

Sociology 130EV

Eco Vista: Creating Systemic Alternatives

John Foran, with Ryan Fisher

Tuesdays and Thursday, 8 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Class will be held in real, synchronous time at <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/2295905339>

or by phone at +1 669 900 6833, Meeting ID: 960 1778 7056



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Office Hours: Office hours will be held on Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. over Zoom at <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/2295905339>

You can also schedule other times by appointment (and John will do lots of e-mail consultation).

Ryan Fisher, Teaching Assistant

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Office Hours: Mondays, 10 a.m. to noon at <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/86300337015>

Feel free to discuss your work with us by e-mail, or in office hours.

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“In order to carry a positive action we must develop here
a positive vision.” – Dalai Lama

“It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community – a community practicing understanding and loving-kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth.” – Thich Nhat Hanh

Statement of Purpose and Course Description

This class is designed to focus our sociological imaginations on creating the kind of society that might weather the climate storm that is coming and actually come out on the other side (or more realistically in the midst of it even as it worsens) with societies far more suited to human well-being and thriving than the ones we presently have all around the world, now so evidently under stress and with our institutions so revealed in all their inadequacy by the coronavirus.

Therefore, now in the Winter of 2021, our work is about how Eco Vista will be made relevant, useful, and life-affirming in the uncertainty of the coronavirus.

We will ground our own work together by *participation* in the exciting new multigenerational student-community project we call Eco Vista – www.ecovistacommunity.com – the transition of Isla Vista into a model eco-village through our efforts in tandem with other community organizations over the next five years.

The heart of the class will be participation in and analysis of group projects which will put you in touch with various relevant community partners in Isla Vista.

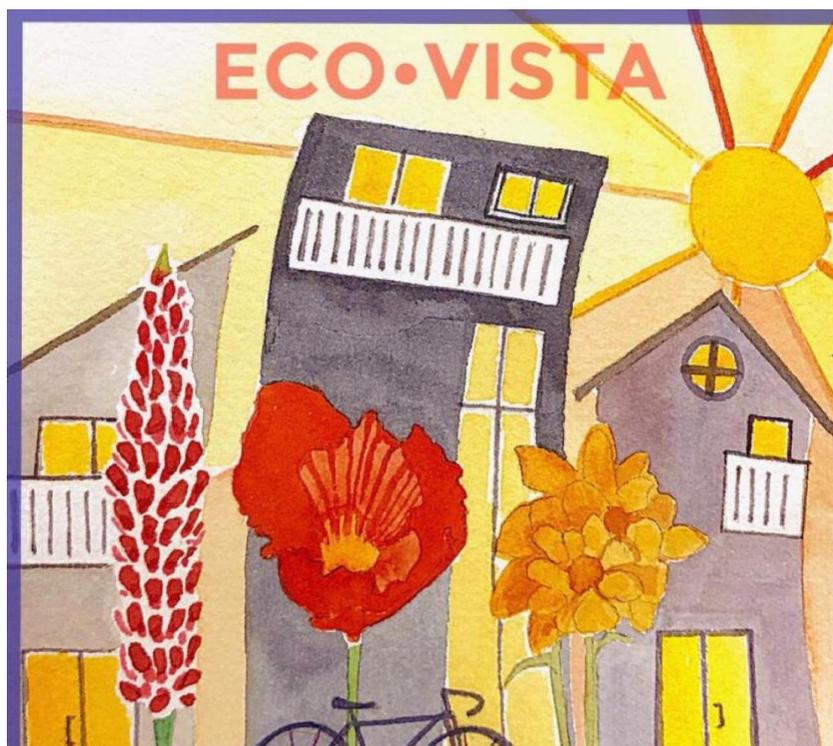
This will be accompanied by a set of readings that provide a historical context for our work, situate Eco Vista in the literature on eco-villages, and explore a variety of cutting edge theoretical and real-world systemic alternatives that will encourage creative thinking about the problems – and opportunities – posed by the

climate crisis.

This course is about gaining useful knowledge and the skills to enable positive action to secure a better future.

