

“We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.” —Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*



COMM 4360 (CEL)  
CONSUMING THE EARTH  
Fall 2020 – Tuesday, 2:00-5:00 PM  
Zoom: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/93226855151>  
Passcode: Earth4360

**Instructor:** Dr. Natasha Seegert  
**Email:** [n.seegert@utah.edu](mailto:n.seegert@utah.edu) (Email is the best way to reach me—please use it!)  
**Office:** 2413 LNCO  
**Office Hours:** By appointment (I am on campus almost all days – email me to set up a meeting)

**CEL TA:** Mark Draper, [markhelzendraper@gmail.com](mailto:markhelzendraper@gmail.com)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

We have entered the Age of the Anthropocene: for the first time in human history, the human animal has the capacity to destroy most of life on earth. If we are to heal the wounds of the global environmental crises, we need to do more than buy consumer goods with green seals of approval. Rather, industrialized civilization needs to reconceptualize its relationship with the earth. People need to think and talk differently about (and with) the earth, nature, and humanity. Therefore, any effective response to the general environmental crisis requires a serious analysis of our communication patterns about nature and our human relationship with nature.

Environmental communication studies how messages are mediated, disseminated, and shape our relationships with the more-than-human world. This class will link communication practices to environmental issues and practices through close interaction with texts which will include books, films, news articles, advertisements, videos, and images. In addition, students will examine different modes of environmental communication and engagement that promote ecological connection and healing: case studies, field experiences, and community engaged learning projects. By the end of the course, students will identify opportunities for environmental engagement that challenge the status quo and “common sense.” Rather than simply dwell fatalistically on the annihilation of ecosystems, this course challenges dominant cultural narratives, and also explores possibilities for ecological hope and transformation.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING

COMM 4360 holds a Community Engaged Learning (CEL) designation. CEL is a method of teaching and learning that seeks to:

- **Engage** unmet community needs;
- **Integrate** learning that occurs in the classroom with action that occurs in the community;
- **Create** opportunities that offer reciprocal benefits for students and the community;
- **Reflect** upon and **analyze** community issues and the roles we play in addressing those issues.

Action-oriented learning helps students better understand and apply course materials to real-world needs. As a CEL course, *reflection*, “the intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives,” will be integral to the learning process in order to help students integrate course materials with their community experiences. Students will complete 20 hours of direct service – where students provide service directly to a community partner at that partner’s site – outside of class time.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Articulate pressing environmental issues fueled by consumerism and how to address those issues through:
  - Direct community engagement involving both environmental advocacy and ecological action in community spaces.
  - The development of effective communication practices that seek to increase individual and community awareness of environmental issues.
- Demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills through:
  - Written academic argument, analysis, critique, evaluation, and reflection on environmental discourses.
  - The interpretation of texts and case studies by applying the concepts, questions, and theoretical paradigms discussed in the field with community partners, and in class.
  - The effective use of community partnerships to produce public communication regarding environmental issues.
- Integrate their coursework knowledge with their community engagement work through:
  - An increased knowledge of the interconnections amongst individuals, society and ecological communities.
  - An awareness of how their individual communication practices can impact public policy and society.
  - An articulation of an ecological sense-of-place and environmental issues they are passionate about and wish to continue engagement with after the class is over.
  - A critical examination of environmental issues from the perspective of hopeful possibility, and the implementation of creative solutions through sustained community engagement.

## CEL Partnerships

- TreeUtah – community tree plantings & digital storytelling
- Wasatch Community Gardens – community gardening
- Edible Campus Gardens – campus gardening
- Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance – public lands advocacy
- Save Our Canyons – public lands advocacy

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The assigned texts for this course are not excessive but will still require that you pace yourself intelligently. To keep from falling behind, plan to **read, write, and/or view films every day**. *It will be worth it—I promise!*

## A Note on Books

*Always bring assigned texts with you to our Zoom class! To ensure that we are all literally “on the same page” and that you are prepared to read when called upon, **BE SURE to purchase the SPECIFIC EDITIONS** of the texts indicated below.*

## Books

- *A Sand County Almanac*, by Aldo Leopold, ISBN: 9780345345059
- *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, by Rebecca Solnit, ISBN 9781608465767
- *Home Ground*, by Barry Lopez, ISBN: 9781595341754

