

ENVS40: SYNTHESIZING EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CBNRM IN NAMIBIA

please READ and REREAD this syllabus throughout the course until you become fluent in these ideas.

Review of Key FSP Principles

1. Shift from passive to active learning – be a participant
2. Take intellectual and personal ownership of the FSP experience. Become a co-producer of knowledge
3. Synthesizing different ways of learning and knowing (empirical and theoretical)
4. Tolerance and patience for ambiguity, complexity and frustration
5. High expectations of personal maturity and accountability
6. Stepping out of your Dartmouth comfort-zone

While in Namibia we will visit a number of institutions that, broadly speaking, are engaged in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) – specifically of wildlife and agricultural resources. As you might know the term CBNRM usually refers to the devolution of management and control of natural resources from larger scales to more local ones (e.g. from national governments to local communities). In practice this creates multiple, interacting scales of control and management (e.g. co-management). The institutions we will visit cross scales from international scale NGOs (e.g. Cheetah Conservation Fund) to the national scale (e.g. Etosha National Park) to the local community scale (e.g. Khoadi-Hoas Conservancy).

The primary pedagogy this course will employ is the synthesis of empirical (your own observations) and theoretical (from the academic literature) insights into the many interacting themes, both social and scientific, that CBNRM entails. Your challenge will be to articulate insights you gain from applying ideas from the literature to your own observations – and vice versa.

The deliverables for this course will include 2 short essays (1-2 pp.), one longer essay (3-5 pp.), and you will each participate in leading one of four discussions of the papers we read.

Cheetah Conservation Fund (9-10 Oct.) – we will be visiting and working with CCF an NGO focused on predator conservation and mitigating human-predator conflict.

Themes: predator-livestock conflict (coexistence), top-predator ecology, politics of global conservation non-profits

Estes, J. a, Terborgh, J., Brashares, J. S., Power, M. E., Berger, J., Bond, W. J., ... Wardle, D. a. (2011). Trophic downgrading of planet Earth. *Science* (New York, N.Y.), 333(6040), 301–306.

Are there reasons to conserve predators beyond the fact that western tourists like them? This article describes the role of top predators in ecosystems.

Brockington, D., & Scholfield, K. (2010). The conservationist mode of production and conservation NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. *Antipode*, 42(3), 551–575.

This article is a critical deconstruction of the ideology of some conservation NGOs in Africa.

WRITING PROMPT 1: Choose a conceptual theme from the Brockington and Scholfield article on Conservation NGOs and apply to some of your observations at Cheetah Conservation Fund.

Length: 1-2 double-spaced pages.

Etosha National Park (11-13 Oct.)– We will be visiting one of the premier national parks in Africa.

Themes: protected area management, “fortress conservation,” tourism, water provisioning

Wilshusen, P. R., Brechin, S. R., Fortwangler, C. L., & West, P. C. (2002). Reinventing a Square Wheel: Critique of a Resurgent “Protection Paradigm” in International Biodiversity Conservation. *Society & Natural Resources*, 15(1), 17–40.
<http://doi.org/10.1080/089419202317174002>

Examines the debate about the necessity of strictly protected areas for effective conservation.

Butler, T., (2015). Introduction: Lives Not Our Own. In, Wuerthner, G., E. Crist and T. Bulter, eds., *Keeping the Wild: Against the Domestication of Earth*. Island Press, Washington D.C.

A brief critique of the “new conservation” or “neoliberal conservation.”

Ongava Research Centre (14-16 Oct.) – This research facility is associated with and supported by Ongava Tented Camp – a luxury tented camp adjacent to Etosha National Park.

Themes: protected area management, conservation research, wildlife fences, water provisioning, tourism

WRITING PROMPT 2: Choose a conceptual theme from the Wilshusen et al. article on the “Protection Paradigm” and apply it to some of your observations at Etosha National Park and/or Ongava Research Centre.

Length: 1-2 double-spaced pages.

