We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. And this has been based on the even flimsier assumption that we could know with any certainty what was good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world – and to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity – our own capacity for life – that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

- Wendell Berry

Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts.

- Salman Rushdie

If you want to build a ship, don’t herd people together to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

- Antoine de St. Exupéry

All power to the imagination.

- Graffiti in Paris, May 1968

Course Description

Social movements have shaped the world we live in and are one of the most important sources of social change. They often organize to address issues of inequity, oppression or prejudice in local, regional, national and transnational spheres. They arise to address factual situations: the number of people without health care, levels of air pollution, racial profiling, unemployment, deaths in war or the destruction of the environment. However, facts alone are not sufficient to create social change. Narratives are needed to provide the stories that inspire, give meaning and unite motivation, strategy and action. Course participants will investigate understandings of social movements, including forest defense and ecological movements, and the role of narratives in
social change. Students will work with the community partner, Bark, to explore the evolution of (1) our relationship to forests and the environment in the Pacific NW and (2) narratives about that relationship, forests, economic development and activism. Students will assist Bark in their community-based work to protect the Mt. Hood National Forest. The cumulative experience of this course will include engagement of the political economy of logging, forest ecology and environmental justice, which when analyzed through the lens of sustainability provides for an integrative understanding of forests and social movements.

Community Issue to be addressed

Forests are a critical part of the social and environmental fabric of our region. Everyone who lives in the Portland metro region, which was built with the natural wealth of our temperate rainforests, has a relationship to the forests that surround it. However, forests and the habitats they create are threatened as part of a wider ecological crisis. Globally, over half of the world’s forests have been destroyed over the last few hundred years with escalating rates in the last 50 years. In the NW there has been significant deforestation and loss of habitat, which are replaced by mono-culture tree plantations oriented for economic production rather than habitat creation. Additionally, there has been a corresponding social devastation of logging communities throughout the northwest as logging has decreased and the export of raw timber replaces regional milling. Lastly, the removal of mature NW forests, which sequester more carbon than almost anywhere else on Earth, adds an additional layer and level of urgency in the context of the climate crisis to this complex community issue. Forests and the social movements that have sprung up with particular potency in the Pacific Northwest over the last three decades to protect them present an opportunity for a dynamic engagement of social and ecological issues.

Bark’s mission is to, “transform Mt. Hood National Forest into a place where natural processes prevail, where wildlife thrives and where local communities have a social, cultural, and economic investment in its restoration and preservation”. Bark’s work includes watching timber sales, checking that timber sales have been appropriately marked, documenting the habitat destruction resulting from clear-cutting and other related activities. A significant aspect of this work, in which students will participate, is called Best Management Practices (BMP) Surveys. During BMP field sessions participants evaluate through measurement of climate, soil compaction, skid trail coverage, water erosion and other factors whether or not the Forest Service’s Best Management Practices for mitigation of environmental damages following logging and thinning are being followed. In Bark’s early BMP work they have found that these practices are largely not followed, which has created opportunities to halt cutting on this basis through legal action.

Additionally, students will explore how narratives of the environment, logging, the Pacific Northwest, old growth and other related subject matter has shifted and evolved over time. They will contribute to a multimedia website that will explore their place-based learning journey in the forests of the Mt. Hood National Forest. This will address a central point of this course that the facts regarding situations of ecological destruction or inequity are not enough to motivate individuals to take action or create social change. These facts need to be placed within a narrative framework that inspires and compels our region to address these serious issues. In addition to timber sale monitoring students will also contribute through the provision of creating narrative
material for Bark.

The Service Project

Description of the Final Product(s)

2. Contributions to a multimedia website (socialchange.pdx.edu) where student content from their place-based narrative exploration of the environment, forests, logging and forest defense social movements will be presented.
3. Presentation of the products to the community partner.

Agency, Anti-Oppression and Education: Participatory Teaching and Learning Philosophy

“Answers are the way out. Answers are not what we are here for. When we look for answers, we’re looking to change the pattern. When we look at the questions, we look for the opening to transformation. The good energy is all in the questions, seldom in the answers.”
- Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*

“To learn which questions are unanswerable, and not to answer them: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness.”
- Ursula Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

“If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don’t have to worry about answers.
- Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*

I strive to create a participatory learning community in the classroom in which students can claim agency over their education. Agency in the context of education means that students recognize that they can and should be the ones shaping their educational experience in collaboration with others involved in the university such as instructors and act accordingly. As part of this I believe that all participants in a course, not only the instructor, have valuable knowledge, insight and analysis to contribute as co-learners. Furthermore, I believe that students should be part of selecting the topics of inquiry in collaboration with the instructor. This insures that not only do we pursue topics which the class is interested in and passionate about but also that we are selecting topics that are relevant and important based on the perspective of all participants in the course.

