

Leadership in Community-Based Conservation

NRE4695 Section 003: Special Topics (1 credit)

Spring Semester 2023

Wednesday, 4:40 – 5:30 pm

In-Person: RHBA 001

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Course

Description: This course is open to students from diverse majors that have an interest in leadership in community-based conservation, which requires **authentic community engagement, culturally relevant environmental education and mentorship, equitable and inclusive practices**, and basic **knowledge of local environmental issues**.

The first half of the course will introduce environmental education (EE) practices:

- EE approaches that promote collective environmental action
- Culturally relevant pedagogical and curricular strategies
- Trauma informed mentorship approaches

The second half of the course will focus on community engagement and leadership:

- Instinctual leadership & leading for change
- Principles of authentic community engagement
- Community conservation issues relevant to Connecticut communities

Undergraduate students enrolled in this course will have the opportunity to apply for 10-month paid environmental education leadership positions through the Natural Resources Conservation Academy (NRCA; <https://nrca.uconn.edu/>), as NRCA Difference Maker Mentors (<https://nrca.uconn.edu/dmm/>). Four undergraduate NRCA Difference Maker Mentors (DMMs) will serve as program leaders and near-peer mentors for the NRCA Conservation Ambassador Program (<https://nrca.uconn.edu/cap/>). Under the support and guidance of NRCA faculty and a graduate student, DMMs will have the unique opportunity to co-facilitate the 2023 summer field experience and mentor a subset of teen participants during their community-based environmental action project in the following fall and winter. This opportunity will provide students with experience with leadership, authentic community engagement, environmental education, mentorship, and implementation of on-the-ground conservation projects. This position will provide professional development in soft skills (e.g., building relationships, teamwork, communication) that are critical for workforce success.

Course

Format: Students will be expected to come prepared to each class period by reading or viewing materials and writing short responses to discussion prompts prior to class. Students will submit their written responses before class and be encouraged to discuss the prompts in class. In addition, brief lectures will be used to supplement the class material.

Course

Format:

As some of the coursework will be collaborative (*Culturally Relevant Environmental Education Activity Team Project*), students will need to demonstrate a willingness to compromise, and will be expected to treat their fellow team members with patience and respect. Students will complete both peer and personal evaluations as part of their team project. These evaluations will count towards the final assessment of the project work. While a couple of class sessions are dedicated to project work time (as noted in the class schedule), students must also be prepared to meet with their teammates outside of scheduled class times. All team members must be active throughout project development and must be present for meetings outside of class sessions, even if they feel that their portion of the project is complete.

Learning

Objectives:

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

- Gain familiarity with environmental issues relevant to Connecticut communities.
- Recall ten culturally relevant and trauma informed instructional and mentorship approaches.
- Describe essential components to co-designing conservation with community stakeholders.
- Discuss and critically reflect on approaches and practices that may or may not facilitate authentic community engagement, inclusive and culturally relevant environmental education, and collective environmental action.
- Work collaboratively to plan, develop, and implement a culturally relevant environmental education activity.

Readings &

Viewings:

Supplementary readings and videos will be used throughout the class and open-source materials will be provided through HuskyCT.

Assignments:

Identity Icebreaker Activity—Students will have 1-2 minutes to share: 1) one object that represents a salient identity of theirs, 2) their environmental motto/mission statement (e.g., what motivates you to do this work), and 3) their enviro-superhero power (e.g., an asset or skill you bring to this work).

Discussion Prompt Responses—Discussion prompts/questions will be provided with class reading/viewing materials one week before the class period in which they are due. Students will be expected to read or view materials and write short responses to discussion prompts prior to class and **submit their responses before class via email to both Laura and Chris (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu and christopher.cane@uconn.edu)**.

