

# Sample Online Discussions and Activities

## Environmental Studies 303: Human Ecology and Sustainability

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### Example Online Discussion

M6.D1: Salish and Settlers Shaping the Landscape

[Rebekah Green](#)

Jun 13, 2013 at 4:13pm

**FIRST POST DUE JULY 13th. RESPONSES DUE BY JULY 15th!**

In the first half of White's book, people's perception about how they or others interact with the environment doesn't always match up with what actually happened.

- For example, early anthropologists and the early settlers of Ebey's Landing described the Salish as living off of "spontaneous products of nature" (White 1980, p19) and moving across landscapes without a trace.
- As another example, the settlers "celebrated the frontier farmer as, among other things, a bearer of civilizations, a founder of the new communities, and a conqueror of the wilderness" (White 1980, p35) and believed their role was to get the land "subdued and the wilde nature out of it."

In what ways do you think these descriptions of the Salish's and the early settlers' interaction with the environment were accurate and/or inaccurate? What purposes do you think did these assumptions of how they and the Salish interacted with the environment serve for the white settlers?

And, of course, this is a fascinating and detailed case study of human-nature interaction. The questions I posted above are just to start your thinking. Feel free to also post and discuss other issues and questions the book raised for you!

### Example Online or Class Group Activity

M2.D1: Critiquing Definitions of Sustainability

[Rebekah Green](#)

Jun 4, 2013 at 3:37pm

Research and find two distinct definitions of sustainability (Wikipedia and the Bruntland definition do not count!). You may find a definition used by a government agency, a non-profit organization, a business or other source. The definitions you find may be definitions you strongly agree with or, conversely, a definition or use of the word you find ludicrous or laughable.

**Post your two definitions of sustainability** to the discussion. Describe where you found them and your initial critique of them. Tell the group what you like and dislike about the definition.

After your first post to this discussion, watch the short vodcast critiquing sustainability definitions. Then return to this discussion. Respond to other posts, **critiquing other group member's found definitions**.

Finally, as a group, develop a **GROUP DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY**. One group member post a final entry in your discussion with the finalized group definition. This will help me know when you are finished so I can better respond to the entire class.

## Example Online or Class Group Activity

M3.D1: National Geographic Case Study of H-N Coupled Systems

[Rebekah Green](#)

Jun 4, 2013 at 5:14pm

Write a 300+ word summary and opinion for the society you chose from the National Geographic case studies. Explain how they get their food, how they interact with species and geography, their understanding of nature, and a few fascinating details about the society.

In your discussion responses, ask clarifying questions as needed, but focus mostly on comparing and contrasting similarities and differences between your case study and others. Postulate why these differences occur; we will focus more heavily on the differences between human subsistence patterns and the reasons for these differences in our next module on cultural evolution.