

Instructor: Dr. Mara Dicenta (she/her) mdicenta@wm.edu

William & Mary, Fall 2023, 3 Credits. COLL 200 ALV

MWF, 9 – 9:50 | Blow Hall 334

Office Hours: Wed. 2:15 – 3:15 pm (Washington, 119) - other hours by appointment.

Land Acknowledgement

William & Mary acknowledges the Indigenous peoples who are the original inhabitants of the lands our campus is on today – the [Cheroenhaka \(Nottoway\)](#), [Chickahominy](#), [Eastern Chickahominy](#), [Mattaponi](#), [Monacan](#), [Nansemond](#), [Nottoway](#), [Pamunkey](#), [Patawomeck](#), [Upper Mattaponi](#), and [Rappahannock](#) tribes – and we pay our respect to their tribal members past and present.

Statement on Slavery and its Legacies

The Board of Visitors acknowledges that William & Mary enslaved people, exploited them and their labor, and perpetuated the legacies of racial discrimination. The Board profoundly regrets these activities, apologizes for them, expresses its deep appreciation for the contributions made by the African and African American members of its community to the vitality of William & Mary then, now, and for all time coming, and commits to continue our efforts to remedy the lingering effects of past injustices.

Course Description

Conservation Ethics deals broadly with the values behind conservation actions. It explores how conservation is shaped by values, politics, and modes of seeing people and nature. By conservation, we mean research, actions, institutions, and policy. And by modes of seeing, we mean how we define what nature is, whose definitions get more traction, and whose definitions are made invisible in the process. This course assumes that what is good and bad for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the Earth is not universal.

For instance, in the face of limited resources, what species do we protect, and which ones let go? Are animals and plants just managed, or do they have a say? Is it better to sterilize, control, or eradicate invasive species? Are scientists more capable of caring for the Earth than communities? Who gets displaced by protected areas?

Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and cultivate the values that guide your own work
- Differentiate ethical positions within conservation research, policy, and practice
- Construct your own ethically supported judgements
- Engage in critical yet constructive conversations
- Improve communication, reading, and writing skills

Course Policies

Is Attendance Mandatory?

Yes, coming to class is crucial to understand and discuss the materials, which will be assessed in your assignments, especially the midterm and final paper. Of course, it's okay to miss class if you have a legitimate reason; just send me a courtesy email.

Everybody gets a free pass for two absences during the semester. After that, I will deduct 0.5 points from your grade for each unaccounted absence.

What happens if I Cheat, Plagiarize, or act Fraudulently?

I take this extremely seriously. Please do not try to rewrite the work of others and make it pass as yours (I notice it most of the time). All assignments must represent your work, so if you are using somebody else's words, cite them.

The [W&M Honor Code](#) defines various forms of academic dishonesty and sanctions. Read it If you are unsure how to cite others properly or what constitutes fraud action. Violating this policy will result in a minimum penalty of zero for that assignment.

Artificial Intelligence

All work submitted in this course, whether in draft or final form, must be your own and must be cited appropriately. You may use AI to help you think of ideas, but you must indicate your use of such tools by including a footnote citing ChatGPT and providing the specific prompt(s) used to generate content. You remain responsible for the validity of all material generated, noting that AI-generated content often contains falsehoods and fictional sources.

I Don't Know if I am Performing Well

I will happily provide feedback on your performance upon request. If you disagree with the evaluation of an assignment, please let me know (I might have mistaken something). Be aware that your grade might be adjusted upward or downward after careful review. To request a revision, you must:

- Do it within three working days after the evaluation.
- Send it written, by email, with a well-reasoned argument.

Can I Submit Late Work?

No late work will receive full credit without prior approval. Unless agreed and justified, I will deduct 5% of the grade for each delayed day.

I am not Feeling Safe in Class

Everyone is strongly discouraged from using discriminatory language and/or hateful ideas. If people say things that make you feel unsafe (including me), please:

- speak to me, email me, or leave an anonymous note in my office box.
- Talk to a peer who can anonymously bring up the issue.

Can I Disagree in Class?

Yes! Topics in class can be personal and political, and discussions will likely involve differences. You are expected to disagree but do so respectfully. When engaged carefully, conflicts can be productive and insightful. Engaging carelessly can result in hard feelings, extreme discomfort, and the closure of cognitive capacities.

Mental and Physical Wellbeing

W&M recognizes that students juggle different responsibilities and can face challenges that make learning difficult. Resources are available at W&M to help students navigate emotional/psychological, physical/medical, material/accessibility concerns, including:

- The W&M Counseling Center at (757) 221-3620. Free and confidential.
- The W&M Health Center at (757) 221-4386.
- For additional support or resources & questions,
- Contact the Dean of Students at 757-221-2510.
- For other [resources available](#), see:



Student Accessibility

W&M accommodates students' diverse abilities following federal laws and university policy. If you need to make special arrangements for class assignments and examinations, please consult me as soon as possible.

