

Forests, Narrative and Social Movements

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EB 93

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Ecosystems may not only be more complex than we think, they may be more complex than *we can think*”

- Frank Elgin

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.

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, diversity, equity and social justice, ethical and social responsibility)
 - a. Students will become familiar with different understandings and theories of social change.
 - b. They will explore and reflect upon their own personal experience and motivations for change in this world.
2. *Social Movements* (critical thinking, diversity, equity and social justice, ethical and social responsibility)
 - a. Students will analyze different social movement theories. This will include knowledge of their origins, functioning, form and influence.
 - b. 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, diversity, equity and social justice, ethical and social responsibility)
 - a. 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, diversity, equity and social justice, ethical and social responsibility)
 - a. 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, diversity, equity and social justice, ethical and social responsibility)
 - a. 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)
 - a. 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. *Narratives* (critical thinking, communication)
 - a. 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, diversity, equity and social justice, communication 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/>).

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 are three caveats here:

1. 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.

2. Attendance is a central and mandatory part of this course. Missing a set amount of classes will make you eligible to only receive certain grades (see below) unless you and I create plans for make-up work that is mutually agreeable to us both.
 - a. If you miss two classes you can get no higher than an A-
 - b. If you miss three classes you can get no higher than a B
 - c. If you miss four classes you can get no higher than a C
 - d. If you miss five classes you can get no higher than a D
 - e. You must attend at least five classes to pass the course
3. I always accept late work, but if you turn in a substantive part of the coursework at the end without having been on top of it throughout the term please think hard about the grade you assign yourself, especially if you are considering an A or B. This is appropriate sometimes, but it is very rare.

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
Interview
Final Reflection and Self-Evaluation
Community-Based Learning
 Bark field-session 1
 Bark field-session 2
 Bark field-session 3

Student Conduct and Technology

It is encouraged that you the 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. 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.

Bari, Judi (1994) Timber Wars. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

Berry, Wendell. "A Native Hill." The Hudson Review. (1968-1969) 601-634.

Bevington, Douglas. (2009) The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Freeman, Jo, ed. (1999) Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.

Heiland, Robert Leo. (1995) Overstory Zero: Real Life in Timber Country. Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books.

Le Guin, Ursula. (1997) "Thoughts on Narrative" Dancing at the Edge of the World. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Le Guin, Ursula. (1972) “The Word for World is Forest” Again, Dangerous Visions. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Luoma, Jon (1999) The Hidden Forest: Biography of an Ecosystem. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press.

Oregon Historical Society (2010) “Instructions for Accomplishing an Oral History.”

Reinsborough, Patrick and Canning, Doyle (2010) Re:Imagining Change – How to Use Story-based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Ritchie, Donald A. (2003) Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Scarce, Rick (2006) Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Solint, Rebecca (2005) Hope in the Dark: The Untold History of People Power. New York, NY: Canongate.

Valiant, John (2005) Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company.

Other Potentially Useful Readings

Social Change, Social Movements and Forest Defense

Bari, Judi (1994) Timber Wars. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

Bobo, Kim, Kendall, Jakie and Max, Steve (2001) Organizing for Social Change. Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press.

Chase, Alston (1995) In a Dark Wood: The Fight over Forest and the Rising Tyranny of Ecology. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Dietrich, William (1992) The Final Forest: The Battle for the Last Great Trees of the Pacific Northwest. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Durbin, Kathi (1996) Tree Huggers: Victory, Defeat and Renewal in the Northwest Ancient Forest Campaign. Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books.

Jensen, Derrick and Draffan, George (2003) Strangely Like War: The Global Assault on Forests. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Freeman, Jo, ed. (1999) Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, eds. (2007) The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Moyer, Bill (2001) Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Satterfiled, Terre (2002) Anatomy of a Conflict: Identity, Knowledge and Emotion in Old-Growth Forests. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Scarce, Rick (2006) Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Whitesell, Edward, ed. (2004) Defending Wild Washington: A Citizen's Action Guide. Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books.

Forest Ecology

Leopold, Aldo (1966) A Sand County Almanac. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Norse, Elliot A. (1990) Ancient Forests of the Pacific Northwest. Covelo, CA: Island Press.

Maser, Chris and Sedell, James (1994) From the Forest to the Sea: The Ecology of Wood in Streams, Rivers, Estuaries and Oceans. Delray Beach, FL: St. Lucie Press.

Maser, Chris (1989) Forest Primeval: The Natural History of an Ancient Forest. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Luoma, Jon (1999) The Hidden Forest: Biography of an Ecosystem. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press.

The Human Relationship to Nature

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

Dobson, Andrew (1990) Green Political Thought. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.

Jenson, Derrick (1994) A Language Older Than Words. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Louv, Richard (2005) Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

McKibben, Bill (1989) The End of Nature. New York, NY: Random House.

Moore, Kathleen D. (2010) Wild Comfort: The Solace of Nature. Boston, MA: Trumpter.

Moore, Kathllen D. (2004) Pine Island Paradox. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions

Moore, Kathllen D. (1999) Holdfast: At home in the Natural World. New York, NY: Lyons Press.

Raban, Jonathan (1999) Passage to Junaeu: A Sea and its Meaning. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Robbins, William (1997) Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story 1800-1940. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Valiant, John (2005) Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company.

Macy, Joanna (2012) "A Wild Love for the World." On Being. Podcast.
<<http://www.onbeing.org/program/wild-love-world/61>>