



Introduction to this Document

The goal of this guide is to provide a big picture overview of the HMI Gap Environmental Studies (ES) curriculum and how it integrates with the Gap progression and other curriculum. This guide, while not exhaustive of the full array of environmental topics that could be taught during a Gap program, is comprehensive. As such, faculty should strive to teach most of the topics covered in this guide.

About the Environmental Studies Curriculum

Through field expeditions in diverse natural areas combined with readings, class discussion, hands-on stewardship projects, and reflection, students will gain a comprehensive and applied understanding of the challenges of 21st Century conservation. Over three months, students will explore questions concerning humans' relationship to the natural world and will delve into the philosophical and ethical challenges and dimensions to conservation, both domestically in the United States and in Chilean and Argentine Patagonia.

Students have the option to enroll in the Colorado Mountain College course entitled "Wilderness and the American Ethic," (3 credits) or a Western State Colorado University course entitled "Land Conservation Ethics" (3 credits). Students must complete additional work after the conclusion of HMI Gap to receive credit through Western State.

Enduring Understandings

The following are the key enduring understandings we hope students walk away with from the Gap Environmental Studies Curriculum.

- Humans and nature exist in a constant state of interaction, affecting each other in intentional and unintentional ways.
- Outdoor recreation, travel, and stewardship are a means of developing a personal relationship with the natural world and place.
- The natural world can be valued in many ways.
- How we define nature and wilderness are socially constructed.
- There are inevitable trade-offs and winners and losers in conservation decisions.

Essential Questions

These are the essential questions that guide our Gap-specific Environmental Studies curriculum. These questions provide the framing for any activities we do related to Environmental Studies and should be referenced throughout the semester as guideposts for student learning.

- Are humans part of, or separate, from nature? What are the implications of this question?
- What is our ethical obligation to the environment/non-human nature?
- What is the value of wilderness? What are the limitations of the wilderness ethic?
- What does stewardship mean? How can humans be effective stewards of nature?
- Is it possible to restore an environment to its natural condition? Should we try to restore the environment to some pre-human condition?
- What are the differences in both environmental ethics and conservation strategies between the US and Chile/Argentina?
- How does human use impact the various ecosystems that we travel through?
- How do we develop a sense of place and is it important that we do so?

Learning Outcomes

At the end of HMI Gap, we hope students will be able to:

1. Have an appreciation of various historical, cultural, and philosophical differences between conceptions of nature.
2. Understand and be able to trace how different theoretical and/or philosophical approaches may lead to different diagnoses of environmental problems and ways to address these problems.
3. Understand the U.S. public land management system and different management approaches to conservation.
4. Understand how the concept of wilderness is a shaper of the American point-of-view and modern society and how this conception of nature may differ in Patagonia.
5. Articulate various arguments for conservation, as well as identify inherent trade-offs from conservation decisions.
6. Practice observation about the natural world as a way of gaining an improved sense of place.
7. Gain a basic understanding of the ecology in each area students travel.
8. Have an improved ability to think, talk, and write intelligently and reflectively (critically) about issues and positions and arguments discussed in this course.



9. Consider and apply theoretical concepts in the areas of environmental ethics to one's own actions and behaviors.
10. Develop basic skills in environmental stewardship, such as trail-building, environmental restoration, and impact mitigation.
11. Articulate one's own personal environmental ethic and idea about their relationship to the natural world.

➤ *Teachable moments* – Often, faculty may bring their own background and experience in environmental topics. Additionally, there are many times when an event or experience arises which presents an excellent opportunity for student learning. We encourage faculty to leverage their own expertise and/or impromptu opportunities for learning to complement the topics covered in this guide.

➤ *Observation* - Alongside teachable moments, faculty and students should inspire each other to observe the surroundings and natural environment. This could come in the form of silent hiking, coming up with questions to present in debrief about the natural world, or hiking with a field guide. Modeling curiosity and mindfulness throughout the course is an excellent way to integrate the ES curriculum in all that we do.

➤ *Field-based activities*: site visits, guest speakers, informal community interactions – We strive to schedule guest speakers who can bring their own experience to bear on the topics we explore throughout Gap. Additionally, students will work alongside other community members in service projects or simply encounter people in the field who may provide an interesting perspective about environmental studies. We encourage faculty to facilitate a debrief reflection about these interactions to enhance students' learning.