Windpoort Farm (17-18 Oct.) – we will be staying on a working game farm where tourist hunting and game meat harvest are practiced. While there we will also interact with a number of neighboring Euro-African livestock farmers.

Child, B. A, Musengezi, J., Parent, G. D., & Child, G. F. T. (2012). The economics and institutional economics of wildlife on private land in Africa. *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice*, 2(1), 18.

This article uses a number of interesting conceptual frameworks to examine the relative merits of raising game or livestock in arid regions.

Ghasemi, B. (2020). Trophy hunting and conservation: Do the major ethical theories converge in opposition to trophy hunting? *People and Nature*, 3, 77-87.

This article uses ethical theories to evaluate the morality of trophy hunting.

Khoadi Hoas Conservancy (19 – 25 Oct.) – we will be engaging with members of the Khoadi Hoas Conservancy.

Themes: Conservancy co-management, human-wildlife conflict, joint ventures

Gargallo, E. 2015. Conservation on contested lands: the case of Namibia's communal Conservancies. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33: 213-231

Gargallo helps to illustrate the complex political, legal, economic and ethnic landscape that the Namibian conservancy movement is a part of.

Silva, J.A., & Motzer, N. (2014). Hybrid Uptakes of Neoliberal Conservation in Namibian Tourism-based Development. *Development and Change*, 46(1): 48–71.

This article reports on research, conducted at a conservancy the program has visited in the past, on the ways in which nature-based tourism is perceived and influences the community.

Muntiferer et al. 2025. Pathways to more inclusive and effective black rhino conservation: Insights from a decade of design and delivery in NW Namibia. *Conservation Science and Practice*, DOI: 10.1111/csp2.70048.

This paper by Jeff and colleagues describes and analyzes the Rhino Ranger program that we will interact with.

FINAL WRITING PROMPT. Through our visits and our readings we have addressed a variety of dimensions of CBNRM in Namibia. Find one or more themes from the literature. Either from

the assigned papers or from other papers you have read; 1-3 papers would be sufficient for this relatively short piece.

For this you could expand upon a theme from one of your shorter responses or combine themes from multiple responses or develop a completely new theme. Combine this with your own observations from one or more of the sites we visited in a cohesive essay.

Length: 3-5 double-spaced pages

Due: Oct. 28, 5PM

Discussions. The discussions will broadly follow along the papers and themes of the sites we visit. You have significant latitude to shape the discussions as you see fit. Be sure that the discussions are designed to elicit and explore the ideas that you see as most important for that site. In preparation for leading the discussions, each group should meet with me at an appropriate time. There will be no formal assessment of the discussions.

Discussion Groups:

1. Cyrus, Molly, Tamhid, Nielsen
2. Abby, Manu, Astoria, Nelson
3. Faustus, Maria, Reva, Claire
4. Ella, Harper, Dejanay, Xander

Assessment: Verbal and written feedback will be provided on the individual components along the way, but no letter grades are given until a final grade is assigned based on the entire body of work at the end of the term. In general, work that is deeper, more complex and more successfully struggles with the synthesis of observation and theory will receive higher grades.

Approximate weightings

Embrace of the core AFSP principles and course objectives: 20%

Organize discussion: 10%

2 short essays: 35%

Final synthetic essay : 35%

Important note: The dates on the calendar for the essay due dates and the dates of the discussions are target dates that may have to be adjusted as events and the needs of our partners may change necessitating that we adjust those dates/times. We will make every effort to keep you well informed if this should happen, but like everything else on this program some of that is out of our control so we must remain flexible and adaptable. In other words, our entire program needs to be resilient in the face of the inevitable changes that will come our way.

Policy on AI. The emphasis of this course is on developing your own thinking and writing capacities. So please do not use any AI tools in completing the work of this class.

