

BIOL 4800 – Conservation Biology

Writing Assignment - The Value of Nature

This assignment is intended to encourage and motivate you to think about how humans, including you, value nature. To accomplish this, we are asking you to write a 5-page paper (worth 40 points) based on the instructions given below. Your paper should be in Times New Roman, 12-pt font, double spaced, 1-inch margins, and should include a heading with your name and a title at the top of the first page. Be sure to cite sources for ideas and information. You are encouraged to talk to others; if you use their ideas, cite them in a footnote. Here are your guidelines:

1) Prepare yourself for writing: Read Aldo Leopold's essay "A Land Ethic" from his book *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), posted via links through Moodle and the course Web site. Also read and consult additional sources you find on value systems of nature. Your text is a good place to start (Chapter 4), but you should also consult other sources to broaden your perspective (and enhance your chances of a better essay = better grade). Examples include other books, popular and scientific articles, internet sources, *etc.* Take good notes (in your journal) and be sure to cite your sources (in your journal and in your essay).

2) After your introduction, start your essay by summarizing main points from Leopold's essay. Since Leopold's essay was written 60 years ago, follow with a review of current-day value systems you discovered in your other readings. This summary should constitute about half of your essay. Even so, this assignment is not a "book report," so write a concise summary of the various authors' main points.

Starting with an outline often produces a more complete, well-organized product, so you could develop your outline in your informal journal and then use it as a guide to flesh out your formal writing assignment.

3) Describe which value system(s) best matches your own. This may be one described in the text or one you found in your research. Explain why you hold this value system. For example, what influences (*e.g.*, people, passions, activities, *etc.*) or experiences in your life have shaped your values of nature?

4) Given how you categorized your own values, find the one from your summary that is the most opposite to yours. Try to identify with a person who possesses that alternative value system and write a paragraph describing circumstances in which that value system and yours could potentially be in conflict, and how you might attempt to resolve the conflict of opinion.

5) End your essay with a prescription for positively impacting human value systems. From your reading and thinking, what can be done to create an ethic today that includes good land stewardship or increased consideration for nature? As in the rest of your essay, reference other sources for ideas where appropriate.

6) Include a Work Cited section for your sources (this should include at least 5 written sources). Use the citation format of the peer-reviewed journal *Conservation Biology*. This is in addition to the 5 pages of your essay itself.

Due Dates: Submit your essays electronically via Moodle (no hard copies are required). Although we anticipate that you will go through multiple drafts to produce the version you submit, we will refer to the first draft you submit as your “first draft.” This draft is the best version of the paper you can put together without in-depth faculty feedback. Your first draft is due by 4:30 p.m. on March 5th (if you are enrolled in BIOL 4800).

You will receive comments and a grade on your first draft and then you will revise your first draft (to potentially improve your grade). The effort we expend making comments will be proportionate to the effort you spend on your first draft, so if you work hard, we will be more motivated to provide you with feedback to help you improve the second draft. The second draft will be due two weeks after you receive the first draft back (with comments that should help you improve).

Points (40 total for the assignment): Your submitted drafts will be evaluated on:

- 1) clarity of organization, logical flow, and compelling arguments – 10 points
- 2) use of references and other sources – 10 points
- 3) technical merits (*e.g.*, grammar, spelling, *etc.*) – 10 points
- 4) overall quality – 10 points.

We will grade both of your drafts and use the highest grade for your final grade on the project, so a good first draft works to your advantage. You must turn in both drafts on time to receive credit for this assignment.

Outside opportunities for feedback on your own drafts: We encourage you to seek feedback from Colleen H. Fava, Coordinator of the College of Basic Sciences Communication Studio (BASC CxC; see contact info. below) as you complete the assignment.

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