

ENGL 1928

Imagining Environmental Futures

Tu/Th 11:15 am - 12:30 pm
 Pillsbury Hall 314
 3 credits
 Fall 2026
 Class # 33748
 Section #1

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Course Description

We create the future in part by imagining it, and this course will seek to understand how we have imagined our environmental futures over the last few decades, and how we should imagine them going forward. We will look in particular at popular nonfiction writing about three interconnected issues — food, climate, and decolonization — exploring how contemporary writers have not only warned us of environmental dangers but also tried to point us toward healthier, safer, and more environmentally just futures. We will read essays, interviews, and journalism by such writers as Robin Wall Kimmerer, Rebecca Solnit, Thelma Young Lutunatabua, Michael Pollan, and Eric Schlosser, and we will address such topics as plant-based eating, Slow Food, climate justice, Land Back, and scientific expertise. Requirements include attendance and participation, a series of short reading responses, several reflective writing assignments, and a final project exploring some aspect of our subject in greater depth.

Course Objectives

What questions will the course help you to answer? How will you grow in knowledge and understanding?
What intellectual abilities will the course help you to develop?

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

- *understand* basic facts and concepts concerning futurity, sustainability, indigeneity, climate change, and food politics
- *clarify* your personal values and beliefs by evaluating competing visions of the future
- *appreciate* the importance of storytelling to envisioning the future and the ways these visions are articulated in different nonfictional forms
- *demonstrate* skills and knowledge appropriate to your personal and professional interests by completing a substantial project involving research, analysis, creative activity, and/or public practice
- *practice* taking risks, pushing your limits, and becoming uncomfortable in order to learn new things
- *reflect* on your own knowledge, experiences, and learning strategies to improve future performance
- *collaborate* with others to increase your knowledge and understanding
- *communicate* your ideas effectively in writing and in speaking

Freshman Seminars

This course is one of several Freshman Seminars, which are small, discussion-oriented classes designed for first-year students, in which you can get to know other students in your class and interact with a faculty member who will guide you and help you make the adjustment to college.

Liberal Education Requirements

Liberal Education courses help you investigate the world from new perspectives, learn ways of thinking that will be useful to you in many areas of your life, and grow as an active citizen and lifelong learner.

This course fulfills the Liberal Education requirement for *Environment theme* by helping you become engaged with the science and policy surrounding the environment. In particular, it raises environmental issues of major significance (food provision and climate change) and gives explicit attention to interrelationships between the natural environment and human society (especially by considering whether and how efforts at decolonization are integral to addressing these issues). The course introduces the underlying scientific principles behind the environmental issues being examined, and the readings directly concern whether technologies such as electric vehicles and genetic modification are sufficient to address these issues. Students also learn how to identify and evaluate credible information concerning the environment through the research for their final projects. A central purpose of the course is to consider whether the approaches the course texts present to environmental problems are consistent with the ethics and values of society, relative to its colonial histories.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course also meets five of the University's seven Student Learning Outcomes by helping you to:

- *identify, define, and solve problems*, through the reflection papers and final project
- *locate and critically evaluate information*, through the research for your final project
- *understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies*, through our discussion of the different perspectives on environmental futures
- *communicate effectively*, through your class participation, writing assignments, and final project presentation
- *acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning*, through the writing assignments and final project, which encourage you to reflect on the role of ethics in private and public life

CLA Core Career Competencies

This course helps you develop several of the CLA Core Career Competencies, especially:

- *ethical reasoning and decision-making*: This competency incorporates assessing your own personal and moral values and perspectives as well as those of other stakeholders and integrating them into an ethical framework for decision-making. You will develop these skills as you consider the ethical challenges related to our environmental futures and the changes that individuals and organizations can make to help build a healthier society.

Texts

What reading materials will help you to pursue the goals of this course?