The primary learning objectives for this class:

1. Gain specific knowledge in the general area of CBNRM.
2. Experience applying an academic theory to your own observations. Grapple with the juxtaposition of the more local and subjective empirical knowledge you acquire through direct observation and the more general, theoretical and broad empiricism of the literature.
3. Gain an understanding of research as an iterative process (think, observe, read, write, re-think, observe, read, write, re-think, etc.).
4. Practice in “interrogating” the real world. The places we visit and the people we meet are the “text” for this class.
5. Experience recording thoughts and observations in a journal and being able to retrospectively observe how your ideas develop and evolve. (Optional)
6. Struggle with how to choose the correct levels of breadth and depth for your academic writing.
7. Practice in adding depth and complexity to your thinking and writing.
8. Learn what it is to create new academic knowledge
9. Learn to trust and value your own original thoughts.
10. Find your “voice” as a scholarly writer.
11. Struggle with the question of your ethical legitimacy in this place that is not your own.
12. Learn to use limited time efficiently and work to the best of your ability within the challenges and constraints posed by the unique circumstances of this course.

Calendar

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|--------|----|---------------------------|--------------|---|
| 8-Oct | W | Swakopmund | Desert Sands | First day of ENVS 40 |
| 9-Oct | Th | Cheetah Conservation Fund | | |
| 10-Oct | F | Cheetah Conservation Fund | | |
| 11-Oct | Sa | Etosha National Park | | |
| 12-Oct | Su | Etosha National Park | | |
| 13-Oct | M | Etosha National Park | | Essay 1 due and Discussion 1 |
| 14-Oct | Tu | Ongava Research Institute | | |
| 15-Oct | W | Ongava Research Institute | | |
| 16-Oct | Th | Ongava Research Institute | | |
| 17-Oct | F | Windpoort Farm | | |
| 18-Oct | Sa | Windpoort Farm | | |
| 19-Oct | Su | Khoadi Hoas Conservancy | | Essay 2 due and Discussion 2 |
| 20-Oct | M | Khoadi Hoas Conservancy | | |
| 21-Oct | Tu | Khoadi Hoas Conservancy | | |
| 22-Oct | W | Khoadi Hoas Conservancy | | |
| 23-Oct | Th | Palmwag | | Discussion 3 |
| 24-Oct | F | Palmwag | | |
| 25-Oct | Sa | Palmwag | | Discussion 4 |
| 26-Oct | Su | Swakopmund | Desert Sands | |
| 27-Oct | M | Swakopmund | Desert Sands | |
| 28-Oct | Tu | Swakopmund | Desert Sands | last day of ENVS 40. final essay due 5 pm |
| 29-Oct | W | Gobabeb | | first day of eENVS 84 |

Suggestions To Help Make Your Writing Clearer And To Make Your Writing Process Less Painful

Start early. Don't procrastinate. Use your journal to start jotting down ideas, thoughts and observations. It is not too early to TODAY write down thoughts about all of the essay assignments. The process of writing something down in your journal will engage your subconscious mind to start working on this essay. You'll need to sit with your thoughts and allow them to mature and develop as time allows. Think, write, think some more, revise. The only way to have time for this is to start early.

Find productive ways to use the notebook and journal I have provided. Writing down your thoughts and ideas is a great way to keep your mind engaged in thinking about your topic and is also a strong signal to yourself that you take your ideas seriously. See more below on journaling.

Separate the processes of drafting and editing. The hardest part of writing is getting a good first draft down on paper (or in a Word document). Don't make this process even harder by engaging your critical mind at this juncture. What's most important is to get some version of your ideas in tangible written form. Once you have this you can engage your critical mind in the revision process. But don't let your critical mind impede you during the drafting phase.

Be sure your essay has a clear point. We might call that point a thesis in a longer piece. Sometimes we might call it an argument. Be sure to recognize that making an argument does not mean you are being argumentative. Rather you need to be reasonable, thoughtful, nuanced and acknowledge the limitations or conditionality of your argument. That is the nature of scholarly writing.

You will need a concept from the literature to use to structure your essay and to develop your argument around. You can think about it as a hook, or an angle if that makes it easier to grasp. See the section below on "Theory."

