

Reclaiming the Commons

Winter 2015

UNST 421-521, CRN 44000

T/R 10-11:50am

Broadway Housing Bldg 224

“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

Instructor: Celine Fitzmaurice
University Studies - Cramer 117
celine@pdx.edu
[503.725.8260](tel:503.725.8260)

Teaching Assistant: Felipe Ferreira
ffelipe@pdx.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

Welcome to your senior capstone! 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. 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. Our capstone will partner with “The Learning Commons” (<http://thelearningcommons.org>) and a variety of commons based initiatives in the Portland area. Through these partnerships, we will raise public awareness of the commons and contribute to the collaborative management of our shared resources.

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. Describe the historical foundations of the commons (communication, critical thinking)
4. Critically examine varied models for the management of shared resources (appreciation for diversity, critical thinking)
5. Discuss the efforts of multiple individuals and communities to manage aspects of the commons (appreciation for diversity, critical thinking)
6. Defend a commons-based paradigm for relating to shared resources (social and ethical responsibility, communication)
7. Reflect on your understanding of the commons, both social and ecological, and how this may shape your future involvement in your communities. (critical thinking, social and ethical responsibility, communication)
8. Analyze the factors which contribute to and detract from successful team work. (communication, diversity)

(*Note: UNST goals associated with a given course goal are listed in italics after each course goal.)

Course Design

This course may feel different than other courses you have taken in the past. First, the course will rely less on lecture-style content and more on experiential and student-led learning. Each of you brings particular expertise from your major and life experience to this course. You will be asked to contribute this expertise to our class activities, assignments and to your final group project. Attendance and full participation is critical to a successful learning experience in this course as so much of our learning takes place in a group context. In the capstone setting, students, instructor and community partners are viewed as co-teachers and co-learners. We will work together to achieve goals that both benefit your educational experience and meet a real need in the community. Finally, in the spirit of reclaiming your own education this capstone is designed as a self-graded course. I will give you plenty of feedback along the way but the final grade for the term will be determined by you. The “Self Grading Criteria” section of the syllabus will describe this process in detail.

Course Activities

In this course you can expect to...

- Participate in classroom discussions and experiential activities relevant to the course goals
- Complete weekly reading assignments which will illuminate a range of perspectives on the commons and commons based organizing efforts
- Critically analyze our course themes and reflect on your learning through weekly reflection papers
- Work in teams to support the efforts of one commons-based initiative in the Portland area
- Co-facilitate one “Commons Teach-in” related to our course themes with members of your final project team

Community Partners

1) “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/.](http://onthecommons.org/))

2) The Learning Commons is affiliated with this network through a project called the “Oregon Commons.” Initiated in 2010, the Oregon Commons project promotes appreciation, stewardship and advocacy of our Oregon commons—the gifts of nature and civilization we share across generations. Here is a link to the project webpage: [http://thelearningcommons.org/projects/.](http://thelearningcommons.org/projects/)

Our key contact at “The Learning Commons” will be:

Paula Manley, paula@theoregoncommons.org, 503-233-9550

3) Through our final projects, we will also be working with a variety of community partners representing commons-based initiatives in the Portland area. Many of these projects will focus on the Cully neighborhood of NE Portland where gentrification threatens to displace existing residents and community members. Residents of this community are already engaged in a movement to “build the commons” at a neighborhood-scale and create a sustainable future for all residents.

The following agencies will be represented:

- Living Cully Coalition (Tony DeFalco, tonydefalco@verdenw.org)
- Rigler School, (Noelle Studer Spevak, noellest@gmail.com)
- Mill Street Planning (Derek Dauphin, dsdauphin@gmail.com)

Materials

The main texts for this course will be:

- Bollier, D. (2014) *Think Like a Commoner: A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers
- Liu, E. and Hanauer, N. (2011) *The Gardens of Democracy: A New American Story of Citizenship, The Economy, and the Role of Government*. Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books.

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 Tuesday afternoon in the readings folder of our D2L site.

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, 2 pages in length, and submitted in class on the date due.

Reflective writing assignments for the following week will be posted every Tuesday afternoon in the reflective writing folder of our D2L site. Reflective writing assignments will be read and returned with comments the following week. No late papers will be accepted without prior communication. You have the option to skip one reflective writing assignment during the term without penalty (note: I ask that you do not skip RW 1 or RW 6 as I use these for assessment purposes.)

As this course is self-graded, you will calculate your own grade for each reflective writing assignment based on the following 10-point scale.:

Reflective Writing Grading Criteria

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 our course content, other coursework or your life experience:	2 points

Commons Teach-In

Each team will facilitate a “Commons Teach-In” on a topic that is relevant to their final project during one of our class sessions. Teach-In Guidelines will be shared in class and posted on D2L.

Final Project

Small groups will be formed to work on a final project designed to reclaim or build the commons at a neighborhood scale. Our community partners will introduce themselves as part of our final project selection process. The final product for each team will vary. You will frequent contact with community partners throughout the term.

This is a 6-credit course. Some of your group work on the final project will take place in the classroom. However, you will need to maintain regular phone, email and in-person contact with

your group members and our partners throughout the term to ensure a successful final project. Please plan for approximately 4 hours outside of class time each week to work on the final project.

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 and Student Conduct

A productive learning environment relies on our adherence to PSU Codes of Conduct: <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/policies-codes-of-conduct-at-psu>. In particular, 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.

Please turn off or silence your phone when you enter the classroom. If you need to take an important call, please step out of the classroom to do so. I also ask that you refrain from using a laptop in class unless you are using it as part of a group work session.

