

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An examination of the role of environmental organizations in the development and implementation of environmental policy through experiential and academic learning. This is a small class that meets once a week. Through assigned readings, discussion and lectures, we will examine how environmental groups are formed, organized, funded and staffed to fulfill various objectives, and how the role/mission they play in developing and implementing environmental policy has evolved. Students will deepen their understanding of these issues through first-hand experience working on "real world" research for an environmental organization. Each student will be responsible for a final paper examining these issues through the lens of a particular conservation or environmental group, completion of the project for the environmental group partner, and class discussion/participation.

CREDIT HOURS: 4 credit hours. This course follows the College credit hour policy for 4-credit courses. This course meets once weekly for 150 minutes per week. The course also includes weekly independent out of class assignments for 1 hour per week, including preparation to lead or participate in group discussion, assignments (posted on Blackboard), and reflections. Students are expected to spend at least 8 hours per week on community engaged learning project, assigned reading and research and writing the final paper. Length of reading assignments will vary given the complexity of the material assigned.

CLASS DAY/TIME and LOCATION: Wednesdays, 3:25-6:05 pm, Meliora Room 206. *Please note, any online class will be recorded.*

COVID-19: All students must comply with COVID-related requirements for masking and social distancing. Additional requirements may be required for course with laboratory, performance, or other activities that require more direct contact with other students. Instructors should outline these requirement clearly in the syllabus and may also add as Blackboard posting or through other class communications.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS: The class will include weekly required reading assignments, active participation in weekly seminar class, and a group community engaged learning project. The class will culminate in a final paper.

INTERNET/COMPUTING: This class requires standard on-line access and computing (i.e., laptop and internet access). The University describes this as follows: "In general, for a 'standard' online course, students will need a laptop with a webcam, 8GB of memory and 256GB of local storage. Standard would be defined in this case as requiring the student to use Blackboard, library resources, and the web (to access journals, articles, etc.), to have the ability to watch Zoom lectures (synchronously and asynchronously), and potentially be available for use with Zoom proctoring."

OFFICE HOURS & COMMUNICATIONS: I will have office hours on Tuesdays from 2:00-3:00 in my office in Harkness or by zoom. I am also happy to meet by appointment. The best way to contact me is by email: tnoto3@ur.rochester.edu. As needed, I will e-mail you; please be sure to check your e-mail as well as Blackboard. *Any adjustments to the syllabus will be announced in class and on Blackboard.*

TEXTS: Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, Island Press 2005

Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire*, Island Press, 2003

All readings are required. You may purchase new or used books; these books are also on reserve in the library. Articles are available online. Please let me know if you have any difficulty accessing them.

GRADING: Class attendance, participation, homework assignments and any quizzes 20%; group discussion leader: 10%; Community engaged learning project (CEL) project 30% (including CEL project worksheets); CEL project presentation 10%; final paper 30%.

ASSIGNMENTS: Directions will be provided (and posted on Blackboard) for each assignment. Be sure to comply with all instructions, including *minimum* page limits. ***Academic honesty is important; you must include citations, quotation marks, and works cited.*** Points will be deducted for late work unless prior permission is given.

COURSE LEARNING/OUTCOMES: Students will be able to demonstrate a basic foundational understanding of the historical context, purpose, mission, tactics and evolution of conservation and environmental organizations in shaping and implementing U.S. environmental law and policy, and will deepen their understanding through reading assignments, assignments, and active participation in weekly seminar class discussion. Students will gain real world experience working collaboratively on a group community engaged learning project for a local environmental organization providing direct insight and experience in the work of these kinds of organizations. Students will demonstrate the ability to research and write a well-reasoned, well-supported paper analyzing the evolution of an environmental group from its original mission, tactics, staffing, and funding to its present scope/mission, tactics, funding, and staffing or analyzing an assigned case study on how environmental organizations shape environmental policy. Students will have the opportunity to tie together the learning in this class through this examination of these issues through the lens of analyzing a particular environmental group and through their own personal reflections as to the group's relevance to others and themselves as well as the student's thoughtful recommendations to improve the performance and effectiveness of the environmental organization.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES: Students are encouraged to utilize academic support services: the Writing Speaking and Argument Program, <https://writing.rochester.edu> ; Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty

DISABILITY RESOURCES: The University of Rochester, this course, and I are committed to inclusion, and welcome students of all backgrounds and abilities. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students with DACA or undocumented status, to students facing mental health issues, other personal situations, and to students with other kinds of learning needs. Please feel free to let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class or your full participation in this course.