In this course, we will be reading three books:

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013)
- Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Young Lutunatabua, eds., *Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility* (2023)
- Karl Weber, ed., *Food, Inc. 2: Inside the Quest for a Better Future for Food* (2023)

We will also be reading a number of articles and book chapters posted on our Canvas site.

Instructor

How will my background help you achieve your goals in this course?

I was born in upstate New York, to parents with French-Canadian, Irish, and Dutch ancestry, but I grew up in northern New Jersey. For the last 28 years I have taught at the University of Minnesota, where I am a Professor of English. I received my B.A. in English at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and my M.A. and Ph.D. in English at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. I currently teach undergraduate and

graduate courses in the environmental humanities, literary nonfiction writing, and sustainability studies. Three of my proudest achievements have been helping to co-organize the University's Environmental Humanities Initiative in 2016, receiving the Morse-Alumni Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education in 2017, and receiving the Arthur "Red" and Helene B. Motley Exemplary Teaching Award in 2022. My research interests concern American environmental literature and its relationship to the ideas of nature, culture, place, and food. I am the author of two books, *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement* (2004) and *The Farmer, the Gastronomer, and the Chef: In Pursuit of the Ideal Meal* (2024), as well as the editor of several others, including *Our Neck of the Woods: Exploring Minnesota's Wild Places* (2009). I am also a Past President of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), and I have been a Senior Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Germany, a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Turin and University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy, and a Visiting Professor at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon in France.

Names and Pronouns

What should we call one another?

Please tell me how you would like to be referred to in class. I will happily address you by the name and gender pronoun you use, or by any other form of reference, and I would be glad to inform class members to do the same. I encourage you to call me by my first name (most people do), but you are welcome to call me "Professor Philippon" if you prefer. I use he/him pronouns. Note that class rosters will list your legal name unless you [enter a different one](#) through your OneStop account.

Contact Me

How can you contact me to help you learn? What are my office hours?

The easiest way to contact me is immediately after class; I would be happy to meet with you briefly to answer a question or elaborate on a point made in class. To contact me at other times, or to arrange to meet at another time, email is the best way to reach me. I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours during the work week. My contact information appears at the top of this syllabus.

I do not keep office hours, but I would be glad to set up a time to talk with you, in whatever way is most convenient (email, phone, video, etc.). Even if you do not have a specific question, I encourage you to talk with me at some point during the semester, so that I can get to know you better as a person and learn more about the subjects that interest you, since the main reason I am here is to help you learn and grow.

Feedback and Grading

How will I evaluate the nature, quality, and progress of your learning?

Feedback

I will attempt to provide feedback to you in multiple ways, in person and online. Sometimes this feedback will be for the entire class, and sometimes it will be for you individually. I will also solicit feedback from you about how the course is going on multiple occasions, so I can improve the course and help you learn more effectively.

How I Grade

Grades are an admittedly imprecise attempt by me to measure the nature, quality, and progress of your learning. You should consider the course requirements listed below, therefore, as a means to provide me with *evidence of your learning* — that is, evidence of your acquisition of the knowledge and skills this course is meant to help you cultivate. I will attempt to measure your learning in two ways:

- (1) *grading for effort*, in which I evaluate your engagement with the course material through your attendance, participation, and completion of various assignments
- (2) *grading for mastery*, in which I evaluate how well you are able to meet the standards I set for various assignments.

I believe my role as a teacher is to set clear goals for you to meet, ensure those goals are challenging yet reasonable, and give you the tools and feedback you need to meet them. For this reason, I do not “grade on a curve,” or assign grades based on the performance of the class as a whole.

Grading Standards

I will award grades using the A-F scale outlined in the University of Minnesota’s [Grading and Transcripts](#) policy. I will also award pluses and minuses, with the highest possible grade being an “A.”

I will assign an “I” (Incomplete) only in extraordinary circumstances, such as hospitalization. An Incomplete requires a written agreement between us, and it will automatically become an “F” at the end of the next semester of your registration if you do not complete the course requirements by that time.

