

SEE-U Colorado

Land Use in the Rocky Mountains

3 credits, 2.5 weeks

Summer 2019: June 4-21

Instructor: Dr. Lisa Dale,

Columbia University Lecturer



Working ranch in Rocky Mountains



Energy development on public lands



Rocky Mountain National Park

The American West is perhaps best known for the dramatic landscapes managed through a web of federal land management agencies. Indeed, Western states have a land base that is at least 35% public, and competing interests vie for limited resources and navigate a complex bureaucracy. Less well understood are the dynamics that arise from the interactions among different land ownership categories: federal, state, and private. Working landscapes are essential pieces of the cultural heartbeat of the region. This course will focus on: 1) the history of Western settlement, highlighting the ways in which early Westerners divided up the land base and allocated resources; 2) the agencies in charge of managing federal public land including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Park Service; 3) state land, with a particular interest in the State Land Board ; and 4) private land, including working ranches. Students will be exposed to an interdisciplinary overview of governance challenges in the West, explore the legal and regulatory framework that guides land-use decisions, and study lasting resource access conflicts.

Rocky Mountain ecosystems will serve as examples of land use concepts in practice. Moreover, the course will explore current issues in sustainable development with a focus on terrestrial resource management, including agricultural systems, recreation use, water use, timber extraction, energy development, wildlife conservation, and climate change. Students will participate in a variety of field activities including visiting federally designated Wilderness areas, visiting an oil and gas well on public lands, attending a controversial land use hearing with the State Land Board, and meeting with rural ranchers.