**Films - Most of these films are available to stream for free through the Marriott Library’s Streaming Services.**

- “[Plastic Wars](#),” from *Frontline*, Season 38, Episode 14
- “[Amazon Empire: The Rise & Reign of Jeff Bezos](#),” from *Frontline*, Season 2020, Episode 6
- *Food, Inc.*, directed by Robert Kenner (Rated PG)
- *Dirt! The Movie*, directed by Bill Benenson and Gene Rosow (Not Rated)
- *The Vanishing of the Bees*, directed by Maryam Henein and George Langworthy
- *Wall-E*, directed by Andrew Stanton (Rated G)

## Electronic Resources, Essays, and Articles

- Many assigned texts will only be available electronically on Canvas under Weekly Modules. **These texts are just as important as the textbooks.**

## ONLINE COURSE FORMAT

- All coursework will be **online and asynchronous**.
- All times are for **Mountain Standard Time**.
- This course will function off a **Tuesday and Thursday schedule** for all content and assignments.
- This class has an **IVC format** (Interactive Video Conferencing). We will **meet synchronously on Zoom on Tuesdays for 75 minutes during the timeframe of 2:00-5:00 PM**. IVC sessions will be used primarily for the discussion of course content. The entire class will meet together on the first session on Tuesday, August 25, at 2:00. After that, the class will be split into two groups which will be determined by your professor and posted to Canvas. Occasionally, we may not have a class session so that students can engage in an optional volunteer event.
- Rather than “lecture” during our scheduled Zoom session, I will post a **written summary of “Key Concepts”** that will be pertinent to your assigned texts for the next week and our IVC session. Each **Thursday by 10:00 AM (noon), I will post Key Concepts** that will guide your readings and assignments due the following Tuesday.
- **Assignments will be due on Tuesdays and Thursdays by 10:00 AM (yes, that is in the morning!!!)**. A 4-hour grace period will be provided until 2:00 PM. No extensions will be offered beyond that grace period.
- **Advanced feedback on assignments** can be provided if you email your professor 48 hours prior to the assignment deadline, excluding weekends and holidays.
- **Assignments will be graded within two weeks** of the submission deadline.
- **Have a question?** Post it to the Course Forum or email me at the email address listed at the top of the syllabus. I may take up to 48 hours to respond to your email (excluding holidays and weekends). In your email, do the following: include an informative subject line, include a salutation that includes my name and title (e.g. Dear Professor Seegert), include your own name at the end of the email, and proofread your email.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Syllabus Quiz (1.5 points)**. Before any of your work will be graded, you must successfully complete an online quiz with questions about the syllabus. Failure to complete this online quiz with a perfect score will result in your other assignments not being graded. You **MUST** re-take this quiz until you have a perfect score.
- **Introductory Post (3 points)**. The Introductory Post must be completed to progress in the course.
- **Weekly Schedule (1.5 points)**. To be successful in online courses, you need a regular schedule to keep you on track. You will be required to submit a weekly schedule. This must be completed to progress in the course.
- **Student Survey (1 point)**. So your professor can best understand your interests and obligations, all students will be required to complete a brief survey. This must be completed to progress in the course.
- **Eco Connections (18 points)**. Our course content is depressing. This assignment is an antidote to the depressing materials you will encounter. You will keep an online “Eco Journal” which will focus on establishing ecological connections through your engagement with *Home Ground* (assigned text), documenting your own “home ground,” and identifying sparks of ecological engagement. *7 submissions possible, 3 points each, the one lowest score will be dropped.*
- **CEL Engagement (36 points total)**
  - **Eco Democracy (6 points)**. Students will have several options to engage with “eco democracy” where we place ecological concerns as part of our civic action in our democracy. Actions can range from registering to vote to creating a short phone script about an ecological concern that you would like to voice to your government representatives. The key is that none of this is partisan, but instead gives you the tools to make ecological concerns part of your dialogue with government entities.
  - **Community Engagement (30 points, 12 hours total)**
    - **Digging in the Dirt**. Students can complete 12 hours of community service with a community partner that involves physical engagement with the soil. This can be through gardening, tree planting, trail construction, etc. All projects must be with an approved community organization and coordinated with the professor and CEL TA.
    - **Communication Connections**. Students can complete 12 hours of community service through the application of coursework knowledge to an organizational project like digital storytelling. All projects must be with an approved community organization and coordinated with the professor and CEL TA.