Freshman Seminars must be taken A-F. A grade of C-minus or better is required for the course to count as an Honors Experience.

I assign grades in terms of a percentage of possible points according to the following standards:

	B+ >= 87%	C+ >= 77%	D+ >= 67%	
A >= 93%	B >= 83%	C >= 73%	D >= 63%	F < 63%
A- >= 90%	B- >= 80%	C- >= 70%		

I may choose to grade more generously, but I will not raise my standards above these.

Overall, I would say I am a “tough but fair” grader. ***I expect your work to be outstanding***, and the way to get an “A” is to meet those expectations in every respect. If at any time you have concerns about your grade, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Grades on Canvas

Although I will be posting grades on Canvas, please keep in mind that the “total” grade shown on the site throughout the semester may not be an accurate predictor of your “final” grade. This is because the “total” grade does not reflect your performance on the assignments and activities that will not be evaluated until the end of the semester, including your attendance and participation. Please consider this when using Canvas to see “how you are doing in the class.”

Grades and Workload Expectations

According to the [Expected Time per Course Credit](#) policy, to achieve an average grade, an average student should expect to spend an average of nine hours per week on academic work (three hours in class and six hours out of class) to complete the work of this three-credit course. *Note, however, that course grades are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort*

University Policies and Resources

What University policies and resources exist to help you succeed in this course?

Because the number of University policies and resources that apply to academic courses has become quite large, the English Department has compiled a [list of these](#) on its web site. These include important policies on:

- Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences
- Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty
- Student Conduct Code
- Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
- Sexual Harassment

- Disability Accommodations
- Mental Health and Stress Management
- Academic Freedom and Responsibility

These also include a wide range of resources to support your learning, such as the [Tutoring & Academic Success Center](#), [Student Writing Support](#), and [Student English Language Support](#). Please familiarize yourself with these policies and resources, which will help you succeed in this course.

Basic Needs Security Statement (adapted from Sara Goldrick-Rab)

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, who lacks a safe and stable place to live, or who needs assistance receiving healthcare or paying their expenses, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the [Office for Student Affairs](#) for support. (Click on “Basic needs - housing, food, healthcare, legal & financial.”) Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable doing so, so I can provide any resources I may possess.

Academic Freedom (from Alan Lightman’s “The End of the Enlightenment?”)

“Academic freedom ... is the freedom to express and debate ideas without fear of censorship or reprisal. It is the freedom to explore. It is the freedom to let the imagination wander. It is the freedom to exchange knowledge with colleagues and others. It is the freedom to question authority and received wisdom. It is the freedom to test ideas against experiment and to reject those ideas that fail the test. It is the freedom to be honest, even if that honesty challenges prevailing views. It is the freedom to be one’s true self.”

AI Policy

- *On Writing:* The rapid proliferation of AI tools has made it all but impossible for me to assign take-home writing, because I am no longer able to distinguish between *your* intelligence and artificial intelligence, thus undermining the validity of any grade I assign to your work. As a result, all of the writing for this course will occur in class, except for the final project. This is an imperfect solution to a pervasive problem, because take-home writing helps you practice critical-thinking skills (formulating, articulating, and revising your thoughts) to a degree that in-class writing cannot achieve. I believe what is gained in the reliability of my evaluation outweighs what is lost in the quality of your learning, but make no mistake: something substantial *is* being lost.
- *On Reading and Research:* As much as I can encourage you to read and think for yourself, I ultimately have no control over whether you use AI to summarize the readings or prepare drafts of your reflection papers. Nevertheless, I share computer scientist Cal Newport’s concerns about the perils of automating hard thought: “The life of the mind is critical to the human experience. It is why you come to a university, just like the entire purpose of a Navy SEAL boot camp is to get ready for the physical hardships of war. Academic institutions need to demonstrate that the life of the mind is hard and worth it. We need to think about cognitive fitness the way we think about physical fitness.” (from “Is AI Making Us Stupid?”)

Requirements

What will you be doing to pursue the goals of this course?

