“A commons arises whenever a given community decides it wishes to manage a resource in a collective manner, with special regard for equitable access, use, and sustainability.” — David Bollier

Course Description
This course will focus on the concept of “the commons” – those resources that humans share and depend on to thrive and survive. Examples of the commons include clean air and water, shared scientific knowledge, or publicly funded resources such as parks and libraries. Increasingly, many aspects of the commons are controlled by the market or private interests. Students in this course will partner with the “Oregon Commons” project (http://theoregoncommons.org) to raise public awareness of the commons and encourage stewardship of our shared resources. The course will provide critical inquiry into the political and economic history of the commons, and through this lens of critically inquiry, allow for the examination of current commons based movements.

Course Goals
By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Define the concept of the “commons” (critical thinking, social and ethical responsibility)
2. Identify various examples of the commons which affect your everyday life (critical thinking)
3. Discuss the historical foundations of the commons (communication, critical thinking)
4. Critique varied models for the management of shared resources (appreciation for diversity, critical thinking)
5. Defend a new paradigm for relating to shared resources (social and ethical responsibility, communication)
6. Analyze the efforts of multiple individuals and communities to regain control of the commons (appreciation for diversity, critical thinking)
7. Work in teams to develop a valuable final product for our community partner. Analyze the factors which contribute to and detract from successful team work. (communication, critical thinking, social and ethical responsibility, critical thinking)

(Note: UNST goals associated with a given course goal are listed in italics after each course goal.)
Course Activities
- Meet with Oregon Commons staff to learn more about the organization’s mission and history
- Participate in a workshop focused on the commons to be facilitated by our community partners
- Participate in classroom discussions and experiential activities relevant to the course goals
- Facilitate one lesson related to our course themes (see D2L for presentation guidelines)
- Write weekly reflection papers and complete reading assignments
- Keep an in-class journal to record your thoughts and questions at the end of each class session. We will allot 5 minutes at the end of each class session for this purpose.
- Work in teams to create a final product that will forward the mission of the Oregon Commons Project
- Optional Activity: Group service project in support of the common good

Community Partner
Under our current economic system, many shared resources have become monetized or privatized in pursuit of profit or individual gain. For example, bottling companies tap groundwater supplies, agricultural companies patent native seeds, record companies trademark traditional music, or private landowners destroy wetlands in favor of development. Recently, a group of prominent scientists, economists and writers have drawn attention to the negative consequences of a market-driven relationship to our shared resources. They argue that unless human communities begin to “reclaim the commons”, the long-term sustainability of our shared resources is at risk.

“On the Commons” is a national network of citizens and organizations working toward a commons-based society. The commons refers to “the natural and socially-created commons belonging to all of us that—when used wisely and fairly—will benefit everyone, including future generations” (http://onthecommons.org/).

The Oregon Commons Project is the local arm of this network and operates as a program of the Learning Commons (a tax-exempt 501-c-3 nonprofit organization). The Oregon Commons project actively works to raise awareness of the commons in Oregon through community workshops designed to engage citizens in identifying the resources we share and value. Once community members have named these resources, they develop action plans for preserving or reclaiming aspects of the commons for the benefit of the common good and future generations.

The Oregon Commons project has four goals:
1. Education. We facilitate learning about the commons.
2. Networking. We strengthen the network of those who care about the commons.
3. Visibility. We raise the visibility of the commons in the public mind.
4. Right Action. We plant seeds for stewardship and advocacy of the commons.

Our key contacts at the Oregon Commons Project will be:
Paula Manley, paula@theoregoncommons.org, 503-233-9550
Todd Samusson, todd@samusson.com
Lenny Dee, lenny@theoregoncommons.org
Reflective Writing
The purpose of weekly reflective writing assignments is to a) record observations, insights, and questions that occur as part of your Capstone experience and b) connect the course experiences to University Studies goals. Each assignment should be typed, single-spaced, at least one full page in length, and should be submitted in class on the date due.

Late papers will lose 20% credit unless prior arrangements have been made. Writing prompts will be posted every Thursday via D2L with the paper due the following Tuesday. Reflective writing assignments will be read and returned the following week. No late papers will be accepted after assignments have been returned.

Reflective writing papers will be graded on the following 10-point scale:
- Paper responds completely to the writing prompt: 2 points
- Paper is well-organized and free of grammatical errors: 2 points
- Paper demonstrates critical analysis: 4 points
- Paper demonstrates synthesis with other course components, other courses or your life experience: 2 points

Reflective writing assignments for the following week will be posted every Wednesday afternoon in the reflective writing folder of our D2L site. You have the option to skip one reflective writing assignment during the term without penalty (note: you are required to complete RW 1 and RW 7.)

Final Project
Small groups will be formed to work on a final project for our community partner. A list of potential projects will be given to you by our community partners at the beginning of the term. You will need to maintain phone, email and, in-person contact with your community partner contact and your group members throughout the term to ensure a successful final project.