Nutshell your argument. When you get to the point that you can express your argument in a concise, clear, relatively short sentence, then you have clarified your thinking and know your idea well. Work toward this through revisions of the sentence in your essay that expresses the argument – you can call this the thesis statement if that is easier for you to understand. Having this clear statement makes the revision process easier: if a sentence helps develop or support your argument then it stays, otherwise, it goes.

Revise, revise, revise. Good writing comes from the iterative process of editing multiple times to sharpen the ideas and improve the writing. Especially concentrate on concision and vague word choice in the editing process (see below).

Concision. Wordiness makes your ideas hard for the reader to grasp. Eliminate all unnecessary modifiers or redundancy. Make every word count – in these short essays you don't have room

for wordiness. It is relatively easy to increase concision during the editing process. Simply look at every word in your essay and ask if it is contributing something new and important to the essay. If it is not, eliminate it.

Vague word choice. Be specific! The greatest impediment to the clarity of your writing is vague word choice. We sometimes use vague wording because we are not confident in what we are writing. We use vague word choice as “softeners” which tell the reader “don’t take this too seriously.” This is similar to injecting the word “like” into our spoken communication. Don’t hide behind vague word choice. Work on your ideas until you are confident enough to want to write them down precisely. In the revision process, look at every word and ask yourself whether this word precisely conveys your meaning. If not, replace it with one that is more precise.

Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence – usually at the beginning of the paragraph. Without this the reader will become confused.

Make sure each sentence has a clear subject – usually near the beginning of the sentence. Without this the reader will become confused.

During the revision process train yourself to read the words on the page and not listen to the thoughts in your head. The reader has only those words and doesn’t have access to the associated thoughts in your mind. So, to put yourself in the readers’ shoes, you have to focus only on the words on the page and ask yourself if they are clear, understandable and precise. If not, revise them. Listening to the thoughts in your head rather than reading the words on the page is one reason that it is easier for someone else to see the problems in your writing than for you to see them.

Use your limited time wisely. Large chunks of unstructured time are rare during this program, but small chunks of time are plentiful. Try to use some of those productively. During meals (you’ll spend hours each day over breakfast lunch and dinner). On the bus – even if you are prone to car sickness you can still scribble down the occasional thought or discuss your ideas with your seatmate. Jot down a few sentences before you go to bed at night and just after you wake up in the morning. Keep your little notebook with you at all times to make it easy to jot down thoughts or draft sentences in the odd bits of time that present themselves.

A Brief Guide to “Theory”

Above I’ve used a variety of terms, often “concept” to describe what you need to take from the academic literature and apply to your own observations on the trip. All of these terms describe what collectively we would call “theory.” Here I try to more fully flesh out this slippery concept.

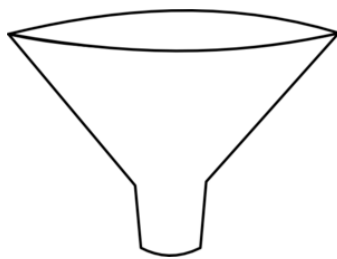
The following simple definitions are my attempt to give you a guide to navigate the world of academic “theory.” Each of these terms describes common elements of what is collectively referred to as “theory.” These terms may be used somewhat differently by other authors, but I think the rationale for this typology would be understood by many. It’s not a simple task to find theory that will be useful to you: not all theories are equally useful, and their utility is context dependent. The types of theory employed often vary by academic discipline. The greater the applicability of a theory to many phenomena, the greater its “domain.” As I have defined and ordered these concepts below, they have increasing complexity, generality and power (size of domain) as you go down the list.

- Concept – a “simple” idea, e.g. CBNRM – Community-based Natural Resource Management
- Framework – a tool for analysis (subdividing a complicated system), provides consistent definitions and vocabulary. Especially useful for making comparisons and generalizations. (e.g. the Social Ecological Systems framework used in Prof. Cox’s courses)
- Hypothesis – a specific prediction based on a theory
- Theory – a set of ideas to explain a set of cause and effect relationships, often involves synthesis (pulls together several different concepts or relationships; allows a common explanation for seemingly disparate phenomena)
- Paradigm – A theory with large domain (e.g. evolution by natural selection)

What is theory good for?: concision of thought and written expression, vocabulary, comparison, generalizing, analysis, synthesis. In short, gaining depth and complexity in your understanding of any topic.

