

PHIL 2500 Environment & Society (Section 001)

Instructor Contact

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Course Description

This class explores ethical, ecological and political dimensions of pressing contemporary environmental issues including public land management, ocean plastic pollution, green energy, and global climate change. We will examine underlying assumptions about human-nature relationships, paying particular attention to the interconnections between environmental and social concerns. Over the course of the semester, our focus will shift from defining and analyzing environmental crises to thinking creatively about how to move toward more just sustainable futures.

Course Structure

This is a fully asynchronous (no scheduled Zoom meetings) online course. Your interaction with me, your TA and with your fellow students will primarily take place in Canvas. I am available for Zoom office hours by appointment (email to schedule). There are 5 weeks of content that you will move through, grouped around four main themes: *Nature and Public Lands*; *Plastic Pollution*; *Climate Crisis*; and *Sustainable Futures*.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Analyze key concepts and underlying assumptions associated with contemporary environmental issues
2. Connect environmental issues with social and political concerns

3. Critically evaluate possible actions and solutions for addressing environmental issues

Materials

All readings are available for free either as links in Canvas or via the UNT library course reserves. The details are on each week's respective "Materials" page.

Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

UNT IT Help Desk

Email:

helpdesk@unt.edu

Live Chat:

<https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk/chatsupport>

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 330

Hours and Availability: Visit <https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk> for up-to-date hours and availability

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-get-help-with-Canvas-as-a-student/ta-p/498)

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Course Requirements

Assignment	Points Possible	Percentage of Final Grade
Assignment 1 – <i>Reflection Paper</i>	10 points	10%
Assignment 2 – <i>Tech Critique Paper</i>	20 points	20%
Assignment 3 – <i>Just Futures Paper</i>	20 points	20%
5 Quizzes x 5 points	25 points	25%
Participation 5 Discussion Forums x 5 points	25 points	25%
Total Points Possible	100 points	100%

Final Grades will be based on the A-F scale,

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%,

D = 60-69%,

F = 59% and below.

Quizzes 25%

There are 5 short quizzes. These consist of multiple choice and true/false questions directly related to the readings. They are designed to keep you engaged and on track, not to trick you. You are welcome to consult the readings and other course materials as you take the quizzes, however, there is a **20 minute time** limit so be prepared.

Discussions 25%

There are 5 discussion forums. These are designed to get you thinking and chatting with one another about issues pertaining to the material in each module. For each discussion, participation requires a minimum of **an original post and two responses** (except for our Week 5 discussion, which only requires a post and no replies). You will find the prompts and more details about each discussion's requirements in Canvas.

Papers 50%

There are **three** larger written assignments. The first is worth 10%, and the remaining two are worth 20% each. Details on Canvas.

Course Policies

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT's full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus. See these [Engagement Guidelines](https://digitalstrategy.unt.edu/clear/online-communication-tips.html#:~:text=General%20Guidelines,avoid%20writing%20in%20all%20caps.) (<https://digitalstrategy.unt.edu/clear/online-communication-tips.html#:~:text=General%20Guidelines,avoid%20writing%20in%20all%20caps.>) for more information.

Late Work

Each assignment has a clearly marked due date. Late work will only be accepted with **prior permission** from the instructor. If you are going to miss a deadline for reasons beyond your control, please email me as soon as possible so we can work out the best path

forward. Otherwise, all work turned in after the due date/time will receive a grade of zero unless the student has a [university-excused absence \(opens in a new window\)](#) and provides documentation with 48 hours of the missed deadline.

I recognize that many of us are still working in less-than ideal circumstances and often with intensified non-academic responsibilities. Please contact me if you are unable to make assignment deadlines due to issues related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity: According to UNT [Policy 06.003](#), Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Under UNT policy, use of AI to generate content without permission is considered a form of cheating (receiving unauthorized assistance).

AI Policy

Use of AI to generate content without permission is not allowed. If you choose to use Grammarly or similar for spelling and minor grammar edits, you must submit a clean draft – mistakes and all – as well as final version that discloses what program you used and how. All written work, including weekly responses, will be submitted through Turnitin, which has an integrated AI-checker. Given the possibility of false positives, I strongly suggest drafting your work with track changes on in word or through a google doc with version history that clearly shows your writing process.

ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/) (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's [Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail [Eagle Connect](https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect) (<https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>).

Survivor Advocacy

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648.

Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

Federal Regulation

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](http://www.ecfr.gov/) (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

(1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.

(2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

Student Verification

UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See [UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).

Academic Support & Student Services

Student Support Services

Mental Health

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
(<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
(<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
(<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/student-counseling/services/individual-counseling.html)
(<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/student-counseling/services/individual-counseling.html>)

COURSE SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES:

WEEK 1 Introduction + Environment, Nature, Wilderness Modules (Available 05/19/25)

Reading

- The Syllabus
- Marris, Emma. 2013. "The Yellowstone Model," Pp.17-36 in *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*. Bloomsbury.
- Crist, Eileen. "The affliction of human supremacy." *The Ecological Citizen* 1 (1): 61 – 64.

Due Dates

05/21 Confirmation and Syllabus Quiz

05/23 Week 1 Discussion Post

05/24 Quiz 1

05/25 Week 1 Discussion - 2 Replies

WEEK 2 Public Lands and Exclusion (with Bears Ears case study) (Available 05/22/25)

Reading

- Finney, Carolyn. 2014. "Bamboozled," Pp. 21-31 in *Black Faces, White Spaces: Rethinking the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. UNC Press.
- Goetzen, Clarisse. 2021. "Understanding the Bears Ears National Monument Debate." *The Alliance for Citizen Engagement*, September 16th.
- Smith, David and Oliver Milman. 2017. "Trump slashes size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase national monuments in Utah." *The Guardian*, December 4th.
- Herrera, Jack. 2024. "Native tribes are getting a slice of their land back — under the condition that they preserve it." *Los Angeles Times*, January 3rd

Due Dates

05/30 Week 2 Discussion Post

05/31 Quiz 2

06/01 Week 2 Discussion – 2 replies

WEEK 3 Plastic Pollution (Available 05/29/25)

Reading

- Maniates, Michael. 2002. "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?" Pp. 43-66 in Thomas Princen et al (Eds.) *Confronting Consumption*. MIT Press.
- Simmonds, Charlotte. 2019. "How you're recycling plastics wrong from coffee cups to toothpaste." *The Guardian*, June 17th.
- Semuels, Alana. 2019. "Is this the end of recycling?." *The Atlantic*, March 5th.

- Syberg, Kristian. 2022. "Why Recycling Isn't the Answer to the Plastic Pollution Problem." *Scientific American*, December 13th.

Due Dates

06/06 Week 3 Discussion Post

06/07 Quiz 3

06/08 Reflection Paper due 11:59pm

06/08 Week 3 Discussion – 2 replies

WEEK 4 Climate, Technology & Justice (Available 06/05/25)

Reading/Watching

- Boucher, Martin J and Philip Loring. 2017. "[Climate change isn't a tech problem so we need more than a tech solution.](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) *Ensia*. March 20th.
- Fleming, Jim. 2017. "Excuse Us While We Fix the Sky: WEIRD Supermen and Climate Engineering." *Environment & Society* 4 (23-28).
- Shiva, Vandana. 2015. "Soil, Not Oil," Pp. 91-126 in *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*. North Atlantic Books.
- *Anote's Ark* (2018 documentary).

Due Dates

06/13 Week 4 Discussion Post

06/14 Quiz 4

06/15 Tech Critique Paper due 11:59pm

06/15 Week 4 Discussion – 2 replies

WEEK 5 Imagining Just Futures (Available 06/11/25)

Reading

- Alaimo, Stacy. 2012. "Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanisms and Unknown Futures." *PMLA* 127(3): 558-564.
- Oreskes, Naomi and Erik M. Conway. 2013. "The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future." *Daedalus* 142(1): 40-58.
- Garnet Jones, Adam. 2020. "History of the New World" Pp.16-24 in *Love After the End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit & Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction* edited by Joshua Whitehead.

Due Dates

06/20 Week 5 Discussion Post

06/21 Quiz 5

06/21 Just Futures Paper due 11:59pm

No discussion replies necessary in Week 5