

# **Conflict, Collaboration, & Voice in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem**

**June 30 – August 9, 2008**

**Background Reference for Faculty in Communication Studies, Geography, Political Science, and Other Disciplines Interested in Encouraging Student Enrollment**

## **Brief Description:**

This web- and field-based course will use two land use controversies in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem as case studies for applying principles of conflict assessment, adaptive management planning, collaborative learning, and public participation as hypothetical alternatives to traditional command and control resource regimes. It provides students the unique opportunity to build upon the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' ongoing interest in the stewardship of public lands as well as its broader initiative, the American Democracy Project. Such will provide upper-division students in various collegiate majors a high-quality, field-based exposure to issues and practices at the intersection of science and society. The first part of the course will be conducted on-line using web-based technologies. In turn, students will have the opportunity to travel to Yellowstone National Park for an intensive field experience allowing them to interact with relevant agency personnel, nongovernmental organizations, and private-sector stakeholders.

Those electing to receive only 2 credits will (a) read roughly the equivalent of two books, engage in at-distance small group discussions oriented around issues found in the readings, and complete an essay exam over all course materials and (b) draft two substantive analyses addressing opportunities for alternative conflict management approaches (i.e., one for either bison or snowmobile management in Yellowstone and one for a local controversy of their own choosing) to also be electronically submitted for evaluation by the end of the course. Students wishing to receive 4 credits will (a) read, discuss, and be tested over all course materials, (b) attend the field-based portion of the course in Yellowstone National Park so as to participate in a number of face-to-face group interactions and exercises at various locations in the park, and (c) submit via the Web a final paper focusing on a local controversy and applying skills gained in the course.

## **Course Schedule:**

**Phase 1** (June 30 to July 20, 2008; 2 & 4 credit options)

Students receive a packet of readings for the course and participate in a series of on-line, threaded, and graded small-group discussions facilitated by instructor-posed questions focusing on linkages between the separate readings. They will also identify, receive instructor clearance for, and begin researching a local controversy, ultimately analyzed using tools found in the same readings. Each student will, as well, complete a comprehensive examination covering the readings for the course (to be electronically submitted) before the beginning of Phase 2 (or Phase 3 for those seeking only 2 credits).

**Phase 2** (July 21 to July 29; 4 credit option)

**7/21** (dinner included in their fee for the field study) Students make their own arrangements for arriving at either (a) the Bozeman (MT) airport (where Yellowstone Association Institute staff will have a shuttle waiting) by 2 pm or (b) the Mammoth Hot Springs hotel complex in Yellowstone National Park (WY) by 5 pm (if they are using personal transportation). Cabin assignments and an orientation session will take place in the evening.

**7/22** (breakfast and lunch included; dinner on their own) Students participate in a classroom-based review of conflict assessment principles, adaptive management planning, collaborative learning strategies, and effective public participation processes (based on readings already completed). The afternoon includes a shuttle and light-walking tour of the Mirror Plateau. A presentation on the natural history of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem will take place in the evening.

**7/23** (breakfast, lunch, and dinner included) Students participate in discussions with National Park Service resource specialists regarding bison management, both in the classroom and at a site in the Hayden Valley. The afternoon includes a visit to Cooke City (MT) and a discussion with representatives of the Beartooth Alliance. A presentation on the social history of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem will occur that evening in Silvergate (MT).

**7/24** (breakfast and lunch; dinner on their own) Students are introduced to exercises designed to scenario-test conflict assessment, adaptive management planning, collaborative learning options, and effective public participation processes for bison management in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. That afternoon, they participate in discussions with National Park Service resource specialists regarding snowmobile conflicts. The evening is open for individual research, recreation, or relaxation.

**7/25** (breakfast, lunch, and dinner included) Students travel to West Yellowstone to visit with snowmobiling entrepreneurs and activists aligned with the Buffalo Field Campaign. The afternoon includes a visit to Norris Geyser Basin. The evening includes a presentation on the bears and wolves of Yellowstone National Park.