This course is for you, about you, and ultimately by you. It is rooted in our love for ourselves, for each other, for the community, and for the planet.

And dedicated to the inspiration and beautiful presence of Michael Bean.



OUR MISSION

Our long-term goal is to establish an ongoing, multigenerational, student-led community development project for an equitable and just transition in Isla Vista.

We aim to encourage and inspire the foundation of an eco-village in Isla Vista through renewable energy, a flourishing and regenerative agro-ecology of public urban gardens, cooperative, affordable eco-housing, a circular eco-economy based on solidarity and meeting the real needs of the inhabitants, a vibrant web of visionary cultural creativity, radical self-governance, and community priorities determined by all who reside here.

We hope that Eco Vista can become a model for other sustainable communities!

Community values and principles

We are inclusive.
We are democratic.
We are non-violent.

We work collectively whenever possible, and all are free to organize their own activities and projects.

We are open to all points of view that are aligned with these values and supportive of the Eco Vista Mission.

We act and live out of love for the dignity of all living beings, and base this love on social and climate justice, and on radical hope.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Policy on Plagiarism (we agree with the following quote from the syllabus of Dr. LeeAnn G. Kryder, for Writing 109AC). “Plagiarism is stealing. It is the copying of a part, or the whole, of another person’s work while promoting the text as if you created it. Avoid plagiarism by acknowledging the author or source of that idea or text. Plagiarism may jeopardize a student’s entire career.” If we detect plagiarism on any assignment (be aware that internet plagiarism is among the easiest to detect), neither you nor we will be happy because you will receive an F for the assignment, and quite possibly for the course, as well as face potential disciplinary action from the University.

Now for the fun stuff! Everyone is expected to attend class meetings and to prepare reading assignments in order to participate *fully* in discussions; we do know that speaking in class is difficult for some – perhaps many – students, and we will work together to ease the burden of this. For help, see “On talking in class” on our GauchoSpace. Participants will be asked for on many occasions to volunteer to facilitate the discussion in various ways, which we will work out together in class. We will conduct the class in a discussion-based way much of the time, so *you should try to come prepared to participate at every meeting.*

Please note: The format guidelines for all papers in this course are 1” margins all around, 12-point size, and double spacing (not 1.5 lines). Always **spellcheck** your work and make sure it makes sense before you hand it in. You will upload papers as **Word** documents [*no pdf’s please*] onto our class GauchoSpace.

Big Picture Overview of the Assignments

Pre-class Reading Reflections. Thirty percent of your grade

– Three 500-word Reading Reflections and replies to others’ reflections woven throughout the course (for a total of 30 percent of your grade).

Group Project. Fifty percent of your grade

– A Collaborative Group Project, with a proposal of 500 words worth 10 percent of your grade due on Sunday, January 24, a group presentation to the class in weeks 9 and 10 (for 10 percent of your grade), and a Final Paper of about 3,000 words in all (with a group and individual component for the final 20 and 10 percent of your grade, respectively), due on Monday, March 15.

Ethnographic Essays on the Friday Eco Vista General Assemblies: Twenty percent of your grade

– Two 500-word “Ethnographic Observations” of the Eco Vista General Assembly (which will meet on the second, fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth Fridays of the Winter quarter at noon) worth 20 percent of your grade.

Detailed Breakdown of Each Assignment

Pre-class Reading Reflections [30 percent of your grade]

During weeks one through eight, for class meetings of their choice, everyone will write three short reflections of about 500 words on one or more of the readings, due on GauchoSpace by midnight of the day *before* class meets. *Each time you post your own reflection, you will also post a short reply to one or more classmate’s reflections.*

Feel free to write informally or in the first person. You may include your emotions and feelings if you want. However, please spellcheck your work and make sure it makes sense. In our writing as well as in class, we should be respectful of other peoples’ views and keep our minds open.

Just a few of the many possibilities for engaging with the reading(s) might be to write about something you liked, and briefly explaining why; write about something you *didn't* agree with, or that confused you, explaining why; engage with the main arguments of one or more readings, explain how the readings relate to each other, or reflect on how a reading relates to a previously discussed theme or reading, the current world situation, or your own life.