Some resources that might be of use include:

- Office of Disability Resources. (disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall)
- Undocumented/DACA Student Support Contacts

<https://www.rochester.edu/college/ccas/undergraduate/daca/index.html>

- University of Rochester CARE Network <https://www.rochester.edu/care/>

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

Environmentalism, Historical Context and Future of Environmental Movement

Aug 25th Introduction

Lecture: Review the syllabus, expectations for this class, class structure, community engaged learning (CEL) projects and *sign up for class discussion leader*.

Class discussion of the reading: What is an environmentalist? Are you an environmentalist? What are the stereotypes of environmentalists in popular culture? Are they accurate? What is an environmental group? What expectations do we/should we have of these organizations?

Reading:

Lisa Curtis, “Why I’m not an Environmentalist” (The Huffington Post, April 25, 2012)

TNJ Staff, “For Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, It’s Easy Being Green” (The Network Journal, June 19, 2013)

Dr. Elaine Batchlor, “Why I am an Environmentalist” (Los Angeles Sentinel, Jan 17, 2019)

Keith Goetzman, “Not an Environmentalist? You Have Lots of Company” (Utne Reader, June 15, 2011)

Linda Poon, “ ‘Environmentalist’ Doesn’t Just Mean White and Wealthy” (City Lab, Nov. 2, 2018)

Paulina Porizkova, “America Made Me a Feminist” (New York Times, June 10, 2017)

Emma Foehringer Merchant, "How the Environmental Movement Has Changed" (The New Republic, Nov. 29, 2015)

Assignment: Are you an Environmentalist? (on Blackboard). Please email me this assignment before class or hand in a paper copy in class

Sept 1 First Wave: Conservation

Lecture: Conservation movement introduction

Discussion:

1. How do Shabecoff and Jones discuss how colonists and Native Americans understood nature, wilderness and human activity?
2. Why were conservation organizations, like Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Federation and Audubon, formed? What were their goals/objectives?
3. Is wilderness important to preserve, conserve, manage or protect? What role do you think humans should play?
4. Do you think our relationship to nature and wilderness should be defined by cultural norms, laws, or other means?
5. Are hunting and fishing groups conservation organizations?

CEL Project: *assignments*

Reading: *A Fierce Green Fire*, chapters 2-4

Van Jones, "Beyond Eco-Apartheid," [ellabakercenter.org](https://ellabakercenter.org/in-the-news/newsop-ed-news-story/beyond-eco-apartheid), April 30, 2007,
<https://ellabakercenter.org/in-the-news/newsop-ed-news-story/beyond-eco-apartheid>

Sept 8 Conservation and Public and Private Lands

Lecture: Conservation and America's public and private lands

Guest speaker: Bethany Erb, Pheasants Forever

Student Led Discussion:

1. How is Michael Brune reconsidering Sierra Club's founders and past? Why?
2. What is Rewilding? Why is this important? What role is Outdoor Afro playing? How might equity in public access to nature impact what lands are preserved and how they are managed?
3. Should conservation organizations help shape policy for public lands, private lands or both? Why?
4. Are there stewardship obligations we should expect of private landowners?
5. Is equity and access to private land ownership a conservation issue?

Reading:

Michael Brune, "Pulling Down Our Monuments," July 22, 2020

Susanne Rust, Bettina Boxall, Rosanna Xia, “Sierra Club reflects on its racist roots and looks toward a new future,” Los Angeles Times, July 23, 2020

Rachel Bauch, “Rewilding Our Natural and Cultural Pathways” ThriveGlobal June 25, 2020 (interview with Rue Mapp from Outdoor Afro)

Megan Horst, “How Racism Has Shaped the American Farming Landscape” Eater, Jan 25, 2019

Summer Sewell, “There were nearly a million black farmers in 1920. Why have they disappeared?” The Guardian, April 29, 2019

Leah Douglas, “African Americans have lost untold acres of land over the last century” The Nation, June 26, 2017

CEL Project Worksheet 1

Sept 15 Conservation: What’s the future of Conservation Movement?

Lecture: America’s public lands, the Wilderness Act, the Great American Outdoors Act, the Department of the Interior and America’s public lands

Student Led discussion: Return the National Parks to the Tribes?

