Campus Series on the Scholarship of Sustainability begins Thursday, February 5.

The Scholarship of Sustainability is a series of presentations and discussions that welcomes students, staff and the general public to explore the cultural contexts of contemporary environmental problems.

The nine sessions will be held on Thursdays from 4-5:30pm at Room 149 of the National Soybean Research Center, 1101 W. Peabody Drive, Urbana, beginning on February 5. (There is a one-session hiatus on March 26, which coincides with spring break.) Ample metered parking is available nearby.

The 2015 Scholarship of Sustainability campus series begins with a recognition that human behavior underlies all environmental problems and that our behaviors are complexly linked with cultural patterns and the social institutions based on them. It will probe the root causes of our misuses of nature; consider the tension between animal-welfare and ecological perspectives; take a critical look at market capitalism and its embedded values; consider environmental justice in its broadest meanings; and ask whether and how religious thought can help and hinder environmental reform efforts. The final session will consider new directions for conservation.

The series leader is Eric T. Freyfogle, Swanlund Chair and Professor of Law. His many relevant writings include Justice and the Earth (The Free Press), On Private Property (Beacon Press), and Why Conservation is Failing and How It Can Regain Ground (Yale Univ. Press). Sessions will also feature other UIUC faculty and community conservation leaders as well as several special guests. All nine sessions are open to the public, and UIUC faculty and graduate students are especially encouraged to participate. The Series is cosponsored by the School of Earth, Society, and the Environment; the College of Law; and the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics.

Participants can access readings for the series via links at the descriptions of individual sessions below. Readings are also available in spiral-bound form (304 pp.) for $32.10 from the College of Law Bookstore, 504 E. Pennsylvania Avenue, Champaign (basement SE corner; open from 9-12 and 1-4 M-F). They will also be available for purchase by cash or check at the first two sessions.

Four U of I courses are associated with the series:

**ESE 311** Environmental Issues Today
**RLST 270** Religion, Ethics, Environment
**LAW 792JJ** Current Legal Problems
**PS 300** Politics and Economics of Sustainability
Graduate-level students can participate in the series for academic credit by enrolling in Law 792JJ Scholarship of Sustainability; those interested in doing so should contact Professor Freyfogle at efreyfog@illinois.edu

Schedule

February 5. Beginning the Search. Environmental ills involve human misuses of nature. But how might we distinguish between legitimate use and misuse? How might we best think about the proper human role in nature? Is sustainability a useful measure, and what alternatives goals have been proposed? Ultimately, what are the root causes—cultural, cognitive, and material—of our misuses of nature?

February 12. The Challenges of Normative Thinking. It is commonly said that we should base environmental policy on sound science. But what is science, what are its proper roles, and how and why do we regularly misuse it? Science aside, how do we decide what is right and wrong, or even good and bad, about our interactions with nature? And how does our love of individual liberty make it difficult to engage collectively in normative policy discussions?

February 19. Fragmentation and Cultural Flaws. According to environmental historians a major driver in uses and misuses of nature has been the tendency to fragment landscapes and treat nature’s parts as market commodities. We’ll look at the issue of fragmentation—physically, legally, and intellectually—and its resulting problems while also considering the limits on our knowledge and its implications.

February 26. Other Forms of Life. A critical modern assumption is that humans are the only species to possess moral value. Is this morally defensible? We’ll explore the considerable differences between animal-welfare and ecological modes of thought, while paying attention generally to the many ways we benefit from other life forms and how we might best think about them. As we’ll see, our varied reasons for wanting to conserve other life forms can lead to widely differing policies and actions.

March 5. Otherworldly Religions. How have religious views affected our uses of nature, and how might religion today push us in good or bad directions? We’ll consider historian Lynn White’s famous argument and responses to it and also look at how we might evaluate religions—even individual congregations—based on environmental factors.

March 12. Seeing and Valuing Nature. Our dealings with nature are significantly shaped by the ways we perceive it and value it. Better ways of living in nature will likely require us to see nature in new, more ecological ways and to appreciate the value of its countless living components and their complex interdependencies. Perhaps the most lyrical and persuasive
proponent of a new view of nature was Aldo Leopold (1887-1948), viewed by many as our nation’s most thoughtful and far-sited conservationist. This session will introduce this thought.

March 19. The Costs and Possibilities of Capitalism. Much environmental change is driven by businesses and other market participants. We’ll consider calls for a new, green industrial revolution. We’ll also consider ecological critiques of capitalism and market competition and calls for major changes in our economic system.

April 2. Sharing the Earth. The good use of nature inevitably means sharing the planet in responsible ways. How should social justice enter into environmental issues? How should we divide up the earth’s resources and capacities, and what weight should be given to historic patterns of use? Of special interest: sharing the atmosphere and its limited ability to absorb climate-changing gases—the particular topic of this session. Professor J. Michael Scoville, Eastern Michigan University.

April 9. New Directions for Conservation. Efforts to address environmental ills, off to a promising start in the 1970s and 1980s, and greatly slowed in recent decades, with major problems largely unaddressed and with Congress in political deadlock. We’ll look at some of the limitations of current environmental policies. We’ll also consider ideas for a revitalized citizen-led movement to bring about needed major changes and some of the challenges that such a movement would face.