**7/26** (breakfast included; lunch and dinner on their own) Students will have the option of (a) spending the day in the Old Faithful area sightseeing, hiking, or fishing, (b) white-water rafting—at their own expense—on the Yellowstone River, or (c) fishing and horseback riding—at their own expense—in the Slough Creek watershed. The evening is open for individual research, recreation, or relaxation.

**7/27** (breakfast and lunch included; dinner on their own) Students participate in a second series of facilitated exercises designed to scenario-test conflict assessment, adaptive management planning, collaborative learning options, and effective public participation processes for snowmobile management in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The afternoon includes a visit to Dunraven Pass and a short hike to the top of Mt. Washburn. The evening is open for individual research, recreation, or relaxation.

**7/28** (breakfast, lunch, and dinner included) Students travel via shuttle (or by way of their personal transportation) to Bozeman (MT). A presentation by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition will take place in the afternoon. In the evening, they will collaborate on fleshing-out their home-based civic engagement projects and reflect upon their experiences over the previous seven days.

7/29 (breakfast included) Students without personal transportation depart via taxi—at their own expense—for the airport.

**Phase 3** – (July 30 to August 9; 2 & 4 credit options)

Individual students seeking 4 credits will use principles of conflict assessment, adaptive management planning, collaborative learning options, and effective public participation processes to analyze a home-based conflict and chart out a program that they could initiate to better manage the controversy for the good of the larger community. Such will result in a substantive research paper that will be submitted electronically and graded. Alternatively, those who did not join the rest of the students in Yellowstone will, in addition to crafting an individual prospectus and analysis, submit on-line a similar research paper (sans their personal involvement) for one of the Yellowstone-oriented test-cases.

**Readings:**

All students will be provided a “readings packet” containing primary-source excerpts divided into two categories. The first, and most substantial, category deals with general conflict assessment and management issues:

- Brick, P., Van de Wetering, S., & Snow, D. (2000). *Beyond the great divide: Collaborative conservation and the new environmental debate*. Washington DC: Island Press.
- Crowfoot, J. E., & Wondolleck, J. M. (1990). *Environmental disputes: Community involvement in conflict resolution*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Cantrill, J. G. (2004). A sense of self-in-place for adaptive management, capacity building, and public participation. In S. L. Senecah (Ed.), *The environmental communication yearbook, vol. 1* (pp. 153-173). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Senecah, S. L. (2001). The Process Trinity of voice, standing, and influence: The role of practical theory in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of environmental participatory processes. In M. F. Adelphi, J. W. Delicath, & S. P. Depoe (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on Communication and Environment* (pp. 224-234). Cincinnati, OH: Center for Environmental Communication Studies.
- Susskind, L., Levy, P. F., & Thomas-Larmer, J. (2000). *Negotiating environmental agreements: How to avoid escalating confrontation, needless cost, and unnecessary litigation*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Walker, G. B., & Daniels, S. E. (2001). Natural resource policy and the paradox of public involvement: Bringing scientists and citizens together. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry, 13*, 253-269.
- Williams, B. A., & Matheny, A. R. (1995). *Democracy, dialogue, and environmental disputes: The contested languages of social regulation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

The second category deals with issues particularly germane to snowmobiling and bison management in Yellowstone National Park:

- Franke, M. A. (2005). *To save the wild bison: Life on the edge in Yellowstone*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Yochim, M. J. (2006). Victims or victors: Yellowstone and the snowmobile capital of the world. *Historical Geography, 34*, 158-183.

Since all students will be completing a conflict analysis of a self-selected local controversy, they will also be expected to reference at least ten additional background sources. In addition, those students selecting the 2 credit option will be expected to augment packet material regarding snowmobiling or bison management in Yellowstone National Park since they will not have the benefit of the field-based instruction.

## **Assignments & Grading:**

It is assumed that students registering for this course will interpret and analyze course content primarily from the vantage of their undergraduate major or graduate concentration (as well as the cross-referenced 400-level course designation they have selected in either communication studies, geography, or political science). Since land-use controversies (indeed most conflicts) generally revolve around issues associated with the relationship between people and places, political alignments, and interaction patterns, it is expected that students will not be parochial in their approaches to the case studies and subject matter. Rather, they are going to have to integrate various domains of knowledge. Although the instructor specializes in the field of environmental communication, his scholarship and consulting practices span all three disciplines and he will be stressing a synthesis of academic foci throughout the course assignments.