To succeed in this course, you must complete the following requirements, which are worth a total of 1,000 possible points. For more information on this point system, see the section on grading.

Summary of Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation (100 points)
2. Reading Responses (200 points)
3. Reflection Papers (400 points)

4. Final Project (275 points)
5. Learning Assessments (25 points)

1. Attendance and Participation (100 points)

Learning is social; it occurs in community. As a result, you will need to participate actively in this course on several levels, so that we can all work together to broaden our knowledge and deepen our skills.

Attendance: Your regular attendance is important, because we cannot learn from one another if you are not here. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent on a particular day, please let me know. I follow the University's policy on [Excused Absences and Makeup Work](#). ***Note that a pattern of unexcused absences is cause for a grade of "F" in the entire course, regardless of your performance on other assignments.***

Illness: If you experience [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or any potentially infectious respiratory illness, you should not come to class. Such an absence is an excused absence. Boynton Health offers [PCR testing for COVID-19](#). To make an appointment in the Gopher Quick Clinic or Urgent Care, call 612-625-3222.

Community Guidelines: Throughout the semester, we will get to know each other's ideas, personalities, and foibles—both in writing and in person. To make the most of our time together, therefore, I expect only the best of what you have to offer. Ideally, your mind, your courtesy, and your sense of humor should all be operating in top form. You should be eager to learn and grow, open to constructive criticism, and willing to help and collaborate with others. In return, I will always begin and end class on time, will place any course materials online as soon as possible, and will make myself available to answer your questions and discuss your concerns before and after class, whenever possible, in addition to by appointment.

Technology: You are welcome to use a laptop, tablet computer, or cell phone for course-related activities, but sometimes I will ask you to put away all technology to achieve our learning objectives. Please respect me and your fellow students by not using your devices for other purposes (such as non-course-related email, social media, web surfing, and texting). Disrespectful use of technology distracts you and me from the experience we are trying to have together. In particular, studies have shown that putting your cell phone away can increase your comprehension, lower your anxiety level, and foster your mindfulness. Because disrespectful use of technology interferes with learning, it is considered a violation of the Student Conduct Code.

Informal Assignments: As part of your attendance and participation score, I may also ask you to submit other kinds of writing, to work in teams and give informal presentations, and to connect with one or more classmates outside of class as needed.

Why Attendance and Participation Matter: Your regular attendance and active participation matter because this course is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is also about improving your ability to engage in public discourse. It is about helping you find your voice, showing that every voice matters, and practicing the skills of civic participation. This involves reading and listening carefully, interpreting what you have read or heard, and making your own contribution to an ongoing conversation. Your "participation grade," therefore, is my attempt to evaluate how committed you have been to actively engaging others, observing how other people (myself and your fellow students) engage one another, and receiving feedback about your own engagement.

Non-Verbal Participation: Because I recognize that some of your participation will occur in ways that may be difficult for me to judge—such as in small-group discussions, in conversations with one or more other students, and in other unstructured activities—I would also be happy to evaluate your non-verbal participation (or "active listening") by reviewing the notes you take in class. Although active listening cannot take the place of actively contributing to a learning community, it can be an indicator of the depth of your engagement. Please see me if you wish to take advantage of this option.

Grading Criteria: At the end of the semester, I will grade your participation according to the following scale:

- A: frequent and courteous participation, with mature and thoughtful insights
- B: above average participation and insight
- C: moderate participation and reasonable insight
- D: below average participation with little understanding of the issues
- F: little or no participation

To receive the full 100 points for attendance and participation, therefore, you should read the assigned texts carefully, attend the class meetings conscientiously, and participate actively in class discussions, small-group work, and other in-class assignments.

