Natural Resource Conservation
NRM 5325: W01
Web Delivered Course
Spring 2026

Instructor:
Dr. Rob Kinucan
RAS 109
Phone 432-837-8204
Email: kinucan@sulross.edu
Office Hours: MW 9:00-11:00. I am also available by appointment.

Course Description:
Welcome to Natural Resource Conservation! I am Dr. Rob Kinucan, and I will work with you this semester to gain insight into natural resource conservation and hopefully view conservation issues from a fresh perspective. This class provides an overview of the science of natural resource management and integrates topics such as plant ecology, soil science, climatology, economics, and policy within the context of range, wildlife and forest management, plant ecology, energy conservation and urban planning.

Required Textbook:
Natural Resources: Ecology, Economics, and Policy. 2003, second edition. By Jerry Holechek, Richard Cole, James Fisher, and Raul Valdez. Prentice Hall. Available through Sully Bookshelf and via online retailers.

Additional reading:
Leopold, Aldo, 1949. *A Sand County Almanac – The Land Ethic* (Available in course documents in Blackboard)

MacCleery, Doug, 1999. *Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic: Is it Only Half a Loaf Unless a Consumption Ethic Accompanies It? Or Is the Shift to "Ecological Sustainability" on U.S. Public Lands Merely a Sophisticated "NIMBYism" Masquerading as a "Paradigm Shift?* (Available in course documents in Blackboard)

Exam Schedule:
Exam 1 – Monday, March 17
Exam 2 – Wednesday, April 29

Assignments:
Assignments are due weekly, as noted under Course Content Modules. Due dates are also visible under Gradebook.

Term Paper Schedule:
Submit topic for approval – February 16 (submit via email to instructor)
Title & outline due – March 4 (submit via email to instructor)
Paper due – April 6 (submit through Blackboard)

Grades:
2 one-hour exams @ 100 points ea. – 200 points
Weekly assignments – 100 points
Term paper – 100 points
Total – 400 points possible

Final grade assignment: 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; < 60 =F.

Your assignment and term project grades will reward two things: the quality and timeliness of your responses. You should utilize good writing practices (use spell-check, concise writing, proper grammar, and syntax) and directly address questions posed. Effective communication is probably one of the most important tools you will take into the workforce, and I place a premium on your ability to communicate clearly and effectively on your assignments. Regular class participation is an essential part of this online course, and I expect that you will log on to the course weekly. You must read all the assignments and assigned material. Late assignments will only be accepted under extenuating circumstances, and at my discretion. If an assignment is accepted late, a point penalty will be assessed, again at my discretion. All grades will be posted in Blackboard Gradebook.

Connecting with Students for Success:

This spring we will participate in the Connecting with Students for Success program at Sul Ross. Research has demonstrated that building connections between students and faculty fosters a strong learning environment and better overall success. As part of the program, I will meet individually with each of you through Collaborate, and we will schedule meetings soon. Our meetings will last 15 to 30 minutes. You will also receive a survey from institutional research to complete later in the semester to help us assess the effectiveness of the program.

AI Statement

The University does not recommend or endorse any specific AI tools or resources. Students should be aware that many generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) store user input and may use this data to train future models. For this reason, students should never upload or share personal, confidential, or identifiable information—such as names, ID numbers, health data, or assignment submissions containing such details—into any generative AI platform. When using AI tools, students should verify whether the tool complies with student privacy standards as indicated by the University. Faculty may recommend specific tools that better align with institutional data privacy policies, but ultimate responsibility for data protection rests with users. Students are encouraged to use faculty-recommended platforms when engaging in coursework involving generative AI. The University is not liable for any adverse experience or impact when students interact with these tools.

Generative AI is permitted in specific contexts and with acknowledgment. The emergence of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT and DALL-E) has sparked interest among many students in our discipline. The use of these tools for brainstorming ideas, exploring possible responses to questions or problems, and creative engagement with the materials may be useful for you as you craft responses to class assignments. While there is no substitute for working directly with your instructor, the potential for generative AI tools to provide automatic feedback, assistive technology and language assistance is clearly developing. Please feel free to reach out to me well in advance of the due date of assignments for which you may be using generative AI tools, and I will be happy to discuss what is acceptable.

