

ECOTOURISM DEBATE

This assignment includes 3 components:

1. A preliminary 'expert position statement' (1/3 of grade)
2. Participation in an in-class debate (group grade – 1/3 of grade)
3. A summary reflection statement on ecotourism (1/3 of grade)

For Parts 1 and 2:

Each person will be assigned to one of the following expert positions: 'For Ecotourism'

- 1) Conservation Expert
- 2) Development Expert
- 3) Economic Expert

'Against Ecotourism'

- 4) Conservation Expert
- 5) Development Expert
- 6) Economic Expert

Remember to incorporate a First Nations perspective into your expert positions, no matter what your position is.

You will all have a set of readings to refer to for background information, but you should also find additional resources (at least three academic and two non-academic) to support your particular position. (Please see me or e-mail me if you are having trouble with this). Regardless of your own opinions on ecotourism, you will be asked to take on and argue for your assigned position in the debate.

You *may* want to adopt the persona of a particular person or organization to better simulate your expert status. For example:

- 'conservation experts' may want to take the role of an academic conservation biologist or a scientist at an environmental non-government organization (NGO) like the Nature Conservancy of Canada or the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan
- 'development experts' may similarly want to take the role of an academic anthropologist, staff member of a multilateral agency (e.g. University of Saskatchewan), or staff of a development NGO
- 'economic experts' may be tourism industry experts (e.g. Sask Tourism), academic economists, economists working for an environment or development NGO

Part 1: Initial Report

Working alone, write an ‘expert report’ (maximum two pages, single-spaced, typed) that states and justifies your expert position on ecotourism (either for or against). Cite relevant readings and websites. Possible items to include: your definition of ecotourism, your understanding of what ecotourism is and how it works, potential benefits and/or negative impacts of ecotourism (remembering to focus on the kinds of things that are important to someone with your ‘expert’ interests). Remember, in this report you are trying to ‘sell’ your particular view of ecotourism – you should offer both *arguments* and *evidence* (e.g. examples or ‘real life case studies’ from your readings) to make your case. You may also want to consider possible critiques of your arguments (in anticipation of the debate), and try to counter them.

****Bring a copy of your expert report for everyone in the class on the day of the debate**

Part 2: Debate

On the specified date, we will have a debate on ecotourism. You will draw on your ‘expert statement’ to participate in this debate, but **DO NOT SIMPLY READ YOUR REPORT**. Each side (‘for ecotourism’ and ‘against ecotourism’), *working as a group*, should organize and coordinate their arguments so that we are presented with coherent ‘for’ and ‘against’ positions. (Everyone should speak, but you may want to have one ‘spokesperson’ that does most of the talking – it’s up to your group how you divide the time). Feel free to draw on whatever resources (e.g. audio-visuals, etc) that you think would help you to argue your case, although these are not required.

The audience:

In actuality, your audience will be the instructor and students (and possibly a guest or two). Your ‘hypothetical audience’ is a world ecotourism conference, which includes representatives of communities from all parts of the developing world as well as funders (representatives of non-profit organizations and foundations) – they are all curious whether or not they should try to develop or fund ecotourism projects, and are looking to you for the answer.

Debate Format:

Pro ecotourism ‘constructive speech’ – max. 15 minutes

Against ecotourism ‘constructive speech’ – max. 15 minutes

****5 minute preparation time****

Pro ecotourism ‘rebuttal speech’ – max. 5 minutes

Against ecotourism ‘rebuttal speech’ – max. 5 minutes

Pro ecotourism final statement – max. 2 minutes

Against ecotourism final statement – max. 2 minutes

Part 3: Final Report

Each person must write a one page (single-spaced, typed) ‘personal reflection,’ describing and critically reflecting on the role of ecotourism in conservation and development. At this point you should resume your role as student (i.e. abandon your particular expert position), and reflect on the various arguments for and against ecotourism that you have learned from the class (debate, ‘ecotourism exercise’, lectures, guest lectures). Some questions to guide your report:

- What is your own opinion on the role of ecotourism as an integrated conservation and development strategy? (Clearly state whether or not you are in favor of ecotourism, then proceed to explain and qualify that statement however you like. For example, you may be in favor of ecotourism under certain conditions, or for some reasons but not others. Reference appropriate readings, ‘expert statements’, material from class, etc.).
- What kinds of environmental discourses/narratives were reflected in the debate? How does ecotourism fit with different ideas about conservation and development? (Refer to theories and examples of discourses, conservation and development from readings, lectures, etc.)
- Re ‘the ecotourism game’. What was useful (or not) about the ecotourism exercise? How well do you think the exercise simulated ‘real world’ community processes? Do you think the choices available in the game reflected the range of benefits and impacts identified through the debate?

BACKGROUND READINGS:

Honey, M. 1999. *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*. Washington, DC: Island Press. pp. 3-31 (Ch. 1).

Kiss, A. 2004. Is community-based ecotourism a good use of biodiversity conservation funds? *TRENDS in Ecology and Evolution* 19(5): 232-237.

Ross, S. and G. Wall. 1999. Ecotourism: towards congruence between theory and practice. *Tourism Management* 20: 123-132.

Weaver, D. 2001. *Ecotourism*. Milton, QLD: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 96-126 (Ch.4).

Relevant Websites:

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). Homepage. <http://www.ecotourism.org/> (peruse website)

<http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/etour.html> (peruse)

ADDITIONAL 'EXPERT' SOURCES (at least three academic and two non-academic):

- Academic sources should come from peer-reviewed journals. (e.g. Annals of Tourism Research, Conservation Biology, Society and Natural Resources – if you're not sure if something counts as 'academic', please check with me). In addition, I also have some academic books on the subject – feel free to come by my office and look at these if you're interested.
- Non-academic sources can come from newspapers/news websites, organizational websites, popular magazines, etc. (basically anything other than academic sources).