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Hours by sign up on door Hours: M-R 11-12

**AMER 300: "The Commons: History, Sustainability, Activism"** Thursdays 3-6

Garret Hardin’s controversial 1968 article, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” argued that left to themselves, people could not reasonably be expected to manage a common pool resource in a plus sum way. Individually selfish, humans compete with each other in a cycle of overuse that leads inevitably to tragedy on a finite planet. This thesis inspired academic study and policy development, and turned people’s attention toward not just the problem of commons failure but also durable commons—some that have existed for hundreds of years—all over the world.

In this same era, “globalization” has raised questions for activists about the privatization of resources that had long been so deeply assumed to be held in common—like water, like indigenous herbal remedies, like genes—that were now actively being privatized and patented for corporate profit. Many activists have seen a reclaiming of the concept of the commons as an ecological and a civic remedy to questions that ordinary folk as well as world leaders confront the world over.

This course undertakes to study the commons, beginning for the purposes of this courses with the vivid battles over enclosure in England and the US. It will trace how questions of the common arguably undergirded intellectual idealism and political activism in the British colonies and early US before turning to more contemporary questions concerning the enclosure of commons like water, theories and empirical studies of managing common pool resources, and how the commons inspires activist response to, for instance, the patenting of seeds, reviving local common gardens and civic commons along with it, the internet commons, knowledge commons, and global warming. The course will be structured by a speaker series, with an internationally-reknowned speaker visiting every three weeks, in the second week of each unit, including MacArthur Fellows and a Nobel Laureate. On the weeks that the speaker visits, students will plan to attend the 4-5:30 lecture, and then meet with the speaker immediately following, from 5:30-6:30. The third week of each unit will be devoted to a catch-up discussion based on the speaker’s visit and short seminar interaction, the speaker’s book, and the response papers due at the beginning of that class. Finally in the course’s last unit, students will attend a Road Trip on land, environmental, worker and activist commons, visiting the Woodlands Community Trust (on the TN/KY border north of Knoxville) and Robinson Forest (southeastern KY), with lectures by Woodland Community Trust members, Erik Reese (author of *Lost Mountain*).

**Speakers:**

**Lewis Hyde**: Lewis Hyde is a poet, essayist, translator, and cultural critic with a particular interest in the public life of the imagination. His 1983 book, The Gift, illuminates and defends the non-commercial portion of artistic practice. Trickster Makes This World (1998) uses a group of ancient myths to argue for the kind of disruptive intelligence all cultures need if they are to remain lively, flexible, and open to change. Hyde's most recent book, Common as Air, is a spirited defense of our "cultural commons," that vast store of ideas, inventions, and works of art that we have inherited from the past and continue to enrich in the present. A MacArthur Fellow and former director of undergraduate creative writing at Harvard University, Hyde teaches during the fall semesters at Kenyon College, where he is the Richard L. Thomas Professor of Creative Writing. During the rest of the year he lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he is a Faculty Associate at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society.

**Peter Gleick**: Dr. Peter H. Gleick is co-founder and president of the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security in Oakland, California. His research and writing address the critical connections between water and human health, the hydrologic impacts of climate change, sustainable water use, privatization and globalization, and international conflicts over water resources.

Dr. Gleick is an internationally recognized water expert and was named a MacArthur Fellow in October 2003 for his work. In 2001, Gleick was dubbed a "visionary on the environment" by the British Broadcasting Corporation. In 1999, Gleick was elected an Academician of the International Water Academy, in Oslo, Norway and in 2006, he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.

Gleick received a B.S. from Yale University and an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. He serves on the boards of numerous journals and organizations, and is the author of many scientific papers and seven books, including the biennial water report, [*The World's Water*](http://www.worldwater.org), and the new [*Bottled and Sold: The Story Behind Our Obsession with Bottled Water*](http://www.pacinst.org/bottledandsold/).