- **Dirt & Connections Combo.** Students can complete a combination of 12 hours through a combination of “Digging in the Dirt” and working with a “Community Connection” on a project. This must be approved and coordinated with the professor and CEL TA.
- **CEL Reflections (12 points).** You will be required to submit CEL Reflections to an online Reflection Discussion. Specifically, you will be asked to respond to a specific question that will ask you to integrate your community experiences with your coursework. In addition, you will summarize your activities with your community partner and the number of hours you worked with them. Reflections will be submitted every three weeks. *4 submissions possible, 4 points each, the one lowest score will be dropped.*
- **Critical Responses (35 points).** You will be required to submit regular Critical Responses to an online Discussion engaging with specific questions about the assigned material or assigned activities. You will also be required to respond to the posting of one other student. Full details for each post can be found on Canvas. *12 submissions possible, 3.5 points each, the lowest two scores will be dropped.*
- **Eco Education Project (16 points).** Since we can’t cover all ecocatastrophes in this class, students will create a “Wiki Page” that addresses an environmental topic not covered in class. This project requires you to provide information about the topic, action that can be taken, and communication techniques that can be applied to it.
- **Mid-Term Exam (24 points).** The mid-term exam will be fill-in-the-blank, matching, and multiple choice on terms, concepts, and texts/case studies/films read or discussed in class during the first half of the semester. *Mid-term will be timed on Canvas and available to take for three days. Once started, the exam must be completed.*
- **Final Exam (34 points).** The final exam will be fill-in-the-blank, matching, and multiple choice on terms, concepts, and texts/case studies/films read or discussed in class during the entirety of the semester. *Final exam will be timed on Canvas and available to take for three days. Once started, the exam must be completed.*
- **Zoom Attendance & Participation (14 points with maximum loss of -10 points).** Regular attendance at a weekly Zoom session is mandatory. You will be required to arrive on time, be attentive, and attend the full session to receive credit for attending, and failure to do so will count as a tardy.
  - Each student is permitted **TWO “free” absences.** Here’s the breakdown: two tardies=one absence (arriving late, sleeping, or leaving early counts as a tardy). Each unexcused absence after two will incur a 5 point penalty (*i.e. 5 points will be deducted from your class participation score, with a maximum of negative 10 points*).
  - Any absences beyond the 2 “free” absences will not be excused—except per university policy (see below) or the discretion of the professor. Save your “free” absences for the *unexpected*: illnesses, family emergencies, work conflicts, funerals, and pandemics.
- **Course Reflection (5 points).** A final course reflection – 350-600 words – will require you to consider what you have learned throughout the course of the semester and apply it to your everyday life.

### **Course Assignment Values – 200 Points Total**

Syllabus Quiz:	1.5 points <b>(mandatory)</b>
Introductory Post:	3 points <b>(mandatory)</b>
Weekly Schedule:	1.5 points <b>(mandatory)</b>
Student Survey:	1 point <b>(mandatory)</b>
Eco Connections:	18 points
CEL Engagement:	30 points
CEL Reflections:	12 points
Critical Responses:	30 points
Eco Education Project:	15 points
Mid-term Exam:	20 points
Final Exam:	30 points
Zoom participation:	10 points
Course Reflection:	3 points

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### **Letter Grade Values (Do not ask me to “round-up” your grade. I won’t.)**

94-100 A	87-89.9 B+	77-79.9 C+	67-69.9 D+	00-59.9 E
90-93.9 A-	84-86.9 B	74-76.9 C	64-66.9 D	
	80-83.9 B-	70-73.9 C-	60-63.9 D-	