Intrinsic tradeoff between depth and breadth

A funnel is a commonly used metaphor for the research process. The broad mouth of the funnel



represents the full breadth of a researcher’s interests in a topic.

However, there is a necessary tradeoff between breadth and depth. So

to achieve the depth and complexity necessary in original research

requires the researcher to focus her research activities more narrowly.

Think of your essays as the product of a research process that involves

your observations and your reading of the literature. The breadth of your essays should be represented by the narrow spout at the bottom.

In the short space allowed in these essays and in the short time for the research you necessarily have to have a narrow focus. In other words, don’t try to do too much. In scholarly writing it is almost universally true that depth is more valuable than breadth. Depth allows for originality and complexity, breadth does not.

Try to tell a small piece of the story, and to tell it well. The emphasis should be on clarity of expression and solid support and development of your argument.

What are depth and complexity?

You have probably all had the experience of getting feedback on your work that asks you to find more depth and/or complexity in the material. You may have struggled to understand what this means. And, in fact, it's not easy to give a simple answer to that question. Below I've tried to offer a number of different ways to increase the depth of your ideas. These are illustrative examples but not an exhaustive list.

One metaphor that might help is that of the onion. Most topics that are of interest are highly complex and have "layers" of meaning and causation. Similar to the layers of an onion you can always peel back and additional layer to under

Another way that depth and complexity manifest themselves is through understanding the difference between description and causality. Description as the word implies is describing what is, but not delving into "why" it is. Causation goes deeper than description (e.g. A causes B). And there could be multiple causes (A and B cause C) or multiple layers of causality (A causes B and B causes C).

Analysis and synthesis are also intellectual processes that can increase the depth and complexity of your ideas. Analysis is breaking something down into smaller components. Synthesis is putting smaller components together into a large whole. Analysis (A can be broken down into A', A'' and A''') and synthesis (A can be combined with B to produce C).

Exploring the conditionality of your argument also adds depth and complexity. Your argument may only hold when certain conditions or context is present. (A causes B but only in the presence of C)

Another way to think of this that helps some people, is to look at all the key sentences that make up your argument and ask yourself the question: "could I profitably add a clause to that sentence." These clauses might begin with the words: "because..." "except when..." "with the exception of..."

What does it mean to create new knowledge?

Since you will be choosing ideas from the academic literature, and applying them to your own personal observations, by definition, you will be creating new knowledge, new insights. No one before will have put those ideas and experiences together in the same way.

Nobel prize winning physicist and philosopher of science, David Deutsch, has a simple conception of the creation of new, *reliable* knowledge that I find very useful. He contends that all new knowledge comes about through the interplay of two intellectual activities: Conjecture and criticism. In the conjecture, you make a contention, a proposal, a thesis, a hypothesis, an argument. Once made, this conjecture is then the subject of rational criticism to test it, refine it, add depth and complexity to it. For instance, the idealized scientific method (hypothesis – experiment to test – revise hypothesis) is an example of conjecture and criticism. In the wider intellectual realm, these are often social processes. In this assignment, you will do both processes yourself, although you can enlist others to help in both phases, particularly in the criticism phase.

Suggestions for using your journal

I have given you a notebook that you can use as a research journal to help you develop your ideas for the essays and any other topics that interest you. Using the journal is not required and I will not be evaluating your journal in any way. This is merely a suggestion to try it out and see if you can find a productive way to use it. What follows are excerpts from a course syllabus I taught that more formally used the research journal as an important part of the pedagogy of the course. Read this through and try some of these suggestions and see if they work for you.

