

RCH 3301 & NRM 5302
Sustainability in Agriculture
Summer 2026

Professors:

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Course description:

This course provides an in depth look at environmental, social, and economic sustainability on a global to local scale. Emphasis will be placed on how ranchers and land managers can provide for long-term sustainability through planning and implementation of sustainable practices.

Class meetings:

The class will be held as a Texas ranch field class and will be meeting June 1st - June 6th.

Tentative Course Outline:

See the attached itinerary.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn about the agricultural industry in Texas and be able to identify: major challenges to sustainability in Texas; Texas's role in global agricultural market; Texas's impact on and relationship with U.S. agricultural industry.
2. Students will be able to analyze how decisions by ranch managers, landholders, and scientists in Texas are affecting sustainable practices and the environmental, economic, and societal pressures that are helping or hindering these practices.
3. Students will be able to evaluate management practices in agriculture in Texas and determine the level of sustainability and best practices that are being applied or developed.

Marketable Skills:

1. Students will develop skills in oral and written communication
2. Learning through workshops in an adult learning framework
3. Decision making and analysis of industry practices

Required Text:

None.

Packing List:

You will need to pack for being on ranches and walking around pastures every day. Make sure you bring hat and clothes that are comfortable in the heat. You will need to bring your own sunscreen and bug repellent based on personal preference. We will have some downtime in hotels and may be able to go to the Gulf of Mexico if time permits.

Bring a water bottle that can be filled in the morning and last until the evening.

You are responsible for paying for your own food. We will have options for lunch and supper each day. Breakfast will be free in hotels each morning. You may want to bring a small cooler. We will have the opportunity to go to grocery stores if you want to have your own food and snacks.

We will be staying at hotels and ranch houses and you will not need to bring linens, sleeping bag or towels unless you prefer to have your own.

Bring something to record your journal, this may be a laptop, tablet, phone, or notebook. You will need to take pictures so make sure you have a phone with a camera or a standalone camera.

Class Organization

1. This is a field-based class to different places in Texas. You will be expected to act appropriately as ambassadors for Sul Ross State University. You are expected to be on time and ready for each day's activities. Be aware of your own personal safety and be responsible for your actions. Participation is a large part of the grade and you will be graded on your level of interaction, your attitude, and your professionalism.
2. You will be expected to complete you own work. Cheating on an assignment will result in an F for that material and possible expulsion from the class with a grade of F.
3. It is Sul Ross State University Policy to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA Coordinator for Program Accessibility. This must be done prior to leaving on the trip.
4. Please let me know at the first of the class if you have any dietary preferences or health issues that may impact your participation

Grades:

Undergraduate students

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| - Field trip participation | 25% (50 points) |
| - Assignments | 75% (150 points) |

Graduate students

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| - Field trip participation | 20% (60 points) |
| - Assignments | 50% (150 points) |
| - End of Trip Essay | 30% (80 points) |

Photo Scavenger Hunt (60 points): You will be given prompts on items, examples, situations to find and photograph during the trip. You will put your pictures into a power point with one prompt per slide. Each slide will contain the prompt, photo, and caption explaining how the photograph illustrates the prompt. This will be turned in on Blackboard.

Journal (90 points): You will be keeping a daily journal of thoughts, activities, and observations. This can be done electronically or hard copy and will be turned in at the end of the class to be graded. You will be given question prompts to help you focus your thinking for your journal. This will be turned in on Blackboard.

End of Trip Essay (*Graduate Students Only*): You will write a 3-page minimum essay reflecting on the current state of the ranching industry. Specifically, tie together ranching practices that were demonstrated within the field tours to their ecological and economical significance to conservation/restoration of Texas lands, sustainability in livestock production, and the progress of rangeland science.

Itinerary

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start time</i>	<i>End time</i>	<i>Travel</i>	<i>Info</i>
Monday	8:00 am	8:30 am	30min	Meet at RAS and Travel to Decie Ranch
	8:30 am	12:00 pm		Ranch Tour at Decie Ranch
	12:00 pm	1:00 pm		Lunch in Alpine
	1:00 pm	1:30 pm	30 min	Travel to Marfa
	2:00 pm	5:00 pm		Field tour at Mimms Ranch
Tuesday	5:30 pm	6:00 pm	30 min	Travel and stay in Alpine
	5:30 am	12:00 pm	7hrs	Meet at Van, travel to Decatur, TX
	12:00 pm	1:00 pm		Lunch at Greenwood Grocery
	1:30 pm	5:00 pm		Tour Leo Ranch
Wednesday	5:00 pm	6:30 pm	1hr 30 min	Travel to Ardmore, OK and hotel check in
	8:00 am	8:30 am	30min	Travel to Noble Foundation
	8:30 am	12:00 pm		Tour Noble Foundation
	12:00 pm	1:00 pm		Lunch in Ardmore
Thursday	1:00 pm	6:00 pm	5hrs	Travel to Shield Ranch, stay at ranch <i>May also stay in Austin</i>
	8:00 am	12:00 pm		Tour Shield Ranch
	12:00 pm	1:00 pm		Eat lunch near Austin
	1:00 pm	2:30 pm	1hr 30 min	Travel to comfort
Friday	2:30 pm	5:00 pm		Tour Letz Ranch
	5:00 pm	8:00 pm	3hrs	Drive to Victoria, Hotel check-in
	8:00 am	8:30am	30min	Meet and Drive to Sarco Creek Ranch
	8:30 am	11:00 am		Tour Sarco Creek Ranch
	11:00 am	12:00 pm		Eat lunch in Victoria
Saturday	12:00 pm	1:30 pm	1hr 30 min	Travel to Kingsville
	2:00 pm	5:00 pm		Tour Poncho's Ranch
	5:00 pm	5:30 pm		Hotel Check in at Kingsville
	8:00 am	4:00 pm	8hr	Travel back to Alpine

END

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

Student Learning Outcomes for the B.S. in Natural Resource Management

The graduating student will demonstrate that he/she is able to:

1. Identify species of wildland plants and wildlife common to the western United States and describe their natural history.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of an ecosystem.
3. Communicate about natural resources and conservation both verbally and in writing.
4. Conduct range and wildlife inventories in a team setting.

This course will address SLOs 2 and 3.