➤ *Circle* – Circle can be an excellent venue to speak more personally about an environmental studies topic or issue. Faculty may wish to introduce this as a potential theme to students who begin taking a leadership role in Circle.

Tools for Implementing the Environmental Studies Curriculum

While there are many formal classes and activities specifically designed to achieve the stated course objectives and learning outcomes, environmental studies topics and activities can and should be woven into the entire flow of a Gap semester.

- *Formal classes and discussions* – Faculty should teach formal classes and facilitate discussions throughout the Gap semester, drawing from the curriculum outlined in this guide.
- *Assigned readings and journal writing* – Students will be given an Environmental Studies reader with guided reading questions and journal prompts throughout the course. Faculty should facilitate structured time for students to complete this work.
- *Self-directed journal writing* – Faculty may provide time for students to journal about the environmental studies curriculum without specific prompts.
- *Service-learning* – Woven throughout the Gap semesters are extended service projects designed to mitigate human use or improve a degraded ecosystem. These projects provide hands-on opportunities for students to connect with their natural environment and view firsthand the implications of human impacts.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities

As this curriculum is primarily experiential and field-based, attendance and active participation is critical to student learning and informs their other

assignments. In addition, we will be both visiting and working with local government and non-profit organizations, which demands a high level of respectfulness and professionalism. Students will be evaluated on their regular attendance, active engagement, respectfulness to the class community as well as outside visitors, and preparedness for discussions and activities.



Field journal reflecting on readings, activities, and stewardship project

Students will be required to respond to prompts throughout the semester in their Environmental Studies Reader. These entries are intended to inspire personal contemplation about their values, connection to the environment, and how the service-learning component of the course has influenced them. In addition, they may be asked to journal about the course readings in preparation for a class discussion.

Students will be asked to turn in their journal entry after every assignment and/or prompt. These entries will be evaluated primarily based on depth, honesty, clarity, and connection to course material. However, students should be mindful of writing mechanics and readability.

Letter to a Representative

We will be spending almost six weeks traveling through and recreating on US public lands. In particular, we will be in Southern Utah, where there are several contentious debates occurring concerning the Federal government and State's roles in land management, most notably the Bears Ears National Monument designation as well as ongoing Wilderness Bills for the area. Students will be asked to draft a letter to one of their representatives on a land management topic of their choice. In this letter, students should clearly articulate the issue they are writing about, how they have expertise and a stake to write about this issue, and what action they would like them to take. Students will be asked to send this letter before the group leaves for Patagonia in November. This assignment should be evaluated using the rubric provided in the assignment section of this document.

Personal Environmental Ethic Project (PEEP)

This culminating project is a chance for students to define THEIR personal environmental/conservation ethic. This assignment will challenge them to think critically about the way in which they (as an individual and as a member of society) interact with, use, and think of the natural world. This project is composed of two different components: a short presentation to the class during the semester, which is mandatory for all students, and a 4,000 – 5,000 word paper turned in two weeks after the semester concludes (only for students enrolled in the "Land Conservation Ethics").

Evaluating Students on Environmental Studies

Student engagement with the ES curriculum is a mandatory part of their participation in HMI Gap, regardless of whether they are enrolled in college credit. Environmental Studies and Service Learning are a consistent component of the student evaluation and goal setting process. As such, please refer to the Evaluation section of the "Gap How To" for information about this process generally. However, specific rubrics for evaluating discussions, journal reflection, and assignments are included in this guide.

Evaluating students for college credit

The Co-Director of HMI Gap (Rebecca Schild) is the Instructor of Record for all college credits and is the point person for all ES curriculum. This means she oversees and updates the curriculum and evaluation process. As the Co-Director is not in the field with students the entire semester, it is important for faculty to be rigorous and consistent with evaluating student performance. Please refer to the rubrics included with each major assignment and keep track of these evaluations to turn in at the end of each section.