### **Threaded Discussions** (15% of total grade for the course)

All registered students will be placed into groups and participate in a series of on-line, threaded, and graded discussions facilitated by instructor-posed questions. These questions will focus on linkages between the separate readings rather than mere regurgitation of content. Three sets of 2 to 3 summary questions will be presented to students over the span of the first three weeks. Students will be graded on the depth, extent, and timeliness of their on-line interaction with others in their groups.

### **Readings Examination** (35% of total grade for the course)

All registered students will complete a comprehensive essay examination covering the course readings. This examination will be submitted and graded before the beginning of the field-based portion of the course (or the last week for those seeking only 2 credits). The examination will consist of 4 essay questions and require students to draft no less than 250-word replies for each question.

### **Participation in the Field** (30% of total course grade for those electing 4 credits)

Once in the field, students will be dealing with the social and physical science related to snowmobiling and bison management in Yellowstone National Park, as well as the surrounding contexts for these land-use conflicts. In particular, they will (a) interact with stakeholders and resource experts associated with each case study and (b) participate in structured scenario-testing exercises designed to familiarize themselves with the application of various conflict management schemes to the conflicts *per se*. These exercises address each of the issues students will subsequently use to analyze their individual term papers (see below). The basis for awarding a grade for such participation will consist of 50% averaged peer evaluations and 50% instructor evaluation of the breadth and depth of each student's interaction across duration of the field experience.

**Written Analyses of the Yellowstone Case Studies** (50% of total course grade for those electing 2 credits; 20% of total course grade for those electing 4 credits)

*Those students seeking 2 credits* will use principles of conflict assessment, adaptive management planning, collaborative learning options, and effective public participation processes (gleaned from the course readings) to analyze (a) either bison or snowmobile management in Yellowstone and (b) a local conflict of their own choosing (with prior approval of the instructor) which they have independently researched. In addition, and as with those students seeking 4 credits, they will draft a no-less-than 750 word prospectus describing a program that they could initiate to better manage their local controversy. Alternatively, *those students seeking 4 credits* will only be responsible for analyzing a local controversy and drafting the action-program prospectus.

When they analyze either of the two case studies or their own local controversy, students will be expected to devote no-less-than 3000 words (roughly 10-12 pages) in addressing the following issues:

*Conflict Assessment* – This task includes (a) a short *summary description* of the environmental conflict that isolates key themes and problems, (b) a brief *history of the conflict* that identifies both major events over the course of the conflict as well as how the social and physical context has changed over time, (c) a description of the *major stakeholders* that are related in one way or another in the conflict dynamic, (d) a listing of the major *issues* that serve as points of disagreement between the vested parties, (e) a representation of the *interaction dynamics* that characterize the existing relationship between parties, and (f) an identification of the potential *common ground* that can be established between the disputants.

*Collaborative Learning Potential* – This task includes brief discussions of (a) how the relationship between stakeholders can be improved through an understanding of each others' *senses of place and identity*, (b) the extent to which the stakeholders act within *interdependent systems of relationships*, (c) what *feasible and desirable changes* are possible regarding the relationships between parties, and (d) how *individual and mutual interests* can be optimized in terms of the conflict at hand.

*Alternative Public Participation Processes* – This task includes suggestions for how the process of conflict management can be facilitated by guaranteeing that all stakeholders have (a) a *voice* so that they retain more than just the opportunity to express their opinions insofar as they must also have unfettered access to information needed to make rational choices, (b) *standing* in terms of the civic responsibility to view all perspectives as legitimate and worthy of consideration, and (c) *influence* to the extent that everyone's ideas are taken into account when a final decision is made.

### **For More Information, Contact:**

Dr. Jim Cantrill  
Communication & Performance Studies  
Northern Michigan University  
1401 Presque Isle  
Marquette, MI 49855  
(906) 227-2061  
jcantril@nmu.edu.