**Elinor Ostrom:** Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom is the first woman to win the prize in economics, which has been awarded since 1969. Ostrom was recognized by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences for her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons. “Elinor Ostrom has challenged the conventional wisdom that common property is poorly managed and should be either regulated by central authorities or privatized,” the academy said. “Based on numerous studies of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes, and groundwater basins, Ostrom concludes that the outcomes are, more often than not, better than predicted by standard theories.” As a political economist, Elinor Ostrom has studied how institutions—conceptualized as sets of rules—affect the incentives of individuals interacting in repetitive and structured situations. Ostrom and her colleagues at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University developed the Institutional Analysis and Development framework, which enables them to analyze diversely structured markets, hierarchies, common-property regimes and local public economies using a common set of universal components. Large-scale studies of urban public economies demonstrated that systems composed of a few large-scale producers of services, such as forensic laboratories and training academies, combined with a large number of autonomous direct service producers (such as crime and traffic patrol) perform more effectively at a metropolitan level than a few consolidated producers. More recent empirical studies in the field and in the experimental laboratory have challenged the presumption that individuals jointly using a common-pool resource would inexorably be led to overuse, if not destroy, the resource.

**David Bollier:** David Bollier is an American activist, writer, and policy strategist. He is Senior Fellow at the [Norman Lear Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Lear_Center) at the [USC Annenberg School for Communication](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USC_Annenberg_School_for_Communication), collaborates frequently with television writer/producer [Norman Lear](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Lear), and writes technology-related reports for the [Aspen Institute](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aspen_Institute). Bollier is also editor of [*On the Commons*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Commons)where he frequently writes. Bollier calls his work “focused on reclaiming the commons, understanding how digital technologies are changing democratic culture, fighting the excesses of intellectual property law, fortifying consumer rights and promoting citizen action.” Bollier co-founded the public interest group [*Public Knowledge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Knowledge) and serves as a board member. In his own words: “I am an author, activist, blogger and consultant who spends a lot of time exploring the commons as a new paradigm of economics, politics and culture. I've been on this trail for more than ten years, working with a variety of international and domestic partners. Recently, I co-founded the Commons Strategy Group, a consulting project that works to promote the commons internationally. My work on the commons takes many forms -- as an author, conference organizer and frequent international speaker; as the host of an educational film, *This Land Is Our Land: The Fight to Reclaim the Commons*; as the Croxton Lecturer at Amherst College where I taught “The Rise of the Commons” in 2010; and as an expert witness for the “design commons” in a trademark lawsuit; among other initiatives. I was Founding Editor of Onthecommons.org and a Fellow of On the Commons from 2004 to 2010. I have written ten books; the most recent three deal with the commons. My first book on the commons was *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Commons Wealth* (2002), a far-ranging survey of market enclosures of shared resources, from public lands and the airwaves to creativity and knowledge. Then I extended this analysis in my 2005 book, *Brand Name Bullies: The Quest to Own and Control Culture*, which documents the vast expansion of copyright and trademark law over the past generation that has enclosed our cultural commons. In 2009, I published *Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of Their Own*, which describes the rise of free software, free culture, and the movements behind open business models, open science, open educational resources and new modes of Internet-enabled citizenship. While on the trail of the commons, I have worked with American television writer/producer Norman Lear, since 1984, on a variety of non-television, public affairs projects. I am also Senior Fellow at the Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication, and co-founder and board member (2001-2011) of Public Knowledge, a Washington policy advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the information commons. I live in Amherst, Massachusetts, a place that knows a lot about commoning and so inspires a passionate hometown loyalty.”

**Erik Reece:** Reece has won the Sierra Club’s David R. Brower Award and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism John B. Oake’s Award for environmental writing. He writes online for True/Slant, and in print his work has appeared in *Harper’s, Orion, The Nation,* and *The Oxford American* as well as in major American newspapers. He is author of two acclaimed works of non-fiction: *An American Gospel: On Family, History, and the Kingdom of God* (2009),and *Lost Mountain: A Year in the Vanishing Wilderness* (2006)*.* His book of poetry, *Short History of the Present*, is forthcoming.

**Required texts**

Barnes, Peter. *Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006.

Bollier, David. *Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of Their Own.* New York: New Press, 2008.

Gleick, Peter. *Bottled and Sold: The Story Behind Our Obsession with Bottled Water*. Washington: Island Press, 2010.

Hyde, Lewis. *Common As Air: Revolution, Art and Ownership*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010.

Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. London: Cambridge UP, 1990.

**Suggested texts:**

Reece, Erik: *Lost Mountain: A Year in the Vanishing Wilderness*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2006.

Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Boston: South End Press, 2005.

Walljasper, Jay. *All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons*. New York: New Press, 2010.