End your pre-class reflection with *one open-ended discussion* question for the class that emerges from the issues you raised in your response.

*Finally, you are also asked to **reply** to someone else's pre-class reflection.* Your reply should contain at least two sentences and be addressed to the person to whom you are replying, so indicate their name. Pick someone's reflection that interests you, provokes some thoughts, even disagreement, and/or enlightens a subject for you. It is fine if several people reply to the same reflection.

Please add a copy of your reply to someone else to your post-class reflection before you post it – please also post it as a reply to the person you are responding to, so they get to see it. Folks may continue to respond to each other's reflections and replies as much as they like!

Note: all your reading responses and replies will be available to read by class members, so if you have time after posting yours, see what the group is talking about!

Reflections on two Eco Vista General Assembly meetings [20 percent of your grade]

You must try to attend the every other Friday General Assemblies of Eco Vista, from noon to about 1:30 p.m. [meeting link is <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/2295905339>] and post your observations [about 500 words] on at least two of them by the following Monday at noon. Feel free to write informally (and please spellcheck your work and revise once to make sure it makes sense). In our writing, we want to be respectful of other peoples' views and keep our minds open.

If you are not free on Friday at noon, you could attend the Thursday non meetings of the Isla Vista Community Network and write about that: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88198496343?pwd=U2tsOHRIb0JNenJHMEVCdFBLNTN5UT09>

If you can document that you have a conflict with both of these times, contact John for an alternative assignment of some kind.

The Project

Project Proposal [10 percent of your grade]

We will divide class members into groups of five based on each member's choice of one of the following three project topics:

- A 2021 Community Eco-Vista Pandemic Resilience Project
- A Bottom-up Eco Vista Climate Action Plan for a Carbon-Neutral Isla Vista by 2025
- A Community-driven Eco Vista Community Development Plan for Isla Vista for 2021-25

Groups will be formed by Friday, January 15. Each group's written project proposal will be due by midnight on Sunday, January 24. Guidelines will be clarified at our second and third class meetings. The Eco Vista website is one source of ideas for possible projects; another is Michael Bean, *Eco Vista Project Sourcebook* (December 2019).

Group Project Presentations [10 percent of your grade]

Ten- to fifteen-minute in-class groups project presentations will be scheduled over the last two weeks of the quarter and will count for 10 percent of your grade.

Final Report [30 percent of your grade]

Your group will be asked to write a 2,000-word analytic essay that describes your group project in light of the themes and perspectives of the course. In addition, each class member will get to write an individual essay of about 1,000 words where you get to reflect deeply on what you have learned and done, and the relationship between the two, during the quarter.

Some Important Messages from UCSB Student Services

(1) *Food and Housing security.* **If you are facing any challenges securing food or housing**, and believe this may affect your performance in the class, you are urged to meet with a Food Security Peer Advisor, who is aware of the broad variety of resources, including CalFresh, the AS Food Bank, and more that UCSB has to offer (see their drop-in hours at food.ucsb.edu). You are also urged to contact the professor if you are comfortable doing so.

(2) *Disabled Students Program: accommodations for exams.* Students with disabilities may request academic accommodations for exams online through the UCSB **Disabled Students Program** at <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/>. Please make your requests for exam accommodations through the online system as early in the quarter as possible to ensure proper arrangement.

(3) *Managing stress / Supporting distressed students.* Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationships, depression, cultural differences, can interfere with your ability to succeed and thrive. For helpful resources, please contact UCSB **Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)** at (805) 893-4411 or visit <https://caps.sa.ucsb.edu/>

(4) *Responsible scholarship.* Honesty and integrity in all academic work is essential for a valuable educational experience. **The Office of Student Conduct** has policies, tips, and resources for proper citation use, recognizing actions considered to be cheating or other forms of academic theft, and students' responsibilities, available on their website: <http://studentconduct.sa.ucsb.edu/academic-integrity>. Students are responsible for educating themselves on the policies and to abide by them.

