Course Description
This course examines environmental planning and natural resource management from multiple perspectives. We will focus on the historical, geographical, and political-legal factors that have shaped the policy and governance of public and privately held lands in the American West. The course will utilize case studies from the California’s Sierra Nevada and Central Valley, however we will also scale up and out to understand how geopolitical forces, market interests, technological innovations, and competing knowledge claims have transformed rural and regional landscapes. Through discussion, presentations, and textual analysis we will cover a wide range of frameworks and topics throughout the semester, some of which include: complexity of socio-ecological systems, political ecology and power, biocentrism and anthropocentrism, the “trouble” with wilderness, recreation and visitor use management, exurbia and amenity migrants, conservation ecology, the commons and contested landscapes, climate change and the media, adaptive management, conservation easements, extractive industries, federal lands agencies and competing mandates, and ecosystem services and human well-being.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes
The goals and learning outcomes of this course are tied to the program learning outcomes of the Environmental Systems graduate program at UC Merced (es.ucmerced.edu).

A. Course Goals
- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of different types of resource governance.
- Understand the different policy mandates and economic interests shaping decision-making between lands management agencies, civil society, and the private sectors.
- Conceptualize complex environmental problems as coupled socio-ecological systems with adaptation, intervention, non-linear states, and uncertain outcomes.
- Communicate conservation and development alternatives in environmental planning to a diverse set of stakeholders.
- Explain present day land use conflict as historically contingent and shaped by competing knowledge and values where multiple uses vie for control and access to resources.
- Apply natural resource management approaches to student research projects in the interdisciplinary environmental sciences to better inform policy and decision-making.

B. Course Learning Outcomes
The first course learning outcome is to enhance student’s core knowledge about natural resources and lands management issues as complex socio-ecological systems where human and
environmental needs are connected. Students will learn about governance, collaboration, and conflict between stakeholders from lands management agencies, non-governmental organizations, and market-based interests. The second learning outcome is to enhance student’s communication skills for conveying planning, science, and public opinion to decision-makers to inform management outcomes. Students will develop and improve critical thinking and writing skills through in-class discussions and critical review of academic papers. The third learning outcome is to instill an ethical, community-based, and life-long framework for students to understand and address natural resource management challenges. Students will accomplish this through a better understanding of how policies, values, and history shape different environmental planning and management outcomes.

Grading and Class Requirements
Your final grade will be based on the following percentage point break down. Class participation includes attendance at each meeting and a willingness to participate in discussion or ask questions (10%). It’s expected you will lead two weekly reading discussions (20%). Given the format of the course it’s important that you attend every class or if you are unable to make a meeting then coordinate with other students on what material was covered. Midway through the course you’ll be required to give a presentation to the class of approximately 15 minutes on your natural resource management paper topic followed by time for questions (20%). The final research paper will consist of an in-depth case study relevant to natural resource management, environmental planning, conservation science, or regulatory politics (30%). The final paper should be approximately 20 pages (double-spaced) with works cited, and you will be expected to apply theoretical frameworks covered in the course to your given topic. You’ll also be asked to submit an initial abstract (300-word limit), outline, and initial set of references on your chosen topic by week 5 of the course (10%) and first draft of the paper with topic background and literature review by week 10 (10%).

Course Policies
• Classroom interaction. I encourage personal views and critical inquiry based on the material and topics at hand. Equally, I expect that the viewpoints of others will be respected. Consider this course to be valuable practice to engage with your peers through professional communication and scholarly discourse.
• Special accommodations. Students who need special accommodations are required to submit the appropriate form to me in person, preferably within the first two to three weeks of the quarter and outside of class. If you will be requesting academic accommodations, you must first contact the Disability Services (http://disabilityservices.ucmerced.edu/).
• Academic integrity. The University has established codes concerning proper academic conduct and the consequences resulting from improper behavior. Please be aware of these policies (http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/content/uc-conduct-standards).
• Life as a UC-Merced Student. Your course facilitators are aware of the many pressures we all face. There are many campus services specifically suited to help you throughout your university career, please take advantage of your resources, including: Academic Advising (http://advising.ucmerced.edu/), Health Services (http://health.ucmerced.edu/), and Counseling and Psychological Services (http://counseling.ucmerced.edu/).
# Class Schedule and Readings

*All topics/dates/assignments are subject to revision

## Theme 1: The commons, knowledge/power, and contested landscapes

### Week 1: Defining the commons

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

### Week 2: Knowledge, power, and contested landscapes (part I)

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

### Week 3: Knowledge, power, and contested landscapes (part II)

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

**Week 4: The New West, exurbia, and amenity migrants**

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

**Week 5: Climate change, the media, and popular culture**

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

*SUBMIT draft abstract, outline and initial references for term paper*

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**Theme 2: Public lands and protected areas management**

**Week 6: The Anthropocene, wilderness, and environmental change**

**Foundational:**
Applied:

**Week 7: Conservation, enclosure, and the ensuing debate**

Foundational:

Applied:

**Week 8: Conservation easements and the role of private lands**

Foundational:

Applied:

**Week 9: Recreation and visitor use management**

Foundational:

**Applied:**

**Week 10: Presentations**
*PRESENT on research topic for approx. 15 minutes to the class w/ time for questions*

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<th>Theme 3: Complexity, resilience, and valuing nature</th>
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**Week 11: Complex adaptive socio-ecological systems (part I)**

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

*SUBMIT 2nd draft of term - 10 pages w/ topic background and literature review*

**Week 12: Complex adaptive socio-ecological systems (part II)**

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

**Week 13: Climate change and adaptive management**

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**

**Week 14: Ecosystem services**

**Foundational:**

**Applied:**


**Week 15: Cultural landscape values and human well-being**

**Foundational:**


**Applied:**


**Guest Discussant: Alejo Kraus-Polk**

**Week 16 (Finals week):**

*SUBMIT paper via email by December 11th at 9:30pm - end of scheduled final exam time*