

**Tompkins Cortland Community College**

**Master Course Syllabus**

**Course Discipline and Number: RECR 270**

**Year: 2024-2025**

**Course Title: Wilderness and the American Culture**

**Credit Hours: 3**

**I. Course Description:** This course is a chronological survey of wilderness and the philosophy of wilderness through the ages encouraging increased aesthetic perception and deepened awareness of the human experience through contact with the wilderness. Studying the history and concept of wilderness helps us to understand ourselves and circumstances of our situation. Concepts such as art, literature, politics, romanticism, the enlightenment, and religion are explored through our relationship with the wilderness. Though the focus of this course is on the wilderness and its impact on the American culture, the concept of wilderness from non-western civilizations is explored, and contrasted as well. RECR 270 fulfills the SUNY General Education Humanities requirement. Prerequisites: ENGL100; prior completion of RDNG 116 if required by placement. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.) Fall semesters.

**II. Additional Course Information:**

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| 1. This course examines the impact and role wilderness has had on the rise of Western Civilization, from the old world to current modern issues and events. Relevant Eastern culture views on wilderness will also be briefly discussed. |
| 2. The course requires a substantial amount of reading for each unit as well as completing study guides and participating in class discussions. Reading comprehension, analytical, and discussion skills will be deployed.               |
| 3. Students will need to master each topic area, typically through reading the required text book and completing study guides and weekly quizzes, as they progress through the course.   |

**III. Student Learning Outcomes**

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

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| 1. Explain the origins of attitudes and environmental preferences about, early reactions to, and contemporary thought regarding the American wilderness.   |
| 2. Outline the role connection with the wilderness had on the development of western civilization and the stages of human sociocultural phases that shaped American culture, including the Enlightenment/Age of Reason, Romanticism, and Primitivism.      |
| 3. Explain the connections and relationships between the idea of wilderness/nature and cultural aspects such as art, literature, religion, law, and politics and how each shaped the others and the creation of a National Wilderness Preservation System. |
| 4. Outline the connections between the wilderness and American culture with individuals including St. Francis, Locke, Kant, Emerson, Thoreau, Turner, Marsh, Roosevelt, Muir, Pinchot, Johnson, Leopold, and others.                                       |
| 5. Identify contemporary issues regarding wilderness and wilderness use.   |

#### IV. Tompkins Cortland Institutional Learning Outcomes; Program Learning Outcomes; SUNY General Education Outcomes

##### Tompkins Cortland ILOs

Complete this section for “service” courses only (e.g. courses that are required of all students; courses that are not program specific but satisfy liberal arts requirements; or commonly used in multiple academic programs to meet non-program-specific requirements). Check only Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that are meaningfully developed and assessed in this course. For each ILO chosen, include the SLO to which it aligns.

Students will:

- ☐ Communicate effectively, in oral and written forms, taking into consideration audience and purpose.
- ☐ Apply principles and methods of scientific inquiry and quantitative reasoning appropriate to their discipline.
- ☐ Use information, critical thinking, and the creative process to solve problems and reach conclusions.
- ☐ Use technology appropriate to their discipline.
- ☒ Describe the ways in which social, economic, or environmental sustainability depends on their own and the collective contributions of a diversity of ideas and people.

##### **SLOs:**

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|---|
| 1. Explain the origins of attitudes and environmental preferences about, early reactions to, and contemporary thought regarding the American wilderness.  |
| 2. Outline the role connection with the wilderness had on the development of western civilization and the stages of human sociocultural phases that shaped American culture, including the Enlightenment / Age of Reason, Romanticism, and Primitivism. |

##### Program Learning Outcomes

Complete this section for program-specific courses (e.g. those that share the same 4 letter designation as the academic program or satisfy requirements in related programs). List the academic program(s) here and note which Student Learning Outcomes align to specific Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Please see the MCS Instructions for more details.