## COURSE POLICIES

- **Course Civility.** Communication allows us to engage with others and broaden our perspectives. How we talk about concepts together, in the physical or virtual classroom, is part of that process. Our diverse identities and experiences will inform and enhance those discussions. As we approach sometimes difficult topics, each member of the class is expected to foster a respectful, generous, and supportive online environment that makes room for productive difference and reasoned debate. Because this class centers on critical responses to cultural texts, spirited discussion (and even outright disagreement) is encouraged. However, incivility is a different story entirely. Here is the basic netiquette that will be expected in the course:
  - Always address your classmates by name. There is a human being on the other side of the screen who also has struggles, doubts, and bad days.
  - Disagreement is encouraged! Approach differences in a manner that seeks clarity and better understanding by asking productive questions and by providing counterarguments that are supported with evidence and not simply with feelings.
  - Anytime you have a strong emotional reaction to something, pause before responding. Emotions can be deceptive and can be regretted if acted on too hastily. Instead, always seek to provide an argument that is supported by credible evidence based on the theories we discuss in this course.
- **Due Dates & Submission Procedures.** Assignments are due as indicated on Canvas. No late work will be evaluated unless you clear this with me *beforehand* (this is something which I will only clear for **very** good reasons such as medical emergencies). Please submit all assignments to me **electronically**. Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx) is required for submitting papers electronically. Please adhere to style and citation formats outlined on assignment sheets – failure to do so will result in a loss of points.
- **Email.** Please email me at the email address listed at the top of the syllabus. Be aware that I may take up to 48 hours to respond to your email (excluding holidays and weekends). In your email, do the following: include an informative subject line, include a salutation that includes my name and title (e.g. Dear Professor Seeger), include your own name at the end of the email, and proofread your email.
- **Extra Credit.** I rarely offer extra credit. However, COVID changes things. If you make an appointment to meet with me via Zoom, I will give you 2 points of extra credit.

## CAMPUS POLICIES

- **The Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Access.
- **Campus Safety.** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [safeu.utah.edu](https://safeu.utah.edu).
- **Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS). **As an employee of the University of Utah, I am a**

**mandatory reporter for all cases of sexual violence** (this includes reports of cases that happened out-of-state, occurred many years ago, or have already been prosecuted).

- **Student Wellness.** Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at [www.wellness.utah.edu](http://www.wellness.utah.edu) or 801-581-7776.
- **Incompletes.** Per University Policy 6-100 (III), section G, Incompletes are only offered under extraordinary circumstances and if the student has completed 80% of the coursework.
- **Course Withdrawals.** See this semester's *Class Schedule* for deadlines and procedures.
- **Academic Dishonesty.** Academic Dishonesty can take multiple forms. Plagiarism consists of using the work of someone else and passing it off as your own. Even if you plagiarize by accident you will still be held accountable. Other forms of academic dishonesty include signing in for someone else on the attendance sheet, having someone else complete your assignments, or cheating on an exam. *If you are having trouble with this course, contact me! Academic dishonesty is not the answer and the penalty can involve failure of the course.*
- **Curriculum Accommodations.**
  - I am able to make **schedule accommodations** for those who have a conflict that involves religious/spiritual observances, or University sanctioned activities (see University Policy 6-100 (III), section O). If you anticipate any scheduling conflicts with this course, please email me as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to contact me and it must be done through email.
  - I do not make **content accommodations** for course required materials (see University Policy 6-100 (III), section Q). Students may encounter reading materials, presentations, lectures, or audio/visual materials controversial or in conflict with their values or beliefs. Please be assured that all course content has been selected for its pedagogical value and utility in relation to the concepts we are engaging. **I will NOT make content accommodations** for this material. It is your responsibility to review the syllabus, readings, assignments, and materials in advance to be sure that this is a course you wish to take. Should you have questions, contact me immediately.

#### **Note on Potentially Offensive Course Material (!)**

Scholarly engagement with cultural texts (which might include R-rated films, mature video clips, irreverent cultural critiques, etc.) often involves encountering material from outside an individual's philosophical, religious, political, or personal comfort zones. **Please be advised that this course may contain such material.** Such material may include—but is not limited to—obscenity, profanity, representations of sexuality, violence, religion, anti-religion, politics, encounters with controversial issues in the media, etc. Students who feel that this may be a matter of concern should consult with the instructor *immediately after the first class session*. It is your responsibility to research required texts for potentially offensive materials.

#### **A Final Note for Students**

Successful students typically demonstrate a high degree of intellectual curiosity and critical interest, as well as an ability to respond to feedback. Please consider the online classroom as a community space in which we all share a scholarly adventure. I hope you already have, or will develop, a sense of responsibility to and respect for other students by sharing your thoughts, insights, and confusions. **Most important: I want you to do well in this course!** Please let me know how I can help.

Thanks! I look forward to working with you this semester!

~ Dr. Seegert – [n.seegert@utah.edu](mailto:n.seegert@utah.edu)

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#### **SEMESTER OVERVIEW**

Stay posted! A semester overview of course topics and assigned texts will be forthcoming. In addition, it will be posted to Modules.

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