**Learning Objectives**:

* To develop an interdisciplinary understanding of the commons in its historical and contemporary dimensions, from the perspectives of environmental and human sciences, policy, politics and theory, and activism
* To study current pictures of a variety of commons practices and trends
* To connect classroom learning with practical experience in the Tennessee area
* To improve commons-related community, policy and civic problem-conceptualizing and -solving skills
* To improve public writing, and oral presentation skills

**Requirements**

1. Reading completion/class participation (including all lectures, post-lecture one hour seminars and field trip the week of April 16th): (25%)
2. Daily class preparation: come to each class prepared with a ONE SENTENCE summary of each article’s primary argument (it’s hard—you’ll get better as you go). You can have one paragraph for a book. In writing, for submission (10%).
3. Unit Reflection report: This assignment consists of two parts. First, you’ll write a 7-10 page double-spaced essay that reflects and draws on the readings, discussion, visiting speaker’s lecture and our conversation with the speaker, and focuses some of your main interests in and questions about the idea, history, and practices of the commons. You may use any other materials you think appropriate. What seems key for your own purposes in this unit’s work? What’s missing or problematic? What issues have we not raised that are relevant to this unit? (Discussion in the third week of each unit will be based on this assignment: **to be posted by 9 p.m. the Wednesday night before class**.) This document should be written with a general, intelligent audience in mind, not disciplinary experts (although you should certainly feel free to develop concerns and issues from your own disciplinary vantage). Part of your grade will depend on your ability to communicate clearly to a broad audience with intelligent concerns from your own disciplinary interests and training.

Second, you’ll briefly overview your report in class (each student will have 10 minutes), bringing to the table the things you most want to discuss for the seminar discussion. (65%)

**Reading prep*: make notes to prepare for class discussion***

1. what are the takeaway lessons from each particular reading?
2. what are two things you most want to discuss from each reading (and why)?
3. How does the reading’s main arguments relate to/comment on/ factor into other materials we’ve been reading, and the discussions we’ve been developing?
4. (Interdisciplinary humility): What do you need to know more about to interact intelligently and capably with this book’s arguments?

**Policies**

*Act Like a Professional:*

Class starts on time, and resumes immediately after break.

Finish all assignments/course work on time or fail.

Notify us in advance of absence whenever possible.

*Act Like a Human Being:*

Have some fun with this material!

Treat your fellow students with compassion and respect.

Treat authors with compassion and respect. (It’s possible to disagree while

recognizing value in the words/works of another.)

Work to listen with care and communicate clearly.

Better to come late than not at all.

**Course Calendar:**

**(Pre-Reading:** *State of the Commons*(on OAK, 2002)*;*[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interdisciplinarity**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interdisciplinarity); and, if you aren’t much familiar with the concept of the commons, consider purchasing and reading Jay Walljaspar, *All that We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons*, New York: New Press, 2010 **)**

***Jan 12*** discussion of 1) course overview and discussion of interdisciplinarity (see pre-readings); and 2) ***UNIT #1: The Historical Commons: England and US***

**Required (all on OAK):** Neeson, from *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820*; Banner, “Political Function of the Commons” and Fritz, from *American Sovereigns: The People and America’s Constitutional Tradition before the Civil War”*;

**suggested (all on OAK; *and, may we urge you at least skim this)*:** Edwards, from *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post Revolutionary South*, and Pawlikowski, “‘The Ravages of a Cruel and Savage Economy’: Ohio River Valley Squatters and the Formation of a Communitarian Political Economy, 1768 – 1782”

**Jan 19** read Hyde’s *Common as Air*, **attend Hyde lecture 4-5:30; seminar meets 5:30-6:30 in XXX**

**Jan 26** reflection paper due on unit #1 readings and Hyde lecture & seminar discussion

***Feb 2******UNIT #2: Water Commons, Economics and Management***

**Required (all on OAK)**: Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons,” Gleick, “Peak Water,” McCay,”Culture of the Commoners,” Trawick, “Moral Economy of Water,” Bakker,

“Neoliberalizing Nature?” (Guest Lecturer: Jonathan Gilligan)

**Feb 9** read Gleick’s *Bottled and Sold*, **attend lecture 4-5:30; seminar meets 5:30-6:30**

**Feb 16** reflection paper due on unit #2 readings and Gleick lecture & seminar discussion

***Feb 23******UNIT #3: Commons Policy: Science, Economy, Interpretation***

read Ostrom’s *Governing the Commons*,

**March 1** **required** (all on OAK):

Ostrom, Elinor. 2011. “Background on the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework.” *Policy Studies Journal* 39(1) (February): 7–27.  
   