In this course, students shall give credit to AI tools whenever used, even if only to generate ideas rather than usable text or illustrations. When using AI tools on assignments, add an appendix showing (a) the entire exchange, highlighting the most relevant sections; (b) a description of precisely which AI tools were used (e.g. ChatGPT private subscription version or DALL-E free version), (c) an explanation of how the AI tools were

used (e.g. to generate ideas, turns of phrase, elements of text, long stretches of text, lines of argument, pieces of evidence, maps of the conceptual territory, illustrations of key concepts, etc.); (d) an account of why AI tools were used (e.g. to save time, to surmount writer's block, to stimulate thinking, to handle mounting stress, to clarify prose, to translate text, to experiment for fun, etc.). Students shall not use AI tools during in-class examinations, or assignments unless explicitly permitted and instructed. Overall, AI tools should be used wisely and reflectively with an aim to deepen understanding of subject matter.

It is a violation of university policy to misrepresent work that you submit or exchange with your instructor by characterizing it as your own, such as submitting responses to assignments that do not acknowledge the use of generative AI tools. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have about the use of generative AI tools before submitting any content that has been substantially informed by these tools.
In this course, we may use generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) to examine the ways in which these kinds of tools may inform our exploration of the topics of the class. You will be informed as to when and how these tools will be used, along with guidance for attribution if/as needed. Any use of generative AI tools outside of these parameters constitutes plagiarism and will be treated as such.
Understanding how and when to use generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E) is quickly emerging as an important skill for future professions. To that end, you are welcome to use generative AI tools in this class if it aligns with the learning outcomes or goals associated with assignments. You are fully responsible for the information you submit based on a generative AI query (such that it does not violate academic honesty standards, intellectual property laws, or standards of non-public research you are conducting through coursework). Your use of generative AI tools must be properly documented and cited for any work submitted in this course.

To ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and to preserve the integrity of the course, students are not permitted to submit text that is generated by artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat, Claude, Google Bard, or any other automated assistance for any classwork or assessments. This includes using AI to generate answers to assignments, exams, or projects, or using AI to complete any other course-related tasks. Using AI in this way undermines your ability to develop critical thinking, writing, or research skills that are essential for this course and your academic success. Students may use AI as part of their research and preparation for assignments, or as a text editor, but text that is submitted must be written by the student. For example, students may use AI to generate ideas, questions, or summaries that they then revise, expand, or cite properly. Students should also be aware of the potential benefits and limitations of using AI as a tool for learning and research. AI systems can provide helpful information or suggestions, but they are not always reliable or accurate. Students should critically evaluate the sources, methods, and outputs of AI systems. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct. If you have any questions about this policy or if you are unsure whether a particular use of AI is acceptable, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification.

Course Student Learning Outcomes:
The primary objective of this course is to introduce students to the science of natural resource management. At the end of this course, you will be able to: 1) explain the history, science, and policy approaches to natural resource management, and 2) apply that knowledge to analyze situations addressing alternate uses of rangeland, wildlife, soil, and water resources within social and economic contexts. By the completion of the course, you should be able to identify and understand key natural resource management issues and integrate ecological, economic, and policy management criteria in an applied framework.

Marketable Skills:
Students are expected to develop the following general marketable skills throughout this course.
Critical thinking and communication: Students will practice problem solving and critical thinking to analyze, interpret and discuss natural resource issues in persuasive essays, short responses, and presentations.

Program Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate they are able to: 1) apply statistical concepts and procedures to natural resource data, 2) evaluate literature and references to substantiate an applied research project, 3) demonstrate their knowledge of and mastery of the fundamentals and advanced concepts of range and wildlife management.