Course Schedule*

**This is a recommended schedule for teaching the ES curriculum, but is subject to change based on unforeseen circumstance or evaluation of students' understanding.*

Topic/Activity	Readings	Objectives	Timing	Page #
Welcome & Introductions		-Provide big picture overview of ES curriculum for students -Get students excited about the ES curriculum -Cover basic expectations and the evaluation process	1 st 3 days	7
"Tech Toss" and technology norms/expectations	Williams, "This is your Brain on Nature"	-Provide space to reflect on and discuss the role/impact technology has on our lives -Develop norms for technology while on course	1 st 3 days	7
Environmental Ethics Frameworks	Leopold, "The Land Ethic;" And Tinker, "An American Indian Cultural Universe"	-Introduce students to the definition of environmental ethics -Introduce several environmental worldviews -Engage students in considering their own personal environmental worldview	Week 1	8
Value of Wilderness	Stegner, "Wilderness Letter;" Abbey "Freedom and Wilderness;" and the 1964 Wilderness Act	-Understand the origins of the Wilderness Act and arguments for protecting wilderness -Reflect on how the wilderness ethic influences our views of nature and humans' relationship to nature	Week 1-2	
Mountain Ecology	Optional use of Rocky Mountain Field Guides	-Develop basic understanding of ecological concepts -Promote closer observation of the natural world	Week 1-2	
The Trouble With Wilderness	The Breakthrough Institute "Conservation in the Anthropocene;" and excerpts from Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness"	-Understand how nature and wilderness are defined is socially constructed -Introduce the consequences of the wilderness ethic	Week 2-3	
The Trouble with wilderness: Wilderness for Whom?	Peterson, "Parks for all;" White, "Black Women and Wilderness;" USDAC "Honor Native Land Guide"	-Encourage students to consider who is left out or not represented in our system of public lands and outdoor recreation activities and what the potential impact(s) is/are	Week 2-3	



Topic/Activity	Readings	Objectives	Timing	Page #
Alternative perspective taking activity and discussion	Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stretch students to interact with the natural world in a novel way -Consider how everything in nature is interconnected and the implications of this -Continue reflecting on our own personal attitudes and values toward the natural world 	Week 3-4 (ideally in a remote place like the Canyons)	
Desert Ecology	Optional use of Desert Field Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Expand upon basic understanding of ecological concepts in a new environment -Promote closer observation of the natural world 	Week 3-4	
Introduction to US Land Management and Bears Ears National Monument	US Land Management Primer foldout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce students to the U.S. public land management system broadly -Identify specific land management categories students have and will travel through 	Week 4	
Case Study: Bears Ears National Monument	Larsen "Why is Bears Ears National Monument causing controversy?" Buhay, "Bears Ears: Why not?" and Thompson, "At Bears Ears, Trump and Zinke ignored everyone but industry"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Connect course content to real world controversy -Learn about the significance of Bears Ears while recreating and doing service in the area -Provide an issue students can direct their letter to a representative 	Week 4	
Stewardship and Restoration	Marris, "Handle with care;" HCN "A displaced California tribe reclaims sacred land"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss the role of human intervention in natural systems -Consider the differences and implications between the wilderness ethic and a stewardship ethic 	Beginning to middle of service project	
Debate: Recreation and Conservation	Linck, "Your stoke won't save us;" and Geltman, "Actually, I think stoke will save us"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consider where recreation interests are placed within the larger conservation space -Encourage students to reflect on their reasons for valuing nature and supporting/not supporting conservation 	Late in Moab or in Patagonia	
Letter to your Representative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engage students in the democratic process, giving voice to decisions about public lands -Synthesize their time/experiences in Utah and what they are walking away with 	Before leaving for Patagonia	
Tourism and the Ethics of Place	Sanders, "Staying Put;" Daniel "A Word in Favor of Rootlessness"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consider the value of sense of place -Reflect on how to be an engaged and ethical traveler 	Week 1 Patagonia	



Topic/Activity	Readings	Objectives	Timing	Page #
Patagonia Ecology	Excerpts from Patagonia Field Guide	-Apply ecological concepts to a new environment -Promote closer observation of the natural world	Week 1 Patagonia	
Background of Parque Patagonia	Patagon Journal, "Making Conservation History: An Interview with Kris Tompkins"	-Give students background information on the Tompkins' conservation efforts in Patagonia and the controversy it has caused	Week 1-2 Patagonia	
Debate: Conservation in Patagonia	The Atlantic, "The entrepreneur who wants to save paradise;" Nelsen, "In Patagonia, Caught Between Visions of the Future;" Dowie, "Conservation Refugees."	-Consider multiple stakeholders perspectives and interests toward Patagonia National Park -Apply different ethical frameworks to a real world issue	Week 2 Patagonia	
Learn Your Trace Discussion		-Consider the limitations of the LNT ethic: get students to think about the impact of their recreation activities beyond what they might directly observe	Week 3 Patagonia	
PEEP presentations		-Students reflect on and articulate their personal environmental ethic	Week 3-4 Patagonia	