1. What is Treuer saying about America’s national parks, from the “best idea” to “little islands,” public recreation spots, and as a “crime scene”? What is he saying about the role of Native peoples historically in shaping and tending the land and the role of the land in their cultural and religious life?
2. What is traditional ecological knowledge and why is this growing in importance with groups like The Nature Conservancy and some government agencies?
3. What is Treuer recommending regarding the future of the tribes and the parks and why?
4. How is the Biden Administration planning to work with the tribes on public lands acquisition and management?
5. How do you think the conservation movement and conservation organizations should evolve to meet the challenges of the present and the future?

CEL Project: Check in

Reading:

David Treuer, “Return the National Parks to the Tribes,” The Atlantic Monthly Magazine, May 2021

Judson Berger, “Maybe Handing Over America’s National Parks is a Bad Idea,” National Review, April 24, 2021

Jim Robbins, “How Returning Lands to Native Tribes is Helping Protect Nature,” Yale Environment 360, June 3, 2021

Conservation reflection (Blackboard) due Sept 15
CEL project worksheet 2

Sept 22 Second wave ~ Environmental Movement

Lecture: 1970s Environmental Decade and Introduction to Environmental Movement

Student led discussion:

1. What was the first Earth Day about? Who organized it? Why did it get such a strong turnout? How does the first Earth Day fit in the context of other movements, such as the civil rights, peace and feminist movements?
2. Why and how were EDF and NRDC established? Who founded these organizations?
3. Why did environmental groups spring to life in the 1970s?
4. Is pollution prevention the main focus of the environmental movement and of these groups?
5. What kinds of staff, expertise, tools did these groups need to be effective?

CEL Project: check in

Reading:

A Fierce Green Fire, Chapters 4 & 5

Eliza Griswold, "How Silent Spring Ignited the Environmental Movement," New York Times, Sept 12, 2012

CEL Project Worksheet 3

Sept 29 Environmental justice

Lecture: 1980s and Environmental Justice

Student led discussion:

1. What is environmental justice? Why and how does EJ become a concern in the 1980s?
2. Who were the activists in the Alsen and Emelle case studies and what strategies were most successful?
3. What challenges and opportunities do you see for grassroots and mainstream environmental groups in working on EJ issues?
4. How might EJ be transformative beyond more inclusive staffing and membership? How might this change how groups envision the purpose and goals of their work?

Reading:

Renee Skelton Vernice Miller, "The Environmental Justice Movement" (NRDC, March 17, 2016)

Jedediah Purdy, "Environmentalism was once a social justice movement" (the Atlantic, Dec. 7, 2016)

Linda Villarosa, “The Refinery Next Door” The New York Times Magazine, August 2, 2020

Brentin Mock, “Are There Two Different Versions of Environmentalism, One ‘White,’ One ‘Black’?” (Mother Jones, July 31, 2014)

Dina Gilio-Whitaker, “What Environmental Justice Means in Indian Country” (KCET, Mar. 6, 2017)

Brian Bienkowski, “Contaminated culture: native people struggle with tainted resources, lost identity” (Environmental Health News, Oct. 25, 2012)

YouTube: “The Story of 535: Building an inclusive green economy putting [#FrontlinesFirst](#)”

*Alsen and Emmell case study (Blackboard) due
CEL Project Worksheet 4*

Tools and Tactics of Environmental and Conservation Groups

Oct. 6 Role of Science

Lecture: Relationship between NGO and science

Guest speakers: Dr. Maria Lemke and Krista Kirkham, The Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy

Student led discussion:

1. How and why might science be important to the work of environmental groups?
2. Is science objective and a-political? Are scientists above the political fray?
3. What is “good science”? Academic expertise, data, peer reviewed studies? Observation of indigenous people, farmers, ranchers, birdwatchers? Who decides?
4. Does our understanding of what is “good science” become subjective in a polarized society? Does this undermine its credibility?
5. How would you strike the balance between science and action, between spending money on monitoring and studies and advocacy or on the ground projects?
6. How did TNC use science to guide its land preservation work?