2. Reading Responses (200 points)

Roughly once a week, on either Tuesday or Thursday, I will ask you to respond to the reading for that day at the start of class. These reading responses are meant to:

- help you actively engage with the course material and thus improve your understanding and retention of our subject matter (that is, your learning)
- provide a means for me to know your interests, so I can tailor our class discussions accordingly
- allow students who may not feel comfortable speaking up in class the opportunity to formulate their thoughts in advance of our discussions

In my prompts for these responses, I might ask you to:

- explain why you agree or disagree with a reading
- describe something that confuses, surprises, or troubles you about the reading
- ask a question, and maybe even attempt to answer that question, about the reading
- react to new information you have learned from the reading
- compare one reading to another

Feedback and Grading: Although I will read these responses regularly, I will not be providing written feedback on individual entries. Instead, I will watch for trends in the length, number, timing, and quality of your responses throughout the semester, and I will let you know if you need to improve. ***Pro Tip: If it's not clear from your reading response whether or not you have actually read the text, you're probably not going into enough detail.***

Each reading response will be graded pass-fail and is worth 15 points (10 responses x 15 points = 150 points). There will be twelve responses throughout the semester, but I will drop your two lowest scores. At the end of the semester, I will award an additional grade of up to 50 points for overall merit, based on the following scale:

- A: substantial, detailed, and/or insightful engagement or analysis
- B: some engagement or analysis, perhaps with some summary
- C: mostly summary, with little engagement or analysis

Missed Responses: Because of the nature and purpose of these reading responses, missed responses cannot be made up. In keeping with the University's policy on [Excused Absences and Makeup Work](#), however, I will drop your two lowest scores, so that you can miss two responses with no impact on your grade.

Online Responses: Depending on the needs of the class, I may ask you to complete some of your Reading Responses online instead of in class. I will announce any changes to the schedule in advance of the due dates.

3. Reflection Papers (400 points)

I will ask you to write two in-class reflection papers on different aspects of our course material:

1. **Critical:** Compare and contrast a portion of *Braiding Sweetgrass* to another course text.
2. **Creative:** Write a letter from the future, referencing the readings.

We will talk more about these papers in class, but in general an excellent reflection paper:

- is focused, well organized, and clearly written
- demonstrates a rich, accurate, and insightful understanding of the course material
- defines terms, supports claims with evidence, and addresses opposing arguments as needed
- is original, interesting, and imaginative as needed
- credits the source of borrowed ideas and statements appropriately
- is free (or almost free) of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling

4. Final Project (275 points)

What is the final project?

The final project, or “passion project,” is a chance for you to learn about a topic related to our course in a self-directed way, so that your learning is more likely to stick with you, be meaningful to you, and reflect your strengths as a learner. It provides an opportunity to engage our subject more deeply, so that your choices help to create the kind of experience you have in the course, rather than me just saying, “Read these texts, write these papers, take these quizzes, and let’s call that learning.” Instead, I’m hoping you say, “Hey, I’m inspired by this course to pursue this subject, which I think is super cool, and look at all this awesome stuff I learned in the process.” It’s not so much a reflection on the things we’ve read and discussed in class (that’s what the other assignments are for) so much as it is a chance to use what we’ve read and discussed as a jumping off point for a further, more focused exploration of a subject that’s meaningful and/or intriguing to you. It should, in short, allow you to follow your passion.

What form should it take?

The form your project takes is largely up to you, although I will work with you to make sure it includes SMART goals (or goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), keeping in mind that this framework will not necessarily apply to projects that are more about exploring ideas or creating art. You may, for example, choose to:

- complete a personal activity involving a course topic, such as tracking your carbon footprint and/or food consumption
- investigate a subject and/or interview a scientist, subject expert, policy-maker, or other relevant individual about it
- review one or more books related to a major theme of our course
- compose a manifesto, white paper, or work of creative writing (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama)
- record a documentary [video](#) or [podcast](#)
- create a publicly accessible, digital, web-based, visual, or multi-[media](#) project (e.g., [website](#), blog, slideshow, Infographic, and/or [StoryMap](#))
- develop a sample museum exhibition, art installation, or public education and/or social marketing campaign on Instagram or TikTok
- volunteer for a non-profit, government agency, or other organization that accomplishes something related to our environmental future
- create a children’s book, comic book, art project, or other illustrated text
- pursue a collaborative project with one or more other members of the class

Ideally, your final project should be a challenge for you, involving either a level of sacrifice, a degree of emotional or physical discomfort, or a difficult task you would not normally undertake. It should also not be something you received credit for in another course. Be creative. Push the envelope. Knock yourself out.