Culturally Relevant Environmental Education Activity—Student teams will plan, develop, and deliver a culturally relevant environmental education activity. The activity will be based on content or activities taught during the Conservation Ambassador Program field experience (see [field experience curriculum](#)), and will explicitly integrate culturally relevant instructional approaches discussed in course materials. There will be an opportunity to gain guidance on the activity with field experience instructors (NRE professors), as the goal of this project is to potentially implement the activity during the upcoming field experience. Each team will guide classmates in how to implement the activity at the end of the course during a professional development presentation. A detailed guideline of the team project will be distributed in a separate document.

Grading: A ≥ 95%; A- 90-94; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62; F < 60

Assignment	% Grade	Week Due
Identity Icebreaker Activity In-Class Share (5pts)	5	Beginning of One Class Period (<i>sign up sheet will be provided</i>)
Discussion Prompt Responses Submitted Responses (5pts each)	40	Weekly (<i>except for 6 select weeks</i>)
Culturally Relevant EE Activity		
Part 1: Initial Draft of Culturally Relevant EE Activity (25pts)	15	March 8
Part 2: Final Draft of Culturally Relevant EE Activity	20	April 19
Part 3: Professional Development Presentation of Activity to Class	20	April 19 or April 26 (<i>teams will present on one of these days; sign up sheet will be provided</i>)

Schedule: This is a guideline—changes will be announced in class or on HuskyCT.

Date	Activity	Readings/Viewings & Assignments Due
18 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Course & NRCA Difference Maker Mentor Opportunity ● Intro to Place-Based Environmental Action, Community Conservation & Equity within Environmental Fields ● Student Identity Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Sign Up for Identity Icebreaker Due (sign up during class period)</i>
25 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Community Agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jones (2021) An Invitation to Brave Spaces, Holding Change. ● Holman (2019) Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces, & Why We Gon Be Alright. ● Equity Lab (2020) REDI Agreements. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i>
1 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Community Agreements (<i>debrief</i>) ● Research-based Environmental Education Approaches that Promote Collective Environmental Action ● Culturally Relevant EE Activity Team Project (<i>description</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Krasny (2020) Collective Environmental Action, Advancing Environmental Education Outcomes. ● Cisneros et al (2021) Program Design Principles to Support Teen-Adult Community Conservation Efforts Frontiers in STEM Education. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i>

8 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conservation Ambassador Program (CAP) Field Experience Curriculum Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CAP Field Experience Handbook ● <i>Sign Up for Culturally Relevant EE Activity Team Project Due (sign up during class period based on topical interest)</i>
15 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Culturally Relevant Instructional Approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth. https://ready.web.unc.edu/section-2-transforming-practice/module-17/ ● On Being with Krista Tippett (2022) Trabian Shorters: A Cognitive Skill to Magnify Humanity. Podcast. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i>
22 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Culturally Relevant Instructional Approaches (<i>continued</i>) ● Team Brainstorm for Culturally Relevant EE Activity Team Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Benavides et al (2017) Promoting Equitable Access to STEM in a Summer Herpetology Fieldwork Program, NSTA. ● Balcos (2019) Decolonizing Environmental Education. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i>
1 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CAP Instructor Visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>CAP faculty provide more details on CAP field day</i> ○ <i>Student teams share initial ideas of how to integrate CRP into an activity</i> ○ <i>Open period to brainstorm ideas & feasibility</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>No Assignment Due – but please come prepared with questions for instructors about their CAP field day and initial ideas of how to integrate culturally relevant strategies into activities.</i>
8 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trauma Informed Mentorship ● <i>Potential Guest Lecture: Dr. Chafouleas</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Davidson (2017) Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education: A Guide, Education Northwest. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i> ● <i>Part 1: Initial Draft of Culturally Relevant Environmental Education Activity Due</i>
15 Mar	<i>Spring Recess</i>	—
22 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 Leadership Lessons for Leading for Change ● Key Principles for Authentic Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Am. Association for Enviro. Ed. (2000) Guidelines for Excellence in Community Engagement (Summary). ● Healthy Food Policy Project (Accessed 2021) Food Access Policy Change Through Authentic Resident Engagement. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i>

