SDEV 4350: Public Lands in the American West
Spring 2018
Tuesday / Thursday 4:10-5:25

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Office: Interchurch Building, Suite 401
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00 and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Sarah Montgomery
Sem2232@columbia.edu

Course Description:
Environmental issues in the American West are dramatically different from the rest of the country due in large part to the prevalence of public lands. Most western states have a land base that is at least 35% public, and competing interests vie for limited resources and navigate a complex bureaucracy. This course will focus on the federal agencies authorized to make management decisions across those lands: the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Park Service, and others. We will explore the legal and regulatory framework that guides land use decisions, and study enduring resource access conflicts. Pulling from both academic scholarship and the gray literature in political science, environmental sciences, law, and organizational behavior, this course provides an interdisciplinary overview of governance challenges in the American West.

Organized into four parts, the course will unfold as follows. Part I reviews the theory and origins of our public lands system. We will explore political and ecological history, as well as contributions from psychology and anthropology that help flesh out the layered values associated with the collective choice to remove so much land from the private estate. Part II brings us to the nuts and bolts of the system, and we will learn about the agencies responsible for managing public lands with a focus on the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Laws and regulations that guide these agencies will also be covered in this section of the course. Part III will focus on stakeholders, including environmental groups, industry groups, local communities, and, indeed, American taxpayers. With so many competing interests, these groups have been active participants in management, and we will consider the various tactics these groups use to advance their goals. Part IV brings everything together in a more detailed study of key controversies on public lands, including energy development, recreation access, Wilderness designation, wildfire management, and endangered species management.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will gain a toolkit for understanding and evaluating environmental policy in the American West. With a focus on public lands, students will understand the federal agencies
charged with their management as well as the scope of conflict those managers face. By learning about the most important laws in play, students will be able to identify legal mandates, regulatory interpretation, and political values. Finally, students will develop their own opinions about pervasive controversial issues.

**Materials:**

Students should get a one year digital subscription to High Country News. ($14.95.). To sign up, click "student subscription" at [https://www.hcn.org/subscribe](https://www.hcn.org/subscribe)

All other reading material will be made available on our course reserve page.

**Activities:**

*Participation:* This is an interactive class and regular participation is expected. Please come to class having completed the assigned reading and prepared to engage in discussion and class activities. Additionally, graduate students in the class will each sign up to lead discussion on one of the assigned readings during the term. Missing more than two classes is a potential problem. Please be in touch with me if something is preventing you from coming to class or participating fully.

*Quizzes:* There will be four tests during the semester, one at the end of each thematic section. Material from class discussion and assigned reading will be covered. Each test will include multiple choice and short answer questions.

*Debate:* Each student will be assigned to a team with a position on a controversial issue facing public lands in the West. The last two weeks of the semester, the class will stage debates on these topics. Leading up to the debate, we will have a series of sub-deadlines where teams will submit research and outlines.

*Essay:* In lieu of a final exam, students will submit a final essay. There will be a choice of topics, and students will be asked to analyze the intersection of culture, policy, governance and law. The essay will be 8-10 pages. More details about this assignment will be provided in class.

**Grading Breakdown**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>(4 x 10% each) 40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Academic Integrity:
As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited. In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent. Should we detect any student misconduct, we will report the incidents swiftly to the Directors of Undergraduate Studies, in accordance to Columbia Procedures. Infractions may result in grade reductions, written warnings, disciplinary probation, suspension, or dismissal. Please familiarize yourselves with the Academic Integrity Policy at Columbia:
http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity

Accommodation and Accessibility:
In order to best serve students, we ask that students with learning-related disabilities reach out to the Office of Disability Services. Please visit the Columbia site that describes how best to navigate the system to obtain individualized services:
http://www.college.columbia.edu/rightsandresponsibilities
**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Part I: Origins and Theory**

**Tues. 1/16**
Introduction to course, review of syllabus.

**Thurs. 1/18**
Theory: Managing Commonly Owned Natural Resources

*Read for today:*

**Tues. 1/23**
History and Emergence of a Public Lands System in the U.S., pt. 1

*Watch for today:*

**Thurs. 1/25**
History and Emergence of a Public Lands System in the U.S., pt. 2

*Read for today:*

**Tues. 1/30**
History and Emergence of a Public Lands System in the U.S., pt. 3


**Thurs. 2/1**
Placing the U.S. Public Lands System in Context

*Read for today:*
Tues. 2/6
Debate topic assignments
Read for today:
- High Country News. Skim back issues, read the last few current issues, get acquainted with current environmental issues in the American West.
- NOTE: This is a particularly important day to attend class. If you miss, you will be assigned to a debate team.

Thurs. 2/8
Test #1

Part II: Agencies, Laws and Regulations

Tues. 2/13
Read for today:

Thurs. 2/15
Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act and The Wilderness Act
Read for today:

Tues. 2/20
National Environmental Policy Act
Read for today:

Thurs. 2/22
National Forest Management Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act
Read for today:

Tues. 2/27
Endangered Species Act
Read for today:
• U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. ESA Basics: 40 Years of Conserving Endangered Species.

Thurs. 3/1
Test #2

Part III: Stakeholders

Tues. 3/6
State and Federal Government
Read for today:
• Goad, Jessica and Tom Kenworthy. 2013. State Efforts to ‘Reclaim’ Our Public Lands. Center for American Progress.
Due today:
• Preliminary outline and bibliography for debate

Thurs. 3/8
Local Communities and Tribes
Read for today:
• Western Values Project, 2015. The Economics of Sagebrush: What Five Priority Sagebrush Landscapes Contribute to Western Economies.

SPRING BREAK 3/12-16
Tues. 3/20
Scientists
Read for today:

Thurs. 3/22
Environmental Groups
- Visit websites: Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Wilderness Society, others. Determine which public lands issues the groups care about, how they frame their approach, and what their strategies are.

Tues. 3/27
Test #3

Part IV: Key Issues & Controversies

Thurs. 3/29
Water
GUEST SPEAKER: Adam Schempp, Director, Western Water Program, Environmental Law Institute
Read for today:

Tues. 4/3
Oil & Gas Development
Read for today:
Thurs. 4/5
Wildfire
Read for today:

Due today:
  • Reading assignment for debate teams

Tues. 4/10
Logging, Grazing and Mining
Read for today:

Thurs. 4/12
Debate #1

Tues. 4/17
Debate #2

Thurs. 4/19
Debate #3

Tues. 4/24
Debate #4

Thurs. 4/26
Test #4

Final Essay due: Monday, May 7, 2018, 5 p.m.