(5) *Academic support.* For general **academic support** visit **Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS)** early and often. CLAS offers instructional groups, drop-in tutoring, writing and ESL services, skills workshops and one-on-one consultations. CLAS is located on the third floor of the Student Resource Building, or visit <http://clas.sa.ucsb.edu>

Five Rules for Best Participation

By Zack King, UCSB scholar-activist, slightly adapted

1. Think critically and work hard. We're confronting dire problems faced by humanity. Your critical thinking needs to be turned on – ask questions, be curious, do outside research, question all authority [I think he even means the instructor].

2. Don't just do the reading. Engage with it. Read it, question it, think about it, write on it, talk to your friends and family about it, take it out to dinner, dream about it, whatever you need to do. It's an important part of these ten weeks and it matters.

3. We're a community. Be as polite, open-minded, friendly and understanding as you can be. Don't do anyone's work for them but do help them figure out how to do it themselves. Try to make some friends.

4. Everybody talks and everybody listens. One of the most important skills you'll learn in college is engaging, out loud, with other people whom you may not know, on the most important issues we as a species face. You need to learn these skills to change the world. There's something in activist circles called "step up, step back." The step back part means, if you've already had the chance to speak in class that day, you make an effort to drop back, listen, and encourage others to speak (so, how we will operationalize this is: if you have spoken, don't raise your hand again until that option is offered). Step up means, if it's a challenge to speak in class or you're having trouble engaging, you push yourself to speak up and engage.

5. If we're going to make the most of our time together, you'll need to be actively engaged in class. This means you need to be taking care of yourself - get enough sleep, get enough to eat and drink. Stay healthy. Consider having your video on during class. Participate in the chat.

Course Meetings, Topics, Readings

Part One: From Isla Vista to Eco Vista

In the end, Eco Vista is ... a promise, a pledge, a dream, a future.

The promise of Eco Vista is that together we might create a place that is life-affirming for all its inhabitants and that might inspire others elsewhere – particularly young people in their own communities – to use their imaginations to create the innovative future communities we all want to live in, right now!

Our pledge to each other is to co-create, imagine, dream, and transform our community into a place that matches the name of Eco

Vista. We want to dream and make manifest this vision together with you!

The Eco Vista dream is a communal, shared, joyful adventure – may it transport us to a place worthy of the love we feel for it.

The future of Eco Vista is ... well, that's what we hope and aim to find out!

Tuesday, January 5. Eco Vista: A New Vision for Isla Vista

After an introduction to the course and to each other we will explore what we know about the town of Isla Vista, the climate crisis, and how they might be related.

Please explore the following website *before* class:

www.ecovistacommunity.com

Thursday, January 7. Isla Vista in The Sextuple Crisis

Today we will examine the problematic economic, political, and cultural dimensions of life in the third decade of the twenty-first century.

Readings

John Foran. “Eco Vista in the Quintuple Crisis.” Pp. 284-291 in *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*. Volume 12. Issue 1 (July 2020).

<https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Foran.pdf>

Ashish Kothari and Miloon Kothari, “We are doomed if, in the Post-Covid-19 world, we cannot abandon non-essentials” (August 11, 2020), https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-08-11/we-are-doomed-if-in-the-post-covid-19-world-we-cannot-abandon-non-essentials/?mc_cid=56ff10425d&mc_eid=6d8c24e1b3

Allen White, “A time to choose” (December 1, 2020), <https://www.tni.org/en/article/a-time-to-choose>

umair haque, “Why Didn’t America Become Part of the Modern World?” (December 1, 2020), <https://eand.co/why-didnt-america-become-part-of-the-modern-world-d4f2ee5c3764>

Tuesday, January 12 and Thursday, January 14. Class Projects and Voices of Eco Vista and the Wider Isla Vista Community

This week will be devoted to discussions with a variety of folks associated with Eco Vista.

Tuesday guests include Elvia Cruz, Jess Parfrey, Elena Salinas, Geordie Scully, Olivia Adair, Shaelyn McHugh, Tyler Barton, and Ash Valenti, who will engage us in a discussion of the possibilities for group projects this quarter, so please review the text in this syllabus that describes the projects on pages 6-7.