Course Material:
This is an asynchronous web-delivered course with no formal meeting times. You should plan on spending two hours per credit hour per week in the class to successfully learn the material. Your grade will be based upon three components: 1) two one-hour essay/short answer exams, 2) one term paper, and 3) weekly reading assignments with concise responses to questions. Exams will be timed. For each exam a study guide of review questions is posted in Blackboard under Course Content. Each exam will consist of questions derived from the study guide. Assignments will be posted on a weekly basis with most of the material based on readings from the textbook. Additional readings will also be assigned and available through online links in Blackboard. On occasion, some terms or questions in the exam study guide will not be covered in the assigned reading. In those cases, it is up to you to independently research the term or question. The weekly assignments and term paper are due by the stipulated dates. Please note all assignments are accessible from the beginning of the course, and you can turn them in at any time up to the due date. The term paper criteria and assessment procedure are posted in Blackboard under the Term Paper Module. All tests and other due dates can be found in Gradebook. All dates and times will be based on local time in Alpine, Texas. Cheating and plagiarism are not acceptable and will be handled accordingly. I utilize the online plagiarism software SafeAssign within Blackboard.

Communication Expectation and Office Hours:
If you have questions or concerns, I am available through email, Blackboard Collaborate, and phone. My general office hours are noted above, and on Blackboard, but I am happy to meet at other times by arrangement. Formal email communication is through our university assigned email addresses. Because of spam filters and the volume of email I receive it is possible that if you send email from another address (e.g., yahoo.com, gmail.com, etc.) it might be filtered as junk mail, and I will not receive it. I will respond within 24 hours during the work week and am available during normal university working hours. If you reach out on a weekend or holiday, I will respond as soon as possible, but please expect a delay.

All email should include the following in the subject line: First initial + last name + brief description of subject (for example: R Kinucan – question for assignment 2). **"Sign" your name in emails.** It is sometimes difficult to identify you by email address alone. Common courtesy dictates that you conduct your academic correspondence like you would business correspondence. Assignments and attached files should similarly be titled: First initial + last name + assignment name (for example: R_Kinucan_termpaper_1.docx). I will accept Word document files, or Excel, and PowerPoint as the exercise dictates. Please contact me in advance if you desire to submit other file formats so we can ensure compatibility. If you fail to include an appropriate subject line, your email may be accidentally purged with junk mail.

Please use **Blackboard Help Desk** for issues related to technical problems with Blackboard.

ADA Statement:
SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email mschwartze@sulross.edu. The office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, SUI Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused, including meaningful and pertinent participation. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION MAKEUP POLICY

Turn work in on time! If you have a specific circumstance that prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, contact me as soon as possible. We can discuss your circumstances and the prospect of partial credit for the late assignments. No work will be accepted more than one week beyond the assignment deadline. Late assignments will only be accepted under extenuating circumstances, and at my discretion. If an assignment is accepted late, a point penalty will be assessed, again at my discretion.

Required Student Responsibilities Statement

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

Miscellaneous:

This syllabus is your roadmap and contract for the course. I adhere to the syllabus; however, on occasion events occur in which it is advantageous to you to adjust. As an example, it may become apparent that there is a reason to adjust the date that an exam is scheduled. If something like this occurs, I will give you advance notification of such a change. If you find that despite your best efforts you are unable to submit an assignment, or have some other challenges with the course, notify me as soon as you can. I may be able to help you resolve the problem, and your outreach lets me know you are conscientious to keep me informed. I will respond to your questions as quickly as I can.

Distance Education Statement:

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are in the student handbook.

Course Topical Outline:
(Detailed assignment timeline and due dates are available in Blackboard under Content and Calendar)

I. Course Introduction – Meet the instructor, review syllabus, and student introductions.

II. Overview – Basic natural resource concepts and terms (Chapter 1).

III. Management Foundations
- A. Historical Perspective (Chapter 2).
- B. The Land Ethic (Assigned reading).
- C. Basic Ecology (Chapter 3).
- D. Conservation Economics (Chapter 4) and Planning, Policy, & Administration (Chapter 5).

IV. Air, Water, and Land Resources
- A. Atmospheric Resources and Climate (Chapter 6).
- B. Water Resources (Chapter 7).
- C. Soil Resources (Chapter 8).
- D. United States Ecosystems (Chapter 9).

V. The Land-Based and Renewable Wild Living Resources
- A. Rangeland and Range Management (Chapter 11).
- B. Wildlife Conservation and Management (Chapter 15).
- C. Biodiversity and Endangered Species Management (Chapter 17).