Reading:

Emily Atkin, “It’s Never Been Harder to Be a Climate Scientist” (New Republic, July 27, 2017)

Brian Clark Howard, “Learning from Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change” (National Geographic, Sept. 4 2015)

Science in the Crosshairs (Science Friday, October 14, 2016)

Bill Birchard, *Nature's Keepers: The Remarkable Story of How The Nature Conservancy Became the Largest Environmental Organization in the World* (Jossey-Bass 2005), Ch. 3

CEL worksheet 5

Oct. 13 **Role of Grassroots Activism**

Lecture: Grassroots action

Guest speaker: Clayton Cox (invited)

Student Led discussion:

1. How did citizen science and grassroots community action combine in the Tonawanda coke case? What was at stake? What results did they get?
2. Have you ever participated in grassroots action, such as writing an email or letter, signing a petition, responding to social media or posting, participated in a protest or other grassroots action? Why/why not?
3. What kinds of grassroots action do you think is most effective? Is this a top-down strategy or a bottom-up strategy? What legitimizes grassroots action? What's Astro-turf?

Reading:

Forcing the Spring, chapter 5: Grassroots and Direct Action

“The Power of a Few: Residents use science and community action to stop an illegal polluter” (Citizen Science Community Resources), <https://csresources.org/our-history> (watch the video too)

N.Y. Plant's Neighbors Expose Regulatory Gaps (NPR, Nov. 10, 2011)

Peter Montague, “Why the Environmental Movement is not winning” (Huffington Post Blog, Feb. 29, 2012)

“Is There Any Point to Protesting?” (The New Yorker, Aug. 21, 2017)

CEL Worksheet 6

Oct. 20 **Environmental Litigation**

Watch at least one of the assigned movies: “A Civil Action,” “Erin Brockovich,” or “Dark Waters.” What did you learn about environmental litigation, particularly toxic tort litigation from your movie?

Reading:

Robinson Meyer, “How the U.S. Protects the Environment, from Nixon to Trump” (The Atlantic, Mar 29, 2017)

Depending on your movie, read:

For “Erin Brockovich,” read “Still Toxic After All These Years” Grist, Jan 29, 2019

For “Dark Waters,” read Nathaniel Rich, “The Lawyer Who Became DuPont’s Worst Nightmare” (New York Times Magazine 2016)

For “A Civil Action,” read “A Decade After the Woburn Toxic Waste Case, Chemist Still Ponders Truth, Justice” (Aug. 25, 2000)

<https://www.umass.edu/pubaffs/chronicle/archives/00/08-25/deccheke41.html>

Lecture: role of litigation

Student led discussion of “A Civil Action,” “Erin Brockovich,” and “Dark Waters.”

1. In your movie, who filed litigation and why? What were they hoping to achieve? What kinds of harms were the plaintiffs suffering? Why?
2. What role did government agencies play, if any? What role did environmental groups or activists play, if any?
3. What did watching this movie and reading the accompanying article tell you about the pros and cons of litigation as a tool for environmental change?

CEL Project Worksheet 7

Oct. 27

Money

Guest speaker: David Wolfe, consultant and former EDF scientist (invited)

Class discussion:

1. How do environmental groups get and use money?
2. How do we fund/finance addressing big issues, like climate change at scale?
3. What do you see as the potential and limits of market-based solutions, like investment in natural infrastructure?
4. Are there innovative approaches that could help address big issues, like the biodiversity and climate crises, at scale?

Reading:

A Fierce Green Fire, chapter 12

Sarah Hansen, “*Cultivating the Grassroots: A Winning Approach for Environment and Climate Funders*” (2012)

Background material for David Wolfe’s presentation:

<https://www.edf.org/ecosystems/natural-infrastructure-strengthens-our-climate-resilience>
<https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/content/natural-infrastructure-infographic.pdf>

Nov. 3 **CEL Project presentations**

Power point presentations on group projects. Be sure to email me your Power point presentation before class. **Final group project due.**

No reading assignment; final community engaged learning project is due and in class power point presentation on your project

Nov. 10 **Role of Lobbying and Politics**

Lecture: Agencies, Congress, state legislatures, laws and environmental programs, and role of lobbying by non-profits

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Breitinger, Owner Breitinger & Associates (invited)

Class Discussion:

1. What is the role of lobbying for environmental non-profits? Why do they lobby agencies and legislatures?
2. In a time of strong political polarization, do you think the role, goals and objectives of lobbying for environmental groups should change or is it even more important to continue this work?

Paper: check in regarding paper topics

Reading:

“Fossil Fuel Interests Have Outspent Environmental Advocates 10:1 on Climate Lobbying” (Yale Environment 360, July 19, 2018)

Richard Louv “We Need an NRA for Nature” (Outside Magazine Mar. 9, 2017)

“How Fossil Fuel Lobbyists Used ‘Astroturf’ Front Groups to Confuse the Public” (Union for Concerned Scientists USA, Oct 11, 2017)

Robinson Meyer, “So Has the Green New Deal Won Yet?” (Atlantic Monthly, Nov. 15, 2019)

OpenSecrets.org, “Pro-Environment Groups Outmatched, Outspent in Battle Over Climate Change Legislation”

Ohio Environmental Council, “Tips for Effective Lobbying”; *OpenSecrets.org* – Environment Industry profile; City of Portland, “Ten Principles of Lobbying”

Paper: e-mail me your topic; check-in during class

Future Directions

Nov. 17 **Sustainability and Environmentalism**

Lecture: Sustainability, environmentalism, social entrepreneurs and B Corps

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Young, founder: What's Good: Shop with Purpose (invited)

Paper: check in

Student Led Discussion:

1. What is sustainability? How does this relate to environmentalism? What are the key indicia of sustainability? What is greenwashing? Where are the decision-points for sustainability (shoppers, manufacturers, retailers, supply chain, government, ...?)
2. What role should non-profits play? What is the difference between a green business and a non-profit working on sustainability issues? What expectations do you have of each?
3. What conflicting goals and ideals did activists in "Build, Build, Build" have? How does this shape your idea of what is sustainable housing and where should it be located? Who should decide? What role should grassroots activists and non-profits play?
4. What is Van Jones saying about the dangers of creating an eco-elite? How might considerations of equity and inclusivity impact sustainability advocacy, such as housing, food, transportation, and clothing?

Reading:

"Driving Systems Change in Turbulent Times: The Future of Sustainability 2019" Forum for the Future, 2019

Conor Dougherty, "Build, Build, Build – When the housing crisis slammed into a wealthy suburb, one public servant took a beating for embracing a radically simple doctrine" New York Times, Feb. 16, 2020

Van Jones, "Vanity Fair: The Unbearable Whiteness of Green" (Huffpost, May 25, 2011)

Nov. 24 **No class: Happy Thanksgiving!**

Dec. 1 **Biodiversity Crisis**

Lecture: Biodiversity Crisis and environmental movement

Student Led Discussion:

1. What is the biodiversity crisis? Is this an issue the general public is aware of? Is there broad public concern about the biodiversity crisis? Is the biodiversity crisis conflated with the climate crisis?
2. Are there environmental justice considerations to the biodiversity crisis?
3. What do you think are the key reasons to protect biodiversity?
4. What role should environmental and conservation groups play in addressing the biodiversity crisis?
5. Which groups are most active in addressing the biodiversity crisis? What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches?

6. What might be some innovative, inclusive approaches to address the biodiversity crisis? How does this address competing considerations, such as development, food and housing?

Paper: check in. Outline due.

Reading:

A Fierce Green Fire, Chapter 13

Graham Lawton, “Rescue Plan for Nature: How to fix the biodiversity crisis” (NewScientist, February 17, 2021)

Michael Pollan, “The Sickness in Our Food Supply” The New York Review of Books, May 12, 2020

Dec. 8th Climate change and next wave of the environmental movement

Lecture: Climate change and the next wave of the environmental movement

Guest speaker: Suzanne Hunt, HuntGreen LLC (invited)

Student Led Discussion:

1. What were the key points from the latest IPCC report?
2. What is climate justice?
3. What role should environmental and conservation groups play in addressing the climate crisis?
4. What might be some innovative, inclusive approaches to address climate change and climate justice needs?
5. Which groups are most active in addressing the climate crisis? What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches?
6. How might environmental groups evolve to better address the biodiversity crisis and climate change?

Reading:

Gus Speth, “Environmental Failure: A Case for a New Green Politics” (Yale Environment 360, Oct. 20, 2008)

Reading: Cary Funk and Brian Kennedy, “How Americans see climate change and the environment in 7 charts” Pew Research Center, April 21, 2020

Catrin Einhorn, “Our Response to Climate Change is Missing Something Big, Scientists Say” (New York Times, June 10, 2021)

YouTube: “Van Jones Introduces Pledge to Put the [#FrontlinesFirst](#) on Climate”

Paper is due. Hand in your paper in class.