Ostrom, Elinor. 2011. “Reflections on ‘Some Unsettled Problems of Irrigation.’” *American Economic Review* 101(1) (February): 49–63. *AER*’s 100th anniversary issue re Katharine Coman’s 1911 article.

Deitz, T., E Ostrom et al. (2003). “The Struggle to Govern the Commons” *Science* 302(5652): 1907.   
   
Cox, Michael, Gwen Arnold, and Sergio Villamayor Tomás. 2010. “A Review of Design Principles for Community-Based Natural Resource Management.” *Ecology and Society* 15(4): 38

Ostrom’s “Polycentricity, Complexity and the Commons” and “Crowding out Citizenship”

**attend lecture 4-5:30; seminar meets 5:30-6:30**

**Mar 15** reflection paper due on unit #3 readings and Ostrom lecture & seminar discussion

***Mar 22 UNIT #4: Global Commons Activism***

**Required**  (all on OAK):

Bollier: “International Commons Conference: An Interpretive Summary”

Bollier: “Imagining a New Politics of the Commons”

Bollier: Bollier, msc (includes: “A Brief Overview of the Commons,” “The Commons as an Antidote to Relentless Growth,” “The Commons as a Different Engine for Innovation,” and “The Rural Commons of India”

**Mar 29** read Bollier’s *Viral Spiral* and also spend time looking at his web site on the commons, [www.bollier.org](http://www.bollier.org) (David Bollier: news and perspectives on the commons); **attend lecture 4-5:30; seminar meets 5:30-6:30**.

**April 5** reflection paper due on unit #3 readings and Bollier lecture & seminar discussion

***April 12 UNIT #5: Overthrowing or Refiguring the Sytem?***

Read: Hardt and Negri, from *Commonwealth* (OAK), Peter Barnes *Capitalism 3.0*, Bollier and Weston, “Regenerating the Human Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment in the Commons Renaissance” (3 pdf files on OAK); Bakker, K. (2007) “The ‘Commons’ Versus the “Commodity’: Alter-globalization, Anti-privatization and the Human Right to Water in the Global South” (OAK); Watch: <http://www.ted.com/talks/pavan_sukhdev_what_s_the_price_of_nature.html>

(suggested: Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy*)

**April 19** watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt_ZHUDhKjs> ; read Reece, “End of Illth” (OAK); “End of Coal” (find at: <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/706> );Speth (find at <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/619>): Berkshare (find at: [www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-berkshare](http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-berkshare)); Time Bank (view at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfquoTg_tVw> );Woodlands Community Trust pdf (OAK) and attend two day road trip to Woodlands Community Land Trust and Robinson Forest (**suggested**: Reece’s  *Lost Mountain)*.

**Final Class meeting: final reflection piece due and discussion**

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**Further Resources (an eclectic assemblage of things we know about!):**

**Electronic:**

<http://www.commoner.org.uk/>

<http://www.bollier.org/>

<http://onthecommons.org/>

<http://shareable.net/>

<http://ourwatercommons.org/>

<http://collaborativeconsumption.com/>

<http://timebanks.org/>

[**"The Tragedy of the Commons," and Beyond**](http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/misc/webfeat/sotp/commons.xhtml#commons): <http://www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/misc/webfeat/sotp/commons.xhtml>

The Commons: Open Society Sustainability Initiative: <http://www.ecoplan.org/com_title.htm>

Digital Library of the Commons (DLC): <http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/>

**Print:**

Bakker, K. (2010). Privatizing water: governance failure and the world's urban water crisis, Cornell University Press.

Banner, Stuart. *Legal Systems in Conflict: Property and Sovereignty in Missouri, 1750-1860.* Norman: U Oklhahoma P, 2000.