How should I decide what to do?

Ask yourself these questions:

- **What kind of process do you most enjoy?** Given that this assignment is as much about process as it is about product, one helpful way to approach it is to ask what kind of process you most enjoy: the design process (building a prototype), the artistic process (creating an art project), the documentary process (telling a story), or the inquiry-based process (answering a question). In this sense, the final project is a form of “Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning” (POGIL), which seeks to empower you to explore a subject that interests you in more detail, in whatever way you wish.
- **Do you want your project to have a personal component?** This is completely fine, but keep in mind that your project will still need to connect your personal experience to some larger social or cultural context.
- **Do you want to work with other students?** This is not required, but some of the best projects I have seen were collaborative projects in which several students contributed their unique talents toward achieving a single goal. I will work with your group to ensure that you collaborate effectively, allocate tasks equitably, and are graded fairly as individuals and as a group.
- **Do you want to work with a community partner?** We can work with the [Center for Community-Engaged Learning](#) to help you identify a community partner for your project, if you would like to pursue this opportunity.

How should I document my learning?

To document what you learned, you will need to give ten-minute presentation to the class at the end of the semester that answers the following five questions:

1. What did you do, where, and when?
2. *Why* did you do it? What motivated you? What was the purpose of your project?
3. What was the hardest thing about it?
4. What did you learn about our subject by doing it?
5. What did you learn about yourself and what you value by doing it?

In your presentation, be sure to share any research you did about your topic, provide relevant context for any action you took, and report any data you collected to the class.

If you wish to use slides in your presentation, please share these with me *before* the presentations begin, either by sharing your Google Slides, logging in to your account (bring your phone to Do the Duo), emailing me your PowerPoint or Keynote file, or bringing a flash drive with your files on it. There will not be time to swap out laptops. Please plan to use the whole ten minutes and *talk with us* about your slides, not *read from* them. (An exception is if you are reading from a paper or story you wrote for your project.) You should also plan to practice your presentation to be no more than ten minutes long. Don’t just plan to “wing it,” as ten minutes go much faster than you realize!

Everyone should be prepared to present on the first day of presentations. I will first take volunteers, then use a random number generator to select the people who will present each day.

What milestones do I need to complete?

To help you achieve your goal, I will ask you to submit two “milestones” during the semester. Each of these components has its own point value:

- **Milestone #1:** A 1-2 page, single-spaced proposal, along with a 1-2 page, single-spaced annotated bibliography. (15 points)
- **Milestone #2:** One-page, single-spaced progress report explaining what remains to be done, including (if appropriate) an excerpt from your project-in-process. (10 points)
- **Final Project Presentation:** Due during the last few weeks of class. (250 points)

There is a 24-hour grace period to submit your proposal and progress report late, no permission needed, no questions asked. If you need more time than this, you may request (via email or in person) up to a one-week extension with no consequences. If you do not request an extension, or you submit your document after the

extended deadline, your submission will be considered late, and its grade will be reduced proportionate to how late it was submitted.