Readings for Tuesday

John Foran, Jess Parfrey, Elvia Cruz, and Geordie Scully, “Planning for a Post-Pandemic Community-based Climate Action Plan for Isla Vista” (September 11, 2020)

Shaelyn McHugh, “A Carbon Neutral Isla Vista by 2025, Part 1: Where did this idea come from?” <https://dev-sustainability-ucsb-edu-v01.pantheonsite.io/news/carbon-neutral-isla-vista-2025-part-1-where-did-idea-come>

Shaelyn McHugh, “A Carbon Neutral Isla Vista by 2025, Part 2: What’s It Like to Be on Cool Block Team?” <https://sustainability.ucsb.edu/news/carbon-neutral-isla-vista-2025-part-2-whats-it-be-cool-block-team>

On Thursday, our guests will include some of the following: Jonathan Abboud, Spencer Brandt, Melissa Cohen, Sierra Emrick, Jay Freeman, Maia, Bethesda Sandoval, Winter Sierra, Tony Barbero, and George Thurlow, who will engage us with their takes on the past, present, and future of Isla Vista.

Readings for Thursday

George Thurlow, “Isla Vista: So Close to UCSB, So Far from Good” (Winter 2014)

Bethesda Sandoval, “Self-Care for Quarantine & Activists (affordable, accessible, sustainable)” (September 2020)

“A Collective Ethnography of the Summer-Fall 2020 Eco Vista General Assembly” (September-December 2020)

Interview with Ash Valenti (October 2020)

Sierra Emrick, “An open letter to the young people of the United States: We still have time to avoid devastating climate change ... if we vote” (October 13, 2020)

Tuesday, January 19. The Eco Vista Project I: Origins – History of Isla Vista

Today we will ground our work together this quarter in the history of Isla Vista from Chumash times to the present. With special guest Carmen Lodise.

Readings

Selected chapters from Carmen Lodise and Friends, *Isla Vista: A Citizen’s History*, Second edition (Independently published in Isla Vista, 2019).

Thursday, January 21. The Eco Vista Project II: Origins and History of the Eco Vista Project

Today’s class will begin to explore the contours of the Eco Vista Project, from its inception in March 2017 to the present. With special guest Geordie Scully.

Readings

John Foran, “From Isla Vista to Eco Vista: A Design Project in Community Resilience” (March 29, 2020)

Geordie Scully, *What role can student-led transition play in place-based sustainability? An investigation into Eco Vista using strategic niche management theory* (August 2020)

Part Two: Creating Systemic Alternatives

There is no doubt that after decades of what has been called ‘development’, the world is in crisis – systemic, multiple, and asymmetrical; long in the making, it now extends across all continents. Never before did so many crucial aspects of life fail simultaneously, and people’s expectations for their own and children’s futures look so uncertain. Crisis manifestations are felt across all domains: environmental, economic, social, political, ethical, cultural, spiritual, and embodied....

What has been missing is a broad transcultural compilation of concrete concepts, worldviews, and practices from around the world, challenging the modernist ontology of universalism in favour of a multiplicity of possible worlds. This is what it means to call for a Pluriverse...

From the introduction to *Pluriverse*

Tuesday, January 26 and Thursday, January 28. Looking at *Demain/Tomorrow Today*

This week’s meetings will feature the screening and discussion of a film that shows some powerful examples of communities making change around the world.

Screening: *Demain/Tomorrow* (Elle Driver, 2016, 115 minutes).

Readings

Eco Vista Community Mission Statement, “Taking the Community of Isla Vista Into the Future” (February 2019), <https://ecovistacommunity.com/our-mission/>

Rob Hopkins, “The unstoppable rise of *Demain*” (February 5, 2016), <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2016-02-05/the-unstoppable-rise-of-demain>

John Foran, “A Theory of Change”

Have a look at *Demain*’s website, which is rich in content, solutions, and ideas for this class: <https://www.demain-lefilm.com/en/film>

Tuesday, February 2 and Thursday, February 4. Meet the Pluriverse

This week's meetings will be a plunge into to the amazing array of alternative ideas, practices, and experiments from all over the world. Our text is the new book, *Pluriverse*. We will work out how to accomplish this feat together...