Barlow, M. Our Water Commons: Toward a new freshwater narrative. <http://www.canadians.org/water/publications/water%20commons/water%20commons%20-%20web.pdf>

Bollier, David. *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Bollier, D. and J. Rowe (2006). The Commons Rising, Minneapolis, MN: Tomales Bay Institute: 28. <http://onthecommons.org/sites/default/files/Commons_Rising_06.pdf>

Botsman, Rachel, and Roo Rogers. *What’s Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.

Boyte, Harry. Common Wealth: A Return to Citizen Politics. New York: Free Press, 1989.

Buck, Susan. *The Global Commons: an Introduction*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998.

Cahn, Edgar S.  *No More Throw-Away People: The Co-Production Imperative*. Washington, D.C., 2004.

Carlsson, Chris*. Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners are Inventing the Future Today!*. Oakland: AK Press, 2008.

Casarino, Cesare, and Antonio Negri. *In Praise of the Common: A Conversaiton in Philosophy and Politics*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2008.

Davidson-Harden, A. "Local Control and Management of Our Water Commons: Stories of Rising to the Challenge." 64 <http://ourwatercommons.org/sites/default/files/Local-Control-and-Management-of-Our-Water-Commons.pdf>.

De Angelis, Massimo. *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capitalism*. London: Pluto, 2007.

Dietz, T., E. Ostrom, et al. (2003). "The struggle to govern the commons." Science 302(5652): 1907.

Dolsak, Nives, and Elinor Ostrom. *The Commons in the New Millennium: Challenges and Adaptation.* Cambridge: MIT P, 2003.

Fung, Archon. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance.* London: Verso, 2003.

Fung, Archon. *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy.*  Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004.

Gardiner, S. (2011) The Ethical Dimension of Tackling Climate Change, E360, <http://e360.yale.edu/feature/the_ethical_dimension_of_tackling_climate_change/2456/>

Gates, Jeff. *The Ownership Solution: Toward a Shared Capitalism for the 21st Century*. Reading, Mass: Perseus Books, 1994.

Gleick, P. H. (2000). "A look at twenty-first century water resources development." Water International 25(1): 127-138.

Goldman, Michael, ed., *Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles for the Global Commons*. London: Pluto, 1998.

Hawken, Paul. *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*. New York: Viking, 2007.

Holstun, James. *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution*. London: Verso, 2000.

Jackson, Tim. *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2009.

Jacoby, Karl. *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. Berkeley: U California P, 2001.

Leighninger, Matt. *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance. . . And Why Politics Will Never Be the Same*. Nashville, Vanderbilt UP (VUP: I’m not kidding!): 2006.

Lessig, Lawrence. *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*. New York: Vintage, 2001.

Linebaugh, Peter. *Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All*. Brekely: U California P, 2008.

Linebaugh, Peter, and Marcus Rediker. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic.* Boston: Beacon, 2000.

McKay, Bonnie J. and James M. Acheson, eds. *The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1987.

Nonini, Donald M. ed. *The Global Idea of ‘the Commons.’* New York: Berghahn Books, 2007.

Ostrom, Elinor, Thomas Dietz, Nives Dolsak, et. al. *The Drama of the Commons: Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change*, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002.

Ostrom, E. (1999). "Coping with tragedies of the commons." Annual review of political science 2(1): 493-535.

Ostrom, E., J. Burger, et al. (1999). "Revisiting the commons: local lessons, global challenges." Science 284(5412): 278.

Peñalver, Eduardo Moisés, and Sonia K. Katyal. *Property Outlaws: How Squatters, Pirates, and Protesters Improve the Law of Ownership.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2010.

Princen, Thomas. *The Logic of Sufficiency*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

Reid, Herb, and Betsy Taylor. *Recovering the Commons: Democracy, Place, and Global Justice*. Urbana: U Illinois P, 2010.

Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Boston: South End Press, 2009.

Shuman, Michael H. *The Small-Mart Revolution: How Local Buisinesses are Beating the Global Competition*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006.

Tavoni, A., A. Dannenberg, et al. (2011). "Inequality, communication, and the avoidance of disastrous climate change in a public goods game." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 108(29): 11825-11829. <http://www.pnas.org/content/108/29/11825.abstract>.

Thompson, E. P. *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*. New York: New Press, 1993.

Thompson, E. P. *Whigs and Hunters* (1975). New York: Penguin, 1990.

Vollan, B. and E. Ostrom (2010). "Cooperation and the Commons." Science 330(6006): 923.