Grading criteria: I will grade your project and your presentation holistically using the following criteria:

- **Content:** Is your project insightful? Does it demonstrate a rich understanding of the material it examines? Is it inspiring, impressive, and something you are proud to call your own?
- **Coherence and clarity:** Is your project focused and well organized? Does it have a clear purpose, and is it devoted to fulfilling that purpose? If you are making an argument, do you support your claims with evidence and address opposing arguments? If your project is creative or artistic, is it original and interesting? Does it compel our attention?
- **Execution vs. difficulty:** Was your goal ambitious, even if the result was imperfect?
- **Presentation:** Is your presentation thoughtful, well organized, creative, and/or original, as appropriate? Do you demonstrate good verbal and non-verbal communication skills (clarity, volume, pacing, tone, eye contact, gestures)? Do you manage your time well and engage your audience?
- **Slides:** Are your slides clear, readable, and well designed? Are they free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling? Do you credit the source of borrowed ideas, statements, and/or images appropriately?

Please Note: I will award only whole letter grades (not “plus” or “minus” grades) for the final project using the following scale: A (240 points), B (215 points), C (190 points), D (165 points), F (0 points). Outstanding final projects may result in a higher overall final grade, as they are meant to demonstrate your learning throughout the semester.

5. Learning Assessments (25 points)

Three smaller assignments (formatted as Canvas quizzes) help me understand how I can create the most effective environment to help you learn throughout our course:

a. Initial Assessment (5 points): At the beginning of our course, I will ask you five questions:

- how did you learn about the course, and why did you decide to take it?
- what are your fears and concerns (if any) about the course?
- what do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses as a learner?
- what barriers (if any) to effective learning do you face this semester?
- anything else I should know?

b. Mid-semester Reflection (5 points): Halfway through the semester, I will ask you to complete a mid-semester reflection, evaluating the course, your participation in it, and anything you can do to improve your learning.

c. Self-evaluation (15 points): At the end of the semester, I will ask you to evaluate yourself again, as well as indicate what you have done to improve since mid-semester, and I will take this self-evaluation into account when assigning final grades.

Course Schedule

How is this course structured to develop your knowledge, understanding, and abilities throughout the semester?

This schedule is subject to change, so if you miss a class you should check with a classmate for the most current information. Readings, assignments, lecture notes, and handouts are all available on our Canvas site. All readings should be read before the class on the day they appear.

1. The History of the Future

- 9/8 Week 1.1 **Welcome**
- 9/10 Week 1.2 **How have we envisioned the future of the University?**
 Read: Elevate Extraordinary 2030
 The TRUTH Project Executive Summary
 Optional: Grist, "Misplaced Trust"
- 9/15 Week 2.1 **Will technology and innovation lead the way to a brighter future?**
 Read: Michael Shellenberger, Ted Nordhaus, et al., "An Ecomodernist Manifesto"
 Nick Foster, "The Future Will Be Mundane"
 DUE: Initial Assessment
- 9/17 Week 2.2 **What principles should we use in thinking about the future?**
 Read: David N. Bengston, "Ten Principles for Thinking about the Future"
- 9/22 Week 3.1 **What were some early warnings of future danger? (part one)**
 Read: Aldo Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)
 Rachel Carson, from *Silent Spring* (1962)
- 9/24 Week 3.2 **What were some early warnings of future danger? (part two)**
 Read: Paul Ehrlich, from *The Population Bomb* (1968)
 Bill McKibben, from *The End of Nature* (1989)
 Optional: Somini Sengupta, "The Population Question"
- 9/29 Week 4.1 **Final Project Discussion**

2. Decolonial Futures

- 10/1 Week 4.2 **What does it mean to "decolonize" the future?**
 Read: Jennifer Schuessler, "What Is 'Settler Colonialism'?"
 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor"
 Optional: Evan Goldstein, "The Idea Fueling the Student Protest Movement"
 Optional: Bruce Gilley, "The Case for Colonialism"
- 10/6 Week 5.1 **How is indigenous storytelling related to Western science?**
 Read: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "Preface" and "Planting Sweetgrass" (pp. ix-59)
 Optional: Robin Wall Kimmerer & Kyle Artelle, "Time to Support Indigenous Science"
 Optional: Jenna Ross, "The Story Behind 'Braiding Sweetgrass'"
 DUE: Mid-semester Reflection
- 10/8 Week 5.2 **What values are required to be "caretakers" of the future?**
 Read: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "Tending Sweetgrass" (pp. 61-117)
 Note: Monday, Oct. 12 is Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 10/13 Week 6.1 **Can plants help us design a better future?**
 Read: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "Picking Sweetgrass" (pp. 119-201)
 DUE: Final Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