Materials
The main text for this course will be:
New York, NY: Routledge

Additional articles or web links for reading assignments will also be assigned throughout the term. Reading assignments for the following week will be posted every Wednesday afternoon in the readings folder of our D2L site.

*In addition to your course books, please bring a blank journal to class for our daily reflective writing exercises.*
Grading Criteria
Grades will be based on participation in the class as measured by:

- Attendance (20%)
- Participation (20%)
- Reflective Writing Papers (25%)
- Individual Presentation (10%)
- Final Project (group) (25%)

The standard 90/80/70/60 grading scale will be used. There will be no final exam for this course. Peer and self review will be taken into account when calculating the final grade for this course.

On-line Access to Course Information
The course syllabus, handouts, reflective writing prompts and additional resources will be made available on-line through D2L. To access this information, you must have a PSU ODIN account. Your D2L 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 www.psuonline.pdx.edu and entering your id and username in the “Online Course Login” section to the right of the page.

Students with Disabilities
Please see us if you have a disability that may require some modification to the course. We will work with you and the Disability Resource Center to arrange needed supports.

Plagiarism
Please note that plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. If you are quoting or relying heavily on another’s work in your written assignments or class presentations, you must acknowledge the source appropriately.

Weekly Schedule
Our tentative weekly schedule is attached. Please note that the schedule is subject to change.
Reclaiming the Commons Course Schedule
Winter Term 2012

Week 1 - Course Overview/Defining the Commons
Mon., 1/9
Welcome and Introductions
What is a Capstone?
Syllabus Overview

Wed., 1/11
Defining the Commons
Classroom Discussion/Activity

Due: Capstone Student Inventory
Read Walljasper, Chapters 1-2
Read Section Z: “Let’s Reclaim the Commons” (see D2L reading folder)

Week 2 - Introduction to the Oregon Commons Project
Mon., 1/16 – MLK Jr. Day, NO Classes

Wed., 1/18
Oregon Commons Project Mission and History
Commons Workshop Facilitated by our community partners
Overview of final project options

Due: Reflective Writing #1
Review websites for the Oregon Commons Project (http://theoregoncommons.org)
and On the Commons (http://onthecommons.org)

Week 3 - The Commons: A Historical Foundation
Mon., 1/23
Form Final Project Teams
The Commons: Historical Foundations- Part 1

Due: Assigned Readings

Wed., 1/25
The Commons: Historical Foundations- Part 2
Debating the Commons: Individual or Collective Control?
Final Project Work Session
Assessment

Due: Reflective Writing #2
Assigned Readings
Week 4 - Public Spaces and the Commons- Contemporary Case Studies
Mon., 1/30
Field Trip to Learning Gardens Laboratory

Due: Assigned Readings

Wed., 2/1
Guest Speaker: Mark Lakeman, communitecture, inc.
Student Presentations
Begin Mid-Term Interviews

Due: Reflective Writing #3

Week 5 - The Ecological Commons: Contemporary Case Studies - Land
Mon. 2/6
Student Presentations
Classroom Discussion/Activity
Mid-term interviews, cont.

Due: Assigned Readings

Wed., 2/8
Student Presentations
Final Project check-in with community partners
Final Project Work Session
Assessment

Due: Reflective Writing #4

Week 6 - The Ecological Commons: Contemporary Case Studies – Water and Air
Mon., 2/13
Student Presentations
Classroom Discussion/Activity

Due: Assigned Readings

Wed., 2/15
Student Presentations
Haida Gwaii: A Case Study

Due: Assigned Readings
Week 7 - The Artistic and Electronic Commons: Contemporary Case Studies
Mon., 2/20
The Artistic Commons
Classroom Discussion/Activity
Student Presentations

Due: Assigned Readings

Wed., 2/22
The Electronic Commons
Classroom Discussion/Activity
Student Presentations
Final Project Work Session
Assessment

Due: Reflective Writing #5

Week 8 - The Intellectual Commons: Contemporary Case Studies
Mon., 2/27
Student Presentations
Final Project check-in with community partners
Final Project Work Session

Due: Assigned Readings
Draft of Final Project to share with community partners

Wed., 2/29
Student Presentations
Film Segment: “Food Inc.”
Due: Reflective Writing #6

Week 9 - Building a Commons-Based Society- Economic and Political Paradigm Shifts
Mon., 3/5
Peer Review of Final Project Drafts
Alternative Economic Models for the Common Good
Classroom Discussion/Activity

Due: Polished Draft of Final Project
Assigned Readings

Wed., 3/7
Alternative Political Models for the Common Good
Classroom Discussion/Activity
Assessment

Due: Assigned Readings
Week 10 - On Becoming a Commoner- Individual Action

Mon., 3/12
Guest Speaker or Site Visit: Peninsula Park Commons
Course Retrospective
Final Project Work Session

Due: Assigned Readings

Wed., 3/14
Community Partner Presentation
Course Evaluations
Farewell!

Due: Electronic and Hard Copies of Final Projects
Reflective Writing #7