Part of this requires that we name, acknowledge and intentionally engage the systems of oppression and domination that exist in our society and which shape our lived experiences, our interactions with each other, what we know and how we hold that knowledge. We must be thoughtful about how we engage each other in the classroom so as not to replicate patterns of oppression. Given these realities, among others, creating a truly participatory and egalitarian learning environment is not possible, however, it is a goal to which we still strive toward. In intentionally engaging and acknowledging these realities we can move as close as possible to creating a participatory learning environment. If there are ever ways that I can create an anti-
oppression environment in the class beyond what I try and do please do not hesitate to let me know.

I have structured the course in an intentional fashion in order to foster this learning community and student agency in claiming your education. The course will not only be discussion driven, but the shape and form of the discussion will be directed by students as much as possible. Students will be deeply involved in assessing their performance and learning over the course of the term and selecting their grade. Lastly, course assignments will encourage a reflective learning practice that facilitates a deeper processing of course concepts and which encourages connection to real world issues. This structure is reflective of a commitment to the values of democracy, horizontalism in the classroom, decentralization and a rich form of participation, which I hope will provide for a dynamic learning experience.

**Learning Objectives**

This course has the following learning objectives. The University Studies goals to which these objectives correspond are indicated in the parenthesis following the objective.

1. **Social Change** (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
   - Students will become familiar with different understandings and theories of social change.
   - They will explore and reflect upon their own personal experience and motivations for change in this world.

2. **Social Movements** (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
   - Students will analyze different social movement theories. This will include knowledge of their origins, functioning, form and influence.
   - Students will apply this knowledge to contemporary movements and be able to distinguish social movements from other forms of political activity.

3. **Ecological Crisis and Climate Change** (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
   - Students will become familiar with the different aspects of the global ecological crisis including deforestation, habitat destruction, bio-magnification, pollution and climate change.

4. **Climate Justice and Environmental Justice** (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
   - Students will comprehend the concept of climate justice and environmental justice in general and specifically in connection to forests, logging and the Pacific Northwest.

5. **Sustainability** (critical thinking, variety of human experiences, ethical and social responsibility)
   - Students will understand sustainability and the interrelationship between the equity, economic and environmental components of the concept and in so doing integrate a wide variety of the learning objectives of this course. These components and their intersections are reflected in the focus on environmental
justice, social movements, the political economy of logging, development and capitalism in the Pacific NW and forest ecology among others.

6. **Forest Ecology** (critical thinking)
   - Students will understand basic forest ecology to ground their other social, political and environmental learning objectives in the biological characteristics and relationships of the forest.

7. **Multimedia Creation, Oral History and Blogs** (communication)
   - Students will understand the qualitative methods related to oral history, multimedia production and blogging through work as practitioners.

8. **Narratives** (critical thinking, communication)
   - Students will synthesize the subject matter of this course to understand how narratives weave together motivation, strategy and action in the context of social change. They will analyze a variety of examples as they connect these narratives to the work of the community partner.

**University Studies Goals**

University Studies has four principal learning goals: inquiry and critical thinking, communication, the diversity of human experiences and ethics and social responsibility. These learning goals seek to empower students as active, self-motivated learners, who have a dynamic capacity for communication. They further aim to foster understanding of the rich complexity of human experience in all its manifestations and better comprehension of the effect of individual and social choices on others and on society. This course will engage these learning goals over the course of the term. More information can be found at the University Studies webpage ([http://www.pdx.edu/unst/](http://www.pdx.edu/unst/)).

**Grading**

In line with the aim of taking agency over your education you will determine your own grade at the end of term, with input from me. Along the way, I’ll offer you engaged, qualitative feedback on your assignments. At the end of the term, I’ll give each of you an itemized handout of all aspects of your participation in the class, and you will use this to decide what grade you have earned over the course of the term.