- 10/15 Week 6.2 **What does it mean to become “native” to a place?**
Read: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, “Braiding Sweetgrass” (pp. 203-300)
- 10/20 Week 7.1 **What stories will help us achieve a sustainable future?**
Read: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, “Burning Sweetgrass” and “Epilogue” (pp. 301-84)
Optional: David Marchese, “You Don’t Have to Be Complicit in Our Culture of Destruction”
- 10/22 Week 7.2 **Paper #1: Critical Reflection Paper (in class)**

3. Climate Futures

- 10/27 Week 8.1 **Why does climate science suggest we need to “electrify everything”?**
Read: *Not Too Late*, first half of “We Have the Solutions” (pp. 1-51)
Optional: Alexis Soloski, “Climate Doom Is Out. ‘Apocalyptic Optimism’ Is In.”
- 10/29 Week 8.2 **How are decolonization and indigeneity connected to climate justice?**
Read: *Not Too Late*, second half of “We Have the Solutions” (pp. 52-102)
Optional: “It’s not the end, we have several possible futures: Interview with Indigenous author Ailton Krenak”
Optional: Bill Gates, “Three Tough Truths about Climate”
- 11/3 Week 9.1 **How should we manage our climate emotions, such as despair, fear, and anxiety? (*It’s Election Day!*)**
Read: *Not Too Late*, “Frameworks of Possibility” (pp. 103-48)
Optional: Glenn Albrecht, “Solastalgia”
- 11/5 Week 9.2 **Why is imagining the future critical to addressing climate change?**
Read: *Not Too Late*, “The Future We Want” and “Take This With You” (pp. 149-98)
Free Extra Chapter: “What Can I Do about the Climate Emergency?”
Optional: Illing, “We can have growth while fighting climate change”

4. Food Futures

- 11/10 Week 10.1 **How did COVID-19 affect the future of food?**
Read: *Food Inc. 2*, chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 3-25)
Optional: Twilight Greenaway, “We Are What We Eat — and We Must Make Food Decisions with the Climate Crisis in Mind”
DUE: Final Project Progress Report
- 11/12 Week 10.2 **What is the future of regenerative agriculture and aquaculture?**
Read: *Food Inc. 2*, chapters 8 (pp. 117-38) & 11 (pp. 161-75)
- 11/17 Week 11.1 **What is the future of meat?**
Read: *Food Inc. 2*, chapters 6 (pp. 89-101) and 14 (pp. 201-36)
Optional: Mubina Fareed, “Thanksgiving Sucks”
Sean Sherman, “The Thanksgiving Tale We Tell Is a Harmful Lie”

- 11/19 Week 11.2 **What does it mean to decolonize your diet?**
 Read: *Food Inc.* 2, chapters 5 (pp. 73-87) and 16 (pp. 257-72)
 Optional: Kate Nelson, "The Land Back Movement Is Also About Foodways"
 Sean Sherman, *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen* (excerpts)
 Sean Sherman, "Un-Modernist Cuisine"
 Jackson, "Sean Sherman Opening New Restaurant"

- 11/24 Week 12.1 **Paper #2: Creative Reflection Paper (in class)**

5. Final Project Presentations

- 11/26 Week 12.2 **No class (Thanksgiving)**
- 12/1 Week 13.1 Group 1 (6-7 students)
 12/3 Week 13.2 Group 2 (6-7 students)
- 12/8 Week 14.1 Group 3 (6-7 students)
 12/10 Week 14.2 Last class and Remaining Presentations
- 12/11 Fri Self-evaluations due by 11:59 p.m.
 12/30 Wed Final grades due by 11:59 p.m.