Specify the Academic Program

**Recreation Leadership A.S. and Outdoor Recreation A.S.**

##### **PLO:**

Describe /explain the history, development, impact, and value of leisure, recreation and parks to individuals, society, and the environment.

##### **SLOs**

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Explain the origins of attitudes and environmental preferences about, early reactions to, and contemporary thought regarding the American wilderness.   |
| 2. Outline the role connection with the wilderness had on the development of western civilization and the stages of human sociocultural phases that shaped American culture, including the Enlightenment / Age of Reason, Romanticism, and Primitivism.    |
| 3. Explain the connections and relationships between the idea of wilderness/nature and cultural aspects such as art, literature, religion, law, and politics and how each shaped the others and the creation of a National Wilderness Preservation System. |

**PLO:**

Describe/explain the role of the recreation professional as an advocate for leisure, diversity, human rights, and services for individuals with illnesses and disabilities.

**SLO**

3. Explain the connections and relationships between the idea of Wilderness/nature and cultural aspects such as art, literature, religion, law, and politics and how each shaped the others and the creation of a National Wilderness Preservation System.

**SUNY General Education Outcomes**

If this course **assesses** a SUNY GEN ED Outcome, check all that apply and indicate which course outcome(s) address each checked item:

☐ CRITICAL THINKING - Students will:

- a. identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; and
- b. develop well-reasoned arguments.

☐ INFORMATION MANAGEMENT - Students will:

- a. perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
- b. understand and use basic research techniques; and
- c. locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

☒ GENERAL EDUCATION CATEGORY - Area(s):

For courses that are approved to meet one (or more) of the ten SUNY General Education categories, indicate which category the course fulfills, and which outcome(s) are aligned with the SUNY outcomes for that category:

**Area 7 Humanities**

Knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.

1. Explain the origins of attitudes and environmental preferences about, early reactions to, and contemporary thought regarding the American wilderness.
2. Outline the role connection with the wilderness had on the development of western civilization and the stages of human sociocultural phases that shaped American culture, including the Enlightenment / Age of Reason, Romanticism, and Primitivism.

☐ This course does not address any of the above Tompkins Cortland ILOs, PLOs, or SUNY General Education Outcomes.

**V. Essential Topics/Themes**

1. Old World roots of opinion – Origins of wilderness attitudes, including religion
2. A wilderness condition – Discovering the New World
3. The Romantic Wilderness - The Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Deism
4. The American Wilderness – Creating the American culture, a distinct identity compared to Europe
5. Henry David Thoreau and wilderness philosophy - Transcendentalism

6. John Muir and wilderness conservation and preservation – Leading the world, new ideas
7. Aldo Leopold and wilderness ethics
8. Wilderness preservation
9. The wilderness cult
10. Philosophical aspects of wilderness
11. The irony of victory – wilderness overuse
12. The international perspective
13. Alaska and contemporary wilderness ideas and issues
14. The future of wilderness

## VI. Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
1. Quizzes	30-70%
2. Written research report or project	10-30%
3. Final Exam	10-30%
4. Homework and other assignments	10-30%
NOTE: The course instructor, with approval of the program chair, can make changes to evaluation methods.	

## VII. Texts – ☒ Required      ☐ Recommended      ☐ Used for more than one course (list courses)

1. Nash, R. F. <i>Wilderness and the American Mind</i> . 5 <sup>th</sup> ed. (2014). New Haven: Yale.
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Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