29 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Case study scenarios to navigate and explore NAAEE Guidelines to Excellence in Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Am. Association for Enviro. Ed. (2000) Guidelines for Excellence in Community Engagement. ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i> ● <i>Note: Your team will receive feedback on your Culturally Relevant EE Activity Team Project</i>
5 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet Current Difference Maker Mentors! ● Tips on Leading an Educational Activity & Presenting ● Team Project Work Period 	—
12 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to CT Community Conservation Topics (<i>discussion</i>) ● Co-Designing Conservation Projects w/ Community Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore CT Community Orgs: Save the Sound, Groundwork Bridgeport, Keney Park Sustainability Project, CT Land Conservation Council, Green Village Initiative, among others. ● Listen to CT Environmental Leaders: Sanders (2022) Recalling the Past to Shape the Future. ● CAP Community Environmental Action Planning Document ● <i>Discussion Prompts Due</i>
19 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team Presentations: Culturally Relevant EE Activity PD Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Part 2: Final Draft of Culturally Relevant EE Activity Due (for all teams)</i> ● <i>Part 3: Professional Development Presentation of Activity to Class (first half of teams)</i>
26 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team Presentations: Culturally Relevant EE Activity PD Presentation ● Course Wrap-Up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Part 3: Professional Development Presentation of Activity to Class (second half of teams)</i>
3 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Application for NRCA Difference Maker Mentors Open</i> 	—

Late Policy: All assignments are due at the time indicated on the syllabus and in the assignment directions. It is your responsibility to complete and submit assignments in accordance with the due date and submission location. Late individual writing assignments received within 24 hours of the due date and time automatically will receive a 15% absolute deduction (i.e., highest score possible = 85%, equivalent to a drop of one full letter grade). Unless prior permission is received from the instructor because of an extenuating circumstance, assignments will not be accepted more than 24 hours after the assigned deadline. Students (or groups) have up to 2 weeks after a particular assignment is handed back to ask questions about the grade. ***I reserve the right to change due dates as needed to accommodate issues that might arise. Changes will be communicated in class, via email, or announced on HuskyCT.***

Course Communication & Contacting the Instructor: I will use UConn student email accounts for all course communication that occurs via email. ***Therefore, it is very important that you check your UConn***

account regularly. If you primarily use a different email account (e.g., yahoo, gmail, hotmail), the UConn email can be linked to it. It is your responsibility to remove appropriate filters so that email messages from this course are not filtered, and to make sure communication via UConn email is working properly. I will strive to post announcements in HuskyCT as well.

To accommodate your schedules, my office hours will be by appointment. ***Please contact me by email to set up office hour meetings. I encourage you to email me about course material beyond office hours as well.***

Remember to create a good impression via email. Think of me as someone that you would like a letter of recommendation from. As such, prepare your email in a professional way—NOT as you would address your friends in email or text. A formal salutation, complete sentences, capital letters where appropriate, proper grammar, punctuation, etc. are expected. I will not respond to emails that are inappropriate or incomprehensible. I always intend to treat students with courtesy, respect, and empathy, and expect courtesy, respect, and empathy in return.

Classroom Environment: My goal is to make the classroom environment a safe and welcoming space for all students, without threat or discomfort. We are a diverse collection of individuals with a variety of backgrounds, values, and opinions. This provides a great opportunity to learn from each other's perspectives and experiences. I encourage students to push themselves out of their individual comfort zone as related to the course material into their learning and growth zone. *Students are expected to demonstrate general respect for all other individuals involved with this course in class, outside of class, and within the HuskyCT environment. There will be no exceptions to this rule. I encourage you to inform me if you feel threatened or uncomfortable about a situation in the classroom or related to the course. I will address it directly, promptly, and appropriately at my discretion.*

University Policies: Students in this course are held to standards and policies of the University of Connecticut. Make sure you are familiar with: <http://provost.uconn.edu/syllabi-references>

- [Absences from Final Examinations](#)
- [Class Attendance](#)
- [Credit Hour](#)
- [People with Disabilities, Policy Statement](#)
- [Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence, Policy Against](#)
- [The Student Code](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Procedures for Instructors](#)