Full involvement in this course—-in other words, an absolutely clear and incontrovertible “A”—looks like this:

- You’ve come to at least 90% of our classes on time (and stayed the full time), prepared to participate in our work for the day and you’ve been present during that time (meaning: no texting or other distractions to yourself and/or others).
- You’ve completed all of the required assignments, including those which are self-chosen and especially your contributions to the final project.
- You’ve committed yourself to working in the spirit of this course—including the claiming of your own education—in accordance with the “Agency and Education” section above.
In addition, we’ll co-create a flexible rubric to provide an additional framework for your decision-making about your grade. These parameters will align with the “spirit” of the grading system more than with a rigid quantitative breakdown:

A = Outstanding; consistently did your best work/made your best effort
B = Good; regularly did your best work/made your best effort
C = Average; occasionally did your best work/made your best effort
D = Below average; rarely did your best work/made your best effort
F = Little or no effort put forth

There’s one caveat here: I reserve the right to require you to negotiate your final grade with me if your assessment in your self-evaluation seems either artificially high or artificially low. We will try and make this meeting happen before grades are due. In the event that this isn't possible, you will receive an “M” grade at the end of the term (which stands for “missing” and will remain on your transcript until we have negotiated your final grade). These meetings may not end up in a change of the grade you assigned yourself, but will at least allow us to dialogue about the grade and the diversity of our perspectives.

Please keep all of the work you produce in this course until at least the end of the term. You will use these documents in the preparation of your final reflection work.

By remaining in this course, you agree to the conditions set forth here, including the course requirements and the terms for self-grading outlined above.

The following components of the course are offered as a guide to the assignments of the course and to give a general sense of the course components:

Attendance
Participation
Presenter/Discussion Facilitation
Reading Quotes
Short Assignments
  Self-Guided Tour: Nature and Social Change
  Others as assigned
Reflective Writings
  Social Change, the Ecological Crisis and our Relationship to Nature
  Social Movements and Forest Defense
  Ecology and Human Experiences
  Final Reflection and Self-Evaluation
Group Project
  Bark and Topic Exploration, Post and Media
  Interview Excerpt and Post
  Lesson Plan and Reading Selection
  Topic Exploration Summation
Community-Based Learning
  BMP session 1
Online Course Reserves

Over the course of the term some readings may be made available via the online course reserves provided by the library. Any readings will be found on the course reserves section on the library webpage (http://psu-eres.lib.pdx.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?&page=search). After searching by instructor name, course number, etc. you will find the readings for the course. The password for the readings is my last name.

On-line Access to Course Information

The course syllabus, handouts, assignments, selected readings and additional resources will be made available on-line through Desire2Learn. To access this information, you must have a PSU ODIN account. Your Desire2Learn ID will be the same as your ODIN username and your password will be the last four digits of your PSU Student ID number. You will log into the course by going to http://www.psuonline.pdx.edu and entering your id and username in the “Online Course Login” section to the right of the page.

Student Conduct and Technology

It is encouraged that you read Student Conduct Code (http://www.pdx.edu/dos/student-code-conduct). It details your rights and responsibilities as a student and as a member of the Portland State community. To foster a positive, respectful environment, free of distractions for all participants, there is a zero-tolerance cell phone policy. When you enter the classrooms, turn off or silence your phone and put it away. Similarly, laptops and other hand-held devices are not to be used during class, unless you have an exemption cleared with the professor.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who may require accommodations are encouraged to contact the PSU Disability Center (http://www.drc.pdx.edu/) and the instructor at the beginning of the term.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone’s work as your own through copying it without giving the creator of the work credit. Plagiarism can also include using another person’s theories, ideas, or phrases without proper attribution. The simplest way to avoid plagiarizing is to always cite the sources from which you gather information or develop arguments. Plagiarism is a serious issue and is a violation of the PSU Student Conduct Code. University policy calls for severe sanctions for any form of academic dishonesty.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the end of the assigned class period unless otherwise indicated. Timely
completion of assignments is important to consider in the self-grading process and will be indicated in the feedback provided by me. Assignments will not be accepted by email. However, if you are absent you may send me a copy of the assignment so that I know you have completed it. You must then bring a printed copy when you come to the next class session.

Reading List

We will read excerpts from the following texts.


Reading Options for Group Projects

Social Change, Social Movements and Forest Defense


Forest Ecology


The Human Relationship to Nature

Berry, Wendell – See any number of this author’s work.


Interview Options for Groups

Later in the course I will help identify individuals are willing to be interviewed for this part of
the group project, however, you are welcome to interview others. Please let me know how I can support you in finding someone interesting and appropriate to interview for your group project.