**ESST 2300: Introduction to Environmental and Sustainability Studies**

**PROFESSOR**: C. MORRIS

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**FACULTY PROFILE:** <https://www.uta.edu/mentis/public/#profile/profile/view/id/1212/category/3>

**OFFICE HOURS**: Tue 2:30-3:30, 5:00-6:00, Thu 2:30-3:30

**SECTION INFORMATION**: ESST 2300, SECTION 001

**TIME AND PLACE**: Tue/Thu 3:30-4:50 UH 001

**CONTENT:** This course will introduce students to basic concepts necessary to understand and engage present-day debates over policy, politics, and science of sustainability and the relationship between people and the natural environment. This will be accomplished primarily be exploring the history of sustainability and the human-environmental relationship in the United States. The history of the United States has been shaped by a close relationship between people and the North American environment, relationships that have not always been sustainable. The land has altered human behavior and touched human consciousness as surely as people have transformed the land in ways both constructive and destructive. From the colonial period when nature mediated relations between Europeans and Native Americans to cattle ranching in the West to modern environmental engineering to conservation and environmentalist politics, this class will explore the largely unconsidered but crucial role non-human nature has played in the human history of America (and vice versa).

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** By the end of the semester students will be able to explain the concept of sustainability and related concepts, and to apply those concepts critically and thoughtfully to issues and examples drawn from the relationship between people and the natural environment in the present and in American history.

**TEXTBOOKS:** Thomas Thwaites, *The Toaster Project*

Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature*

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*

**ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:**

Four Writing Exercises (10 points each) 40 points

Three Exams (20 points each) 60 points

**Writing Exercises:** There will be four writing exercises, in which students will explain in a brief essay (500 words) a key concept as it applies to their own lives.

**Exams:** There will be two midterm exams and a final exam covering class readings and discussions. These exams will not be cumulative.

**Extra Credit:** Extra-credit opportunities will be available. (More information to follow.)

**Missed assignments and Exams:** Students with a valid, documented reason for missing a writing assignment or exam will be permitted an extension or make-up exam as arranged with the instructor.

**ATTENDANCE:**

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students’ academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I will not assign a grade specifically for attendance, however, I will take not of attendance for diagnostic reasons, to monitor student engagement, progress, reading comprehension, and oral communication skills. Furthermore, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients “begin attendance in a course.” UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels; see “Student Support Services,” below.

As a general rule, for every credit hour earned, a student should spend 3 hours per week working outside of class. Hence, a 3-credit course might have a minimum expectation of 9 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Disability Accommodations:** UTArlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA),* and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.* All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of **a letter certified** by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD).Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting: **The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability).

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit*[*uta.edu/eos*](http://www.uta.edu/hr/eos/index.php)*.*

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated.*For information regarding Title IX, visit* [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or [jmhood@uta.edu](file:///C:\Users\hannabas\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\697W32M3\jmhood@uta.edu).

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code in their courses by having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University. Additional information is available at <https://www.uta.edu/conduct/>.

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in face-to-face and online classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” are directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback via the SFS database is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. Students’ anonymity will be protected to the extent that the law allows. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law and aggregate results are posted online. Data from SFS is also used for faculty and program evaluations. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** for semester-long courses**,** a period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**Student Support Services**:UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/current/academic-support/learning-center/tutoring/index.php), [major-based learning centers](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/college-based-clinics-labs.php), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/advising.php), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/current/academic-support/mcnair/index.php). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*NOTE: As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.*

WEEK ONE

Jan. 16 Introduction. Lecture/Discussion: What is Nature?

Reading Assignment: *The Toaster Project*, pages 9-87.

Jan. 18 Handout and discuss first writing assignment, due in one week. Begin discussion of *The Toaster Project*

READING: *The Toaster Project*, pages 88-177.

WEEK TWO

Jan. 23 *The Toaster Project*, general discussion of the book, concepts, applications

Jan. 25 Lecture/Discussion: The Environmental Footprint of Pre-Columbian Americans

**FIRST WRITING EXERCISE DUE**: Environmental Footprint of a Cell Phone

WEEK THREE

Jan. 30 Discussion of Writing Exercises

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Introduction

Feb. 1 Lecture: Early Americans and the American “Wilderness”

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapters One and Two

WEEK FOUR

Feb. 6 Discussion: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapters One and Two

Feb. 8 Discussion continued

WEEK FIVE

Feb. 13 **FIRST EXAM** on Lectures, discussions and readings, including *The Republic of Nature*, Introduction, chapters 1, 2.

Feb. 15 Lecture/Discussion: People Seeing Plants Seeing People

READING: Michael Pollan, *Botany of Desire*

**WEEK SIX MICHAEL POLLAN WEEK**

**Feb. 20 Discussion continued: *Botany of Desire***

**FEB. 20 MICHAEL POLLAN LECTURE, 7:30 P.M., TEXAS HALL (**[**https://www.uta.edu/maverickspeakers/2017-18/michael-pollan.php**](https://www.uta.edu/maverickspeakers/2017-18/michael-pollan.php)**)**

**FEB. 21 MASTER CLASS WITH MICHAEL POLLAN (Time and place tbd)**

**Feb. 22 Michael Pollan post mortem**

WEEK SEVEN

Feb. 27 **SECOND WRITING EXERCISE DUE.**

Lecture: A Republic of Commodities

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Three

Mar. 1 Discussion: Sustaining Slavery: Cotton Plantation Agriculture

WEEK EIGHT

Mar. 6 Lecture/Discussion: Capitalism and the Conquest of the Continent

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Six

Mar. 8 Discussion continued

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

WEEK NINE

Mar. 20 Lecture/Discussion: Using Nature to Destroy the Planet: The Invention of the Atom

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Seven

Mar. 22 Discussion continued

WEEK TEN

Mar. 27 **SECOND EXAM** on *The Republic of Nature*, Chapters 3, 6, and 7.

Mar. 29 Lecture/Discussion: Intersections of Science and the Humanities

READING: Carson, *Silent Spring*, selected chapters to be determined

WEEK ELEVEN

Apr. 3 Discussion of *Silent Spring*

Handout for Third Writing Exercise, due in one week.

Apr. 5 Discussion of *Silent Spring*

WEEK TWELVE

Apr. 10 Lecture/Discussion: Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Eight

Apr. 12 Discussion

WEEK THIRTEEN

Apr. 17 Lecture/discussion: Sustainability Economics

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Nine

Apr. 19 Discussion continued

**THIRD WRITING EXERCISE DUE**, on the history of uses and meanings of the word “sustainable.”

WEEK FOURTEEN

Apr. 24 Trinity River Project Presentations

Apr. 26 Trinity River Project Presentations

WEEK FIFTEEN

May 1 Trinity River Project Presentations

May 3 **FOURTH WRITING EXERCISE DUE** at this time, on a concept discussed in this class and how it was applied by classmates or how it might be applied to the history of the Upper Trinity River Basin, based on class presentations.

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, May 10, 2:00-4:30