The researcher diary can be seen as an integral part of the development of the researcher and the construction of research knowledge. In the same way that diary writing and reflection act as mediators in the development of teaching, researcher diaries mediate the construction of research knowledge. I strongly believe that my experience of keeping a research diary scaffolded my development in several ways. One was as a repository for thoughts and reflections; another was as a written account of my research journey. Not only was the act of writing scaffolding my knowledge through inner dialogue with more expert other, but the opportunity to re-read and interact with my thoughts was also a strong mediator in understanding my role of researcher and the research process.

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Useful journal entries can be of two general types: descriptive and reflective.

Descriptive: Notes on reading, conversations or observations. Data. Sketches. Factual accounts of places you went, things you saw, people you spoke to, articles you read. TO DO lists. Notes on literature searches, keywords.

Reflective: “Thought” pieces about your evolving understanding of the topic. Critical analysis of an article. “Brainstorming” notes or diagrams. Strategic plans for moving the research forward. Questions you want to answer. Discourse on how you feel about your research.

Obviously, these are not mutually exclusive categories and both are important to the research process.

However, the reflective components add the most to the depth of the research. A lot of descriptive material without sufficient reflective processing won't take you far. So be sure to devote plenty of space and attention to the reflective components. Keep in mind this quote from Rapely (2007):

Writing is thinking. It is natural to believe that you need to be clear in your mind what you are trying to express first before you can write it down. However, most of the time the opposite is true. You may think you have a clear idea, but it is only when you write it down that you can be certain that you do. (p.25)

Use the journal as a thinking tool. In some of your entries take the time to try to express the kernel of your research topic clearly and concisely. This will help clarify your thinking and this clarity will help move the research forward. In the past we have seen a strong correlation in the seriousness of the use of the journal and the quality of the resulting writing.

This is a journal/diary so the point is to use it frequently (i.e. you should be thinking about your research frequently so you should need to make journal entries frequently). If you find you are always behind and have to catch up more than a couple of days with your journal you are missing the point and the value of the journal and will need to adjust your work flow so that you can make more regular entries. Try to keep the journal handy and jot things down as they come up. The entries don't have to

be long – although some of them should reflect longer reflections too. *Don't just fill up the journal with writing to satisfy the assignment. Instead, experiment with research journaling as a research and thinking tool. What kind of entries best help you advance the depth of your understanding of your topic?* Keep in mind the value of a research journal as expressed by Borg (2001):

Simon Borg 171

1. *It served as a reminder of past ideas and events which guided subsequent action.* The journal provided a database from which precise information could be retrieved at a later date. I often went back and re-read earlier entries as a means of reminding myself what I had done at an earlier stage of the study and using this information as the basis for subsequent action.
2. *It provided a record of plans and achievements which facilitated evaluation.* The journal documented both plans and actual achievements throughout the research process. This written record facilitated my task of evaluating progress and, in the case of lack of progress, of reviewing possible reasons for it.
3. *It supplied an account of events and procedures which allowed a more detailed write up of the study.* A record of specific information about events and procedures during the fieldwork and in analysing the data was particularly useful when I wrote up the study because it enabled me to fill in what would have otherwise been gaps in my description of what I had done.
4. *The journal allowed me to recall and to reproduce the thinking behind key decisions in my work.* The detailed record of experiences captured in the research journal was a powerful form of data which I drew on in my thesis to convey to readers how specific decisions were made, particular problems overcome, or specific events perceived.
5. *The research journal comprised an instructive narrative of my professional growth.* The journal provided a detailed account of my changing perspectives on the research process throughout the project. Reading through it, as I did at various stages along the way, and as I still occasionally do, is a source of instructive insight into the development of my understandings of the research process.
6. *The journal provided physical evidence of progress which gave me a sense of achievement and motivated me.* Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996: 49) write that as the research journal (or diary, as they call it) grows, 'it will serve as a physical (but hopefully not too embarrassing) reminder of just how far you have progressed'. My experience supports this assertion. In regularly reviewing my journal, I found that the mere activity of reading through it and acknowledging the work I was doing was motivating.