Reading

Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta, editors, *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (New York: Columbia University Press and New Delhi: Tulika/AuthorsUpFront, 2019),
<https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Pluriverse-full-printable-version-July-2019.pdf>

Part Three: Creating Systemic Alternatives in Isla Vista

Tuesday, February 9 and Thursday, February 11. A Green New Deal for Eco Vista

This week we will study the possibilities and challenges of the Green New Deal for achieving the mission we have set for Eco Vista.

Readings

“Planning the Inaugural Eco Vista Green New Deal,”
<https://ecovistacommunity.com/planning-the-inaugural-eco-vista-green-new-deal/>

“First Popular Assembly for an Eco Vista Green New Deal: A Report” (February 2020), <https://ecovistacommunity.com/eco-vista-green-new-deal/>

Tuesday, February 16 and Thursday, February 18. The Eco Vista Transition Initiative

This week will be devoted to understanding the theory and practice of the Transition Town movement, and examining some of the Eco Vista Transition Initiative planning documents.

If degrowth refers to the notion that *less* economic production could lead to a vastly better world, especially in the wealthy countries of the global North, then the Transition Towns movement is about putting this into practice.

Readings

Ester Alloun and Samuel Alexander, “The Transition Movement: Questions of Diversity, Power, and Affluence,” Simplicity Institute (August 2014),
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-08-18/the-transition-movement-questions-of-diversity-power-and-affluence/>

Diana Leafé Christian, “Starting a Successful Urban Ecovillage,” *Hopedance Magazine* #51 (August 2009),
<http://www.sbpermaculture.org/articles/DChristianArticle.html>

[Optional, extra material] Transition Network Team, *The Essential Guide to Doing Transition: Getting Transition started in your street, community, town or organization* (Totnes Transition Network, 2016).

Becoming a Transition Initiative –
<https://www.transitionus.org/initiatives>

The Eco Vista Transition Initiative application materials

Websites

Transition United States –
<https://www.transitionus.org/what-is-transition/>

Common Transition Primer website:
<https://primer.commontransition.org/>

Global Ecovillage Network –
<https://ecovillage.org/>

Tuesday, February 23. What about an Eco Vista Party [not *that* kind of party...]

This class will return to the general problem of system change with a focus on the possibility of creating a new *kind* of party to bring about social transformation in Isla Vista...

Readings

John Foran, “Election of the Decade? Why We Need a New Kind of Party” (November 2, 2020)

John Foran, “Finding Pathways to a Better Future: A proposal that our movements confront the issue of political power, finding new ways to take and use it,” *Radical Ecological Democracy* (December 16, 2017),
<http://www.radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/finding-pathways-to-a-better-future/>

Thursday, February 25. Imagining Eco Vista

Today we will engage in a class role play about what Eco Vista could look like in Isla Vista by the year 2030.

Readings

Rob Hopkins, an interview with Drew Dellinger, “If We had More Imagination, We could have Less Capitalism” (July 11, 2018), <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2018-07-11/if-we-had-more-imagination-we-could-have-less-capitalism/>

Rob Hopkins, “Introducing the Imagination Sundial” (July 1, 2020), https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-07-01/introducing-the-imagination-sundial/?mc_cid=29de925adc&mc_eid=6d8c24e1b3

Part Four: Creating Eco Vista Together

Tuesday, March 2. Final Projects 1

Today, we will host the first courageous group presentations of your final projects. This class is not to be missed!

Thursday, March 4. Final Projects 2

Today will be packed with more excellent group presentations – it will be a class you will *not* want to fall asleep in!

Tuesday, March 9. Final Projects 3

Today will feature our final set of outstanding group presentations – a class you will *not* want to miss!

Thursday, March 11. Toward a Better Future

Today will conclude your amazing group presentations – plus many surprises! This will also be a final brainstorming session about everything we've all learned, and an opportunity to celebrate our work by sharing reflections on the course and our dreams for continuing to be involved in the Eco Vista Project!

*****NOTE:** *Final papers should be posted on Gauchospace by 12 midnight on Monday, March 15.*