



Land Stewardship Ambassadors Spring 2026

Course Description

Land Stewardship Ambassadors is a 10-session course for high school students offered by The Witte Museum and the East Foundation in order to increase awareness of land stewardship principles and promote civic engagement. This course is a *reading and writing-intensive course*. There will be three cohorts for this course—one in Bexar County (San Antonio), one in Cameron County (Brownsville), and one in Webb County (Laredo). Students enrolled in surrounding counties are encouraged to apply. During the regular sessions, students will participate in discussions and activities related to a given topic. There will also be two special overnight sessions, where all cohorts will come together in person—first at The Witte Museum in San Antonio and then at the East Foundation's San Antonio Viejo Ranch in Hebbronville.

The purpose of the Land Stewardship Ambassador program is to provide students with an educational and experiential program in which environmental and natural resource knowledge is increased through discussions, readings, workshops, and guest speakers. Students are introduced to this program through an overnight visit to The Witte Museum and conclude with a final trip to the San Antonio Viejo Ranch to observe land stewardship principles in action. Through these classroom, museum, and ranch-based activities, the program increases awareness of land stewardship principles and empowers the next generation of land stewardship ambassadors.

Contacts

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Webb County - Masi Mejia, mmejia@eastfoundation.net

Meeting Locations

Bexar County Cohort: Witte Museum, San Antonio & Other Locations

Cameron County Cohort: IDEA Camp Rio, Brownsville & Other Locations

Webb County Cohort: Falcon International Bank - Community Room, Laredo & Other Locations

Sundays, 2:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m. (unless otherwise noted)

Course Objective

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Discuss topics of land stewardship as it relates to their local and state communities
- Identify reputable sources for research
- Communicate effectively with a group of peers and instructors in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of topics related to land stewardship
- Act as an ambassador of The Witte Museum, East Foundation, and the Land Stewardship Ambassadors program to the general public

Required Texts

Any books needed will be provided and distributed ahead of the required reading assignments. This course is a reading and writing-intensive course.

What is a reading and writing-intensive course? This means that this course has several readings per week and that instructors evaluate students based on their writing submissions.

Student Requirements

Students are expected to complete all assignments as required, participate in group discussions, write reflections from their discussions, and present a final project at the end of the semester.

Required Assignments

All assignments posted in Google Classroom have a deadline of Friday at 11:59 p.m. prior to the Sunday meeting. This includes, but is not limited to, T.Q.C. and assignments related to the final presentation.

In order to make sure the students are engaging the text efficiently and thoughtfully, each student will write a T.Q.C. report and turn it in. These will be graded/annotated/checked and handed back to them the following week. The T.Q.C. report will have a deadline of Friday at 11:59 p.m. prior to the Sunday meeting. The “T” stands for thesis, which requires the students to write their own thesis statement that they believe captures the main point of the text, a minimum of 100 words. They will then find a particular quote (“Q”) that caught their attention and write it down, a minimum of 20 words. They will then comment (“C”) on the significance of the quote and why it caught their attention, and elaborate on how it relates to land stewardship, minimum of 250 words.

T. Thesis (100 words minimum)

Write your own thesis statement that reflects the main idea of the assigned text/media.

Q. Quote (20 words minimum)

Record one quote that catches your attention that relates to the thesis.

C. Comment (250 words minimum)

Comment on the quote by explaining why it stood out to you and expand on its significance as it relates to land stewardship.

Sample TQC

Thesis

Children are the future of the world, and if environmentalists continue to ignore them, there will be no passionate earthy people for the future.

Quote

"She gasped and grabbed my leg. She had never seen the stars before...She was a changed person. From that moment on, she saw everything, the camouflaged lizard that everyone else had skipped by. She used her senses. She was awake."

Comment

This quote reminded me of the transition I feel every time I leave the city to go camping or hiking. It takes a while to stop being startled by every bug and to quit passing by plants without looking. Once you've completed the transition, everything becomes amazing and fascinating. I also notice that it takes longer with my family, thoroughly urbanized folks, than with Girl Scouts, a group of enthusiastic, earthy women I'm lucky to have. This chapter really emphasized the importance of children being in nature with adults who model appreciation and respect. It's dangerous to raise a generation indoors.

T.Q.C. Submission

The T.Q.C. report will have a deadline of Friday at 11:59 p.m. prior to the Sunday meeting. To submit a T.Q.C., the student will utilize Google Classroom.

Exit Ticket

Exit Tickets will be available to submit on Google Classroom. Students must submit the Exit Ticket 3 hours after the meeting ends.

Final Project

Each student must develop a public presentation and deliver it to an audience of ten or more people as their final project. The project must be observed by an LSA instructor or recorded and submitted to the LSA instructors. