

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**School of Sport, Recreation and Tourism Management (SRTM)**

PRLS 300 (001) – People and Nature  
3 Credits, Spring 2024  
On-line

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

PRLS 300: None

**University Catalog Course Description**

Traces philosophical evolution of perceptions of and attitudes toward nature. Examines role of philosophers, scientists, nature-writers, and artists in the shaping of environmental thought. Includes extensive reading of Emerson, Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, Carson, Wilson, and others.

**Course Overview**

This on-line course utilizes Blackboard to deliver course content. Five, short on-line lectures will be held during the semester. These lectures will be recorded so that students who cannot join live can watch lectures at a time that is more convenient to them.

Student contributions are an important part of this course. Students will be expected to actively participate in class discussions/discussion boards and to complete all assignments on time.

**Assignments will be due at Midnight** on the specified date due unless otherwise specified.

**Assignments received AFTER Midnight will be considered late and receive a 10% deduction in points per 24 hour period.** If you have an extreme emergency there may be some exceptions; however, you'll need to discuss these issues with the instructor **prior to the due date** to be considered for exception. It is also recommended that students make back-up copies of all assignments since computers have been known to crash at the most inopportune moments.

## Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format via Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard (Bb) course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.**

### *Technical Requirements*

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with a standard up-to-date browser, either Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox is required (note: Opera and Safari are not compatible with Blackboard).
- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students will need a video camera and headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements
- In this course Respondus Lockdown software (available from the University) may be required for taking the mid-term and final exams. See [www.coursesupport.gmu.edu](http://www.coursesupport.gmu.edu) and go to the students sections and look up the information under Blackboard Assessments for Respondus Monitor and Lockdown Browser.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
  - Windows Media Player:  
<https://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/downloads/windows-media-player/>
  - Apple Quick Time Player: [www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

### *Expectations*

- Course Week:  
Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will start on Monday, and finish on Friday.
- Log-in Frequency:  
Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials **every Monday morning** with a recommended **frequency of at least 3 times per week**. In addition, students can log-in for all scheduled online lectures or review sessions, but these sessions will also be available as recordings.]

- Participation:  
Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence:  
Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues:  
Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload:  
Please be aware that this course is **not self-paced**. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Schedule** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support:  
Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting(s) to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. Students may meet the instructor on Mondays on Mason's Fairfax campus or they may meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.
- Netiquette:  
The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- Accommodations:  
Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).

## Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Identify and articulate the philosophical, historical, and cultural context within which perceptions of and attitudes towards nature have evolved;
3. Describe how various subgroups of individuals have interacted with nature throughout history;
4. Articulate the various perspectives individuals have expressed toward the natural environment;
5. Verbally and visually illustrate their personal views of the natural environment; and
6. Discuss key events contributing to current views of the natural environment.

## Professional Standards

(Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT):)

**Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards:  
Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT):**

<b>7.01</b>	<b>Students graduating from the program shall demonstrate the following entry-level knowledge: a) the nature and scope of the relevant park, recreation, tourism or related professions and their associated industries; b) techniques and processes used by professionals and workers in these industries; and c) the foundation of the profession in history, science and philosophy.</b>
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## Required Texts & Videos

1. Bryson, B. (1998). *A Walk in the Woods*. New York: Broadway Books.
  2. Nash, R. F. (2001). *Wilderness and the American Mind* (fourth edition). Yale Univ. Press.
  3. Taylor, Dorceta E. (2016). *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement*. Duke University Press
- Burns, Ken National Park Series (video) and others. Links on Blackboard.

## Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time and in the manner outlined by the instructor (ex. Via Blackboard or email).

This course is divided into 5 Modules that are organized roughly in chronological order moving in time from the early 1800's to the present. Each module will have the following elements:

- Assigned readings
- Assigned video(s)
- 2 Discussion boards
- An assignment
- A unit test

Students will be evaluated on the following:

1. Unit tests- represent 40% of the total course grade. There will be 5 performance based tests which cover the material from the individual unit. There will be no comprehensive exam.
2. Assignments- represent 30% of the total course grade. Three of the assignments will require fieldwork experience, one assignment is a live presentation and one assignment is a short research paper.
3. Class Participation- represents 30% of the total course grade. The following elements comprise the class participation grade:
  - Student introduction
  - **10 Discussion Boards** (2 per module).
  - Lectures- There will be a total of 6 short lectures during the semester. Lectures may be viewed live or via recording for full credit. Lectures may summarize key points from the reading material and videos or add supplementary material which will be relevant to the unit test. Required lectures include:
    - Course orientation lecture (material not included on a unit test but important to understanding the course so it is required).
    - 5 Unit lectures

### Grading Scale:

A+	97 – 100	B+	87 – 89	C+	77 – 79	D	60 – 69
A	94 – 96	B	84 – 86	C	74 – 76	F	0 – 59
A-	90 - 93	B-	80 – 83	C-	70 – 73		

### Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times

## Class Schedule

DATE			TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
T	January	16	<b>Module 1: An Evolving Idea of Wilderness</b>	
M	January	22	Course Introduction Blackboard Collaborate	7 :45 p.m. or recording
M	January	29	Lecture Blackboard Collaborate	7 :45 pm or recording
S	February	3	Assignment/ Test Due Date	Environnemental Issues Assignment/ Unit Test
M	February	5	<b>Module 2: Preservation vs Conservation</b>	
M	February	12	Lecture Blackboard Collaborate	7 :45 pm or recorded
S	February	24	Assignment/ Test Due Date	AT Assignment/ Unit Test
M	February	26	<b>Module 3: Towards a National Park Service</b>	
M	March	4	<b>Spring Break</b>	
M	March	11	Lecture Blackboard Collaborate	7 :45 pm or recorded
S	March	23	Assignment/ Test Due Date	Garden Park Assignment. / Unit Test
M	March	25	<b>Module 4: Evolution in Parks</b>	
M	April	1	Lecture Blackboard Collaborate	7 :45 pm or recorded
S	April	13	Assignment/ Test Due Date	Garden Park Assignment/ Unit Test
M	April	15	<b>Module 5: Protecting Wilderness &amp; the Environment</b>	
M	April	22	Lecture Blackboard Collaborate	7 :45 pm or recorded
W	April	24	Live Presentations Begin	Dates/ Times TBD
S	May	4		Unit Test Completed
S	May	4	All Make-up Work Submitted by This Date	

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students. Blackboard will have specific details on requirements for all assignments and due dates for everything that needs to be turned in or completed for each module.

### Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

## GMU Policies and Resources for Students

### *Policies*

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- d. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/> or you may contact Disabilities services directly at (703) 993-2474 or by email at ods@gmu.edu).
- e. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignment to VIA should be directed to [viahelp@gmu.edu](mailto:viahelp@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments>. Questions or concern regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

### **Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [University Policy 1202](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as the [Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <http://cehd.gmu.edu/>.

## Assignments

*More detailed assignment directions will be shared when the assignments are posted on Blackboard as well as the grading rubrics.*

### 1. **Environmental Issues:**

For this assignment, students will write an 700-800 word paper discussing your perspective regarding one current environmental issue that is being reported in the news. You can research your topic using any news source medium, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, or the world wide web. Your issue can be local, regional, national or global in nature.

### 2. **Art in Nature Assignment:**

Many readings in this course explore the relationship of art and nature. This fieldwork assignment requires you to visit a horticultural garden to learn about/experience the garden. You will be asked to engage in the resource similar to the way artists may have engaged with grand areas of scenic beauty from the early days of the country up to today. This assignment involves taking photographs, creating your own art project and writing a short explanation of your project.

### 3. **Volunteering for Nature:**

One of the ways we connect to the natural world is through volunteering our time to complete outdoor projects, provide outdoor programs, or become advocates for public lands. This fieldwork assignment may require you to sign up for the volunteer project in advance and/or to complete a volunteer waiver or application form. By participating in a volunteer project for this assignment, you will gain first-hand experience on how volunteerism influences our connection to and understanding of nature. Students cannot use previous volunteer experiences like an Eagle Scout Project for this assignment. Volunteer hours must be completed this semester. Students will be required to submit photo documentation and a short written description of the volunteer project that was completed.

*Alternate Assignment will be available for students who are reluctant or unable to do outdoor projects that may involve hands-on volunteer, hiking out to work sites, use of tools, or heavy lifting.*

### 4. **Appalachian Trail Hike:**

After reading about Bill Bryson's adventures hiking on the Appalachian Trail (AT), students will participate in their own AT hike. The goal is to give students a more personal perspective on hiking some of the AT. The assignment requires a minimum hike of 2 hours on any section of the AT. The hike must be done within this semester



Students cannot recall a previous hike or experience on the trail and write about that experience as a substitute for doing the fieldwork this semester. Students will be required to submit photographic documentation and a short paper about the experience

*Accommodations or alternate assignments will be made to address the following:*

- *They are taking the course remotely from an area that does not have access to the AT (i.e. student is take the course remotely from Hawaii)*
- *The student does not have transportation to access the AT,*
- *Student is unable to complete a 2-hour hike due to an injury or other physical restrictions.*

*Please discuss any restrictions or need for accommodations as early as possible in the semester so we can work together to develop and acceptable alternative for this assignment.*

### **5. Personal Nature Philosophy Project**

This course explores a variety of philosophies of nature that change over time in America. Ideally this course should also have inspired students to think about their own ideas or philosophies about nature and wilderness. This project asks students to outline their own nature philosophies in a Powerpoint presentation that will be presented live in a small group setting via Blackboard Collaborate.