## VIII. Bibliography of Supplemental Materials

1. Bergon, F. (ed.) <i>The Wilderness Reader</i> . 1980, Reno: University of Nevada.
2. Callicott, J. B., & M. P. Nelson. (Eds.) <i>The Great New Wilderness Debate</i> . 1998, Athens, GA: Georgia.
3. Dustin, D. (1999). <i>The Wilderness Within</i> . (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.) Champaign, IL: Sagamore.
4. Oelschlaeger, M. (1991). <i>The Idea of Wilderness</i> . New Haven: Yale.
5. Quinn, D. (1992). <i>Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit</i> . New York: Bantam.
6. Trimble, S. (ed.) (1995). <i>Words From the Land</i> . (exp. ed.) Reno: University of Nevada.
7. Adirondack Mountain Club. <i>The Forest Preserve of New York State</i> .
8. Amarotico, J. <i>Thomas Cole in the Adirondacks</i> .
9. Dubos, R. <i>Franciscan Conservation versus Benedictine Stewardship</i>
10. Cornell, G. <i>Native Americans and Environmental Thought: Thoreau and the Transcendentalists</i> .
11. Eliot, J. L. <i>T.R.'s Wilderness Legacy</i> .
12. Emerson, R. W. <i>Nature</i> .
13. Dickenson, J. <i>Trailhead of Wilderness</i> .

14. Johnson, W. <i>An Ecological View of History</i> .
15. Himes & Himes. <i>The Sacrament of Creation</i> .
16. Hardin, G. <i>The Tragedy of the Commons</i> .
17. Mathers, K. (ed.) <i>Important Events in the History of American Attitudes Toward Wilderness</i> .
18. McFague, S. <i>A Square in the Quilt: One Theologian's Contribution to the Planetary Agenda</i> .
19. Muir, J. <i>The Range of Light</i> .
20. Muir, J. <i>Emerson at Yosemite</i>
21. Muir, J. <i>The Philosophy of John Muir</i>
22. Myres, S. L. <i>The Pleasing Awfulness: Women's Views of Wilderness</i>
23. Nash, R. <i>Do Rocks have Rights?</i>
24. Nash, R.F. <i>Why Wilderness?</i>
25. Old Testament (RSV) - Genesis 1- 3; Exodus 20: 1 -1 7; Micah 6:8
26. Quammen, D. <i>The Disappeared</i> .
27. Rockefeller, S.C. & J. C. Elder (eds.) <i>Introduction (to Spirit and Nature)</i> .
28. Rockefeller, S.C. <i>Faith and Community in an Ecological Age</i> .
29. Speolhof, P. <i>Till &amp; Keep the Earth: A Reformation of Christian Stewardship</i>
30. Teal, E.W. <i>Introduction to the Wilderness World of John Muir</i> .
31. Thoreau, H.D. <i>Where I Lived, and What I Lived For</i> . (from Walden)
32. Thoreau, H.D. <i>Walking</i> .
33. Tucker, W. <i>Is Nature Too Good for Us?</i>
34. United Nations, World Charter for Nature
35. White, L. <i>The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis</i> .

*Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.*

## IX. Other Learning Resources

**Audiovisual:** None specified

### Electronic

- Internet sites such as CIA WorldFactbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>).
- Databases containing information about countries and culture, including encyclopedias

**Other:** None specified

**Attendance Policy:** To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.

**Services for Students with Disabilities:** It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for academic adjustments. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.

**Academic Integrity:** Every student at Tompkins Cortland Community College is expected to act in an academically honest fashion in all aspects of his or her academic work: in writing papers and reports, in taking examinations, in

*performing laboratory experiments and reporting the results, in clinical and cooperative learning experiences, and in attending to paperwork such as registration forms.*

*Any written work submitted by a student must be his or her own. If the student uses the words or ideas of someone else, he or she must cite the source by such means as a footnote. Our guiding principle is that any honest evaluation of a student's performance must be based on that student's work. Any action taken by a student that would result in misrepresentation of someone else's work or actions as the student's own — such as cheating on a test, submitting for credit a paper written by another person, or forging an advisor's signature — is intellectually dishonest and deserving of censure.*

*Several degree programs offer student learning opportunities (such as internships, field work, and clinical experiences) outside the standard classroom setting. As part of the learning process, students must understand and engage in conduct that adheres to principles guiding employment within the professional workplace. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, academic integrity, accountability, reliability, respect, use of appropriate language and dress, civility, professional ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness. Disciplinary action may be initiated for inappropriate conduct occurring while participating in any course-related project or event.*