Self-Grading Criteria

It is my belief that your education belongs to you. I am here to facilitate a learning experience for you but the outcome and long-term value of this experience belongs to you. Historically, our education system has encouraged students to be passive consumers of knowledge who measure their success based on the grade assigned by the teacher. In this course we will use a self-grading model to allow you to reclaim your education, set goals for your own learning, and assign a grade to yourself based on your own assessment of how well you met these goals.

Here’s how this grading system will work.

1. You will complete an “Individual Course Plan” assignment toward the beginning of the term to set clear learning and performance goals for yourself.
2. I will collect and comment on all of your reflective writing assignments but I will not assign a grade to these papers. Instead, I will turn these papers back to you so you can assign a grade to each paper using the grading scale outlined in the reflective writing section of the syllabus.
3. You will complete and evaluation of your group project and commons teach-in at the end of the term.

4. You will complete a “Final Reflection and Self Evaluation” at the end of the term to determine how well you met the goals outlined in your individual course plan.
5. At the end of the term, I will give you an itemized handout of all aspects of your participation in the class (i.e. attendance record, checklist of assignments turned in, etc.) which you will use to determine the grade you have earned over the course of the term.
6. You will use all of this information to determine a final grade for yourself using the breakdown outlined below.

Final Grade Breakdown

Attendance at class sessions	(20%)
Participation in class sessions	(20%)
Reflective Writing Papers & Reading Responses	(25%)
Group Commons Teach-In	(10%)
Group Final Project	(25%)

The standard 90/80/70/60 grading scale will be used.

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. In that event, 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). An “M” grade will stay on your transcript for only one term following this one; if you have not resolved your grade through discussion with me by the end of Spring Term 2014, it will convert to an “X”—and that “X” is permanent and unchangeable.

*Note: Please save all of your assignments until the end of our course as you will be using these to determine your final grade.

Weekly Schedule

Our tentative weekly schedule is attached. Please note that the schedule is subject to change.

Reclaiming the Commons Course Schedule
Winter Term 2015

Week 1- Course Overview/Defining the Commons

Tues., 1/6

Welcome and Introductions
What is a Capstone?
Syllabus Overview
“Mt. Hood Pay-Per-View” Video

Thurs., 1/8

Guest Presenter: Paula Manley
Introduction to the Learning Commons
Mapping the Commons Workshop

Due: -Capstone Student Inventory
 -Review websites for

- The Learning Commons, <http://thelearningcommons.org>
- On the Commons, <http://www.onthecommons.org/>

 -Read Think Like a Commoner, Introduction

Week 2- Forming Final Project Teams

*Tues., 1/13

Introduction to Living Cully Initiative
Overview of final project options with community partners
Initial Formation Final Project Teams

Due: Assigned Readings

Thurs., 1/15

*Cully Neighborhood Tour & Lunch, 10am-1pm
(Details of the tour will be discussed in class. Note: we will arrange for an early car to return by 12 for those who cannot exceed the class period.)

Due: Reflective Writing #1

Week 3 – History of the Commons/The Global Commons Movement

Tues., 1/20-

Introduction to “On The Commons” with Paula Manley
A Commons Approach: Framework and Guiding Principles
The Commons: Historical Foundations
Finalize final project teams
Group charters & Project Planning Worksheets
Determine Commons Teach-In Dates

Due: Assigned Readings

Thurs., 1/22

“The Tragedy of the Commons” vs. “The Benefits of Common Management”
Project planning worksheets
Quick learning assessment

Due: Reflective Writing #2

Week 4- The Natural Commons

Tues., 1/27

Introduction to the Ecological Commons
Readings Discussion
Scheduling of Mid-term Interviews

Due: Assigned Readings
Completed Group Charter and Project Planning Worksheet

Thurs., 1/29

Commons Teach-In #1
Ecological Commons Case Study
Quick Learning Assessment

Due: Reflective Writing #3

Week 5 - The Natural Commons, cont.

Tues. 2/3

Final Project Check-in with Community Partners

Due: Assigned Readings

Thurs., 2/5

TBD by all of us
Options include: Ecological Commons Field Trip, Final Project Work Session, Film, other ideas?

Week 6 - The Societal Commons

Tues., 2/10

Introduction to the Societal Commons
Walking Tour of the Commons

Due: Assigned Readings

Thurs., 2/12

Commons Teach-in #2
Gardens of Democracy Book Discussion

Due: Reflective Writing #4

Week 7 - The Societal Commons, cont.

Tues., 2/17

Guest Speaker: Mark Lakeman, communitecture, “Reclaiming Public Spaces”

Due: Assigned Readings

Thurs., 2/19

*Final Project Check-in with Community Partners

Week 8 – Knowledge and Culture Commons

Tues., 2/24

Commons Teach-In #3

Introduction to the Intellectual & Artistic Commons

“This Land is Our Land” video

Quick Learning Assessment

Due: Assigned Readings

Thurs., 2/26

Field Trip to MAD/50 Art Yard and Community Space in SE Portland
(Details TBA)

Due: Reflective Writing #5

Week 9 – Knowledge and Culture Commons, cont.

Tues., 3/3

Commons Teach in #4

Self-Grading Inventory

Final Project Work Session

Due: Polished Draft of Final Project
Assigned Readings

Thurs., 3/5

*Tentative Guest Speaker: Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig, Executive Director of the Dancing Rabbit
Ecovillage

Final Project Work Session

Due: Polished Draft of Final Project

Week 10 - Sharing and Reflecting on Our Work

Tues., 3/10

Social Change Agent Activity/Discussion

Prep for Community Partner Presentations

Course Retrospective

Course Evaluations

Thurs., 3/12

Community Partner Presentation & Final Celebration (Location TBD)
Farewell!

Due: Electronic and Hard Copies of Final Projects
 Reflective Writing #6