *unruly*, concept in the development of modern environmental governance. It is not a simple idea. It is a collection of many different values, of many different hopes, of diverse social and political critiques, multiple bodies of scientific work, and 200 years of violently fraught, exasperatingly tedious, and globally influential policy and management practices that have literally shaped our present landscape. To understand what different people are talking about when they talk about wilderness is, undoubtedly, the best introduction to the history, perennial debates, and likely future of global conservation. And that's what this class aims to do: Introduce the history, perennial debates, and possible future of the concept of wilderness.

This course will always keep an eye on real world environmental governance and policy questions, but our central focus will be on the history of ideas, values, and hopes that give life to these policy matters. That is, we will study the Philosophy around the actual practice and politics of wilderness. Our investigations can be grouped into four main sections:

1. The Wilderness Society
 - All origins have origins, but we have to start somewhere. The wilderness society is not at all the beginning of the concept of wilderness, but they did go a long way to coalesce a vision of the purpose and practical implementation of wilderness management that remains hugely influential. With the many developments in the concept of wilderness, however, less time is given to the actual writings, hopes, and motivations of these folks. We will read a few of their foundational works and ask: What did they really want? And why?
2. Diverse Indigenous and Global Perspectives on wilderness, Wilderness, and wildness.
 - There is no single indigenous critique or approval of wilderness. And the goal of this section is not to study indigenous views separately from everything else. Instead, it is to demonstrate the diverse and complex ways that multiple traditions continue to

influence, critique, broaden, strengthen, and transform the practices and policies around wilderness.

3. Perennial Philosophical and Policy debates

- There are certain concepts and debates that all academic environmental students/professionals need some familiarity with in order to navigate the perennial debates of their fields. We're going to spend some time reading some of the most influential philosophical articles on the concept of wilderness and wildness. Odds are you'll have to cite a few of these in other classes. Best to really understand them!

4. Re-Wilding and the future of Global Conservation

- So, what's re-wilding? How is it related to the concept of wilderness? Folks like David Attenborough and E. O. Wilson, and organizations from National Geographic all the way up to the European Union have all recently said the future of global conservation must centralize rewilding. Here we will identify what current rewilding is and how it relates to the history of the concept of wilderness we have covered.

The course meets for weekly discussion/lecture sessions, in addition to periodic Friday and weekend overnight field trips.

Readings

All readings will be posted on Moodle in pdf format. Sometimes I will print copies and hand them out to you when I really, really want to make sure you read them. This course is taught in a *seminar style*. That means it is not designed to be a lecture where I dump a lot of information on you (though I will offer some). Instead, it is a time set aside for organized discussion and exploration of texts. The quality of the course depends upon the time and thought each of you puts into preparation for class each week. Please read in advance, outline the texts, and prepare questions, comments, challenges, and frustrations to share with the class.

I will also assign short Reflection Papers (see below) on some readings. The purpose of these short papers is to focus your reading and preparation for class, as well as sharpen your skills as a reader and communicator.

Assessment and Grading

Attendance and Participation 15 points

Reflection Papers 60 points (20 each x3)

Final Paper 25 points

Total = 100 points

Attendance and participation

Attendance and participation are essential for success and contribute to your grade. Also, this is an easy way to ensure you get maximum points. I don't grade by how much you talk, or anything like that – only

that you are present and ready to explore ideas. Missing more than two scheduled class meetings (*unexcused* absences) will result in a 1-point deduction per missed meeting.

Reflection papers

Over the course of the semester, I will provide THREE prompts for Reflection Papers. These are short papers (~1,000 words) where you will be asked to synthesize readings (i.e., compare, contrast, or fruitfully intertwine their positions) and offer some sort of evaluation or application. This evaluation could involve an argument for or against, it could show how the readings apply to some current event, or it could offer a suggestion for improving or expanding some position, etc.

But here is a much simpler way of describing what I'm asking:

- Step 1: What did these authors say?
- Step 2: Why does it matter?

Each prompt will provide more specificity on what readings and specific issues to include.

These reading responses are graded according to three criteria:

- *Clear, Academic Writing* - I ask that reflections are written in clear, grammatically correct academic prose, including correct citations. You may use any professional citation style, just make sure to cite specific page numbers whenever you mention a work or an author's idea. Citation helps you better ensure you are accurately representing the author.
- *Accuracy and Depth* – The main purpose of these reflections is to reinforce your understanding of the weeks' readings. As such, a part of your response will be to clearly summarize a portion of what we've read, or to compare the arguments of two authors. This is hard work.

This is the GOAL: to represent a position so well that its own author would readily agree that you have summarized their point.

Reflections that misrepresent authors or are only superficially related to the author's main points will be marked down.

- *Relevance of Evaluation/Application* – Part of each prompt will be open-ended questions that ask for your own opinions. You have lots of freedom in how to answer these sections. Put thought into it. This is where the best final paper ideas develop. Here I will be looking for developed thoughts that are clearly related to the readings. This could be a criticism, a concern, a comparison with another work, an application to some real-life situation, or an inspired idea of how to develop an idea further.

Final Paper

The final paper is a relatively short (2,000 – 3,000 words) philosophical paper on major themes of the course. I will provide full instructions and examples of possible types of paper mid-way through the semester.

But note! A philosophical paper can be MANY different things. *You have a lot of freedom – and freedom is often the hardest aspect of writing a philosophical paper.* This whole semester I want you to be thinking What you most want to say about wilderness/wildness/Wilderness. The first step in the hardest, finding what YOU want to say.

Final Papers will be graded with the same three criteria as Response Papers:

- Clear, Academic Writing
- Accuracy and Depth in Presenting Author's Positions
- Relevance of Evaluation/Application