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis, contact the Student Accessibility Services staff at [757-221-2512](tel:757-221-2512) or sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official accommodation letter. Learn more at www.wm.edu/sas.

How do we deal with COVID-related issues?

If you test +, you should isolate yourself at home or off campus. If not feasible, isolate in your residence hall following these [guidelines](#) (remember that W&M doesn't coordinate isolation housing anymore, but you can find resources [online](#)).

Please do not attend class if you are sick, and test if you suspect COVID-19. Visit [If You're Feeling Ill](#) and [How to Isolate If You Test Positive](#) for more information.

We will shift to Zoom if more than 5 students or the instructor must be absent, you should notify me about your absence at least one hour before class.

Course Requirements

Preparation and Participation

Includes class participation and BB responses. You must do all the readings before class and submit the required (and graded) BB responses (250 – 300 words, due by Sunday before class).

Participation must be grounded on readings (do not feign having read or give your "opinion"). Facilitating multiple voices and letting others speak is also valued!

Quiz 1

This in-class short quiz will test your knowledge of conservation ethics' main concepts. It will take place on Friday, September 15.

Midterm

A take-home case assignment will assess your understanding of class content.

- Release Date: October 5, around noon.
- Deadline: October 8, 10 pm.

Group Teaching

On Wednesdays, you will teach a session in groups of 3/4 students. The main goal is not to prove you know but to teach us about the reading and the region/case presented (hence, you might need to do some research beyond the reading):

- Plan for 45'
- Your group must email me the teaching outline at least two days before the session (explaining the main idea(s) you will teach) so I can provide feedback.
- Include a creative and engaging activity that helps us learn one tiny thing (a concept or a case). The more creative, the better.
- [Sign up](#) for teaching groups.

Research Project

In groups (3-4 students):

1. Agree on a conservation problem
2. Do research, including at least:
 - a. One Policy document
 - b. Three research papers/reports (from different authors/organizations).
 - c. Three news/blog publications *or* One Movie/Documentary
3. Analyze your sources:
 - a. Identify actors
 - b. Identify at least three different conceptualizations of the problem
 - c. Identify at least three underlying ethical approaches
 - d. Discuss those ethics: opposing, complimentary, collaborative, asymmetrical, adversarial, etc.
4. Design a poster/slide on your research & analysis (draft due 11/10, 10 pm) → 10 points.
5. Present your research during the last two weeks of class. → 15 points
 - a. You will have a total of 15'
 - b. Include a 3-5' pitch about the poster
 - c. Include a "making & doing" component (a short game, a song, a performance, an artifact you built, etc.) that helps us understand the ethics involved.

Individually: Final Reflection Paper (2-3 pages) → 15 points.

1. Summarize group research and results.
2. Make your own ethical suggestion on the conservation problem:
 - a. It can be one of the ones analyzed, a combination, or a completely new one.
 - b. It can be very pragmatic or utopian, applied or theoretical.

3. Sustain your proposal:
 - a. Explain the problems and benefits of the different approaches.
 - b. Use conservation ethics concepts and authors seen in class to support your claims.
 - c. Use your own judgment; it should be an approach you believe.
4. Reflect on the research process with your group and the class, addressing how your proposal reflects your future ethical engagements in conservation and beyond.

Important dates:

9/12	Add/Drop deadline
9/15	Quiz 1 (in class)
10/31	Withdrawal deadline
10/6	Take-home midterm due (10pm)
11/10	Group Project Draft Due (10pm)
11/29-12-6	Group Exhibits
12/12	Final Reflection (due by noon)

Grade breakdown by assignment

Assignment	%
BB responses & Participation	25
Teaching	15
Quiz 1	10
Midterm	10
Group Project Draft	10
Group Exhibit	15
Individual Reflection	15

Course Grade Breakdown

Letter	%	Letter	%
A	93 - 100	C	73 - 77
A-	90 - 92	C-	70 - 72
B+	88 - 89	D+	68 - 69
B	82 - 87	D	63 - 67
B-	80 - 81	D-	60 - 62
C+	78 - 79	F	59 and below

Reading Schedule

Readings will be uploaded to BB; [follow this link to see the Schedule at a Glance](#). Please, be aware that some readings or dates might vary to accommodate emerging issues or guests.

Environmental Ethics and Values

Week 1	Introduction to the course
W	Introductions
F	Becker et al. Ch. 1: the social construction of nature
Week 2	Wolves and Conservation Values
M	<i>Labor Day</i>
W	Worster – Varmint and history of ecology
F	Becker et al environmental values + Queer Ecology
Week 3	Restore to what? Romanticism, Nature Equilibrium, and Ecologically Noble Myths
M	Nadasdy, Paul. 2005. "Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism." <i>Ethnohistory</i> 52 (2): 291–331.
W	Adams, William M. 2012. "When Nature Won't Stay Still: Conservation, Equilibrium and Control." <i>Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era</i> , 220–46.
F	Quiz 1: Conservation Values

Animal Rights, Conservation, & Multispecies Justice

Week 4	Metaphors Matter! Coproduction of Science-Society and NatureCulture
M	Larson - The Metaphorical Links Between Ecology, Ethics, and Society
W	Zuk, Marlene. 2002. <i>Sexual Selections</i> . University of California Press. Chapters 4 & 8
F	Activity: Design and perform conservation metaphors
Week 5	Biopolitics: Enlisting, classifying, and managing life
M	Palmer, Alexandra. 2020. <i>Ethical Debates in Orangutan Conservation</i> . London and New York: Routledge. Intro + Chapter 2
W	Dooren, Thom van. 2015. "A Day with Crows - Rarity, Nativity and the Violent-Care of Conservation." <i>Animal Studies Journal</i> 4 (2): 1–28.
F	Guest Speakers: Columba González Duarte, Alberto E. Morales, & insects! ❖ Extra credit!: Cons. Speaker Series: Sharon Wilcox, Th 9/28
Week 6	Decolonizing Extinction & Animal Research
M	Despret, Vinciane. 2016. <i>What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?</i> Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. – chapters TBA
W	Parreñas, Juno Salazar. 2018. <i>Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation</i> . Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Ch. TBA
F	Midterm Work Time in Class

The Ethics of Science, Scientism, and Global Research

Week 7 Scientism, Co-management, and Indigenous Research

M Nadasdy, Paul. 1999. "The Politics of TEK: Power and the 'Integration' of Knowledge." *Arctic Anthropology* 36 (1–2): 1–18

W Liboiron, M. (2021). *Pollution is Colonialism*. Duke University Press. Introduction + Chapter 1

F NO CLASS – Winter break

Week 8 Purchasing Patagonia: Land-grabbing, science peripheries, and the Rewilding controversy

M Wakild, Emily. 2004. "Purchasing Patagonia: The Contradictions of Conservation in Free Market Chile."

W Lorimer, Jamie, Chris Sandom, Paul Jepson, Chris Doughty, Maan Barua, and Keith J Kirby. 2015. "Rewilding: Science, Practice, and Politics." *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour* 40: 39–62.

❖ **Extra credit!** Conservation Speaker Series: Gladys Kalema, TBA.

F **Guest Speaker: Ulises Balza (Conservation Biologist Tierra del Fuego, WCS).**

Week 9 Amboseli Elephants: Ecotourism & the myths of the "community" and "wild Africa"

M Brockington, Dan, Rosaleen Duffy, and Jim Igoe. 2012. *Nature Unbound*. Chapter 5, "Local Management of Natural Resources"

W Thompson, Charis. 2002. "When Elephants Stand for Competing Philosophies of Nature: Amboseli National Park, Kenya." *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practice*, 166–90.

❖ **Extra credit!** – Watch "The Elephant Queen"

F Group Projects Activity

Decolonizing Conservation

Week 10 Land & Water Back

M Roane, J. T. 2022. "Black Ecologies, Subaquatic Life, and the Jim Crow Enclosure of the Tidewater." *Journal of Rural Studies* 94. Elsevier. (**selection**: 230–237)

W Fisk, J. J., Jacobs, L. A., et al. (2021). Cultivating sovereignty in parks and protected areas: Sowing the seeds of restorative and transformative justice through the #LANDBACK movement. *Parks Stewardship Forum*, 37(3).

❖ **Extra credit!** – [Return National Parks to the Tribes](#) (access through WM library)

F Land and Water Back in Conservation Debate

Speaker & Work on Research Projects

Week 11 Research Projects Group Work

M Research Projects

W Class replaced by Conservation Speaker Series: Ami Vitale

F Research Projects

Ethics of Conservation Technologies and Institutions

Week 12 Do technologies have ethics and politics?

M	Jenkins, Lekelia D. 2021. "Power, Politics, and Culture of Marine Conservation Technology in Fisheries." <i>Conservation Biology</i> 36 (3): e13855.
W	Reo, Nicholas James, and Kyle Powys Whyte. 2012. "Hunting and Morality as Elements of Traditional Ecological Knowledge." <i>Human Ecology</i> 40 (1): 15–27
	Extra credit! Conservation Speaker Series: Steven DeRoy (3–5pm)
F	Technologies Activity
Week 13	Symbiosis & Thanksgiving
M	Remote Class: Watch Margulis Film
Donors, Bosses, & Advocacy Ethics	
Week 14	Groups Exhibits
M	Groups Exhibit I
W	Groups Exhibit II
F	Groups Exhibit III
Week 15	Exhibits and Farewell
M	Groups Exhibit IV
W	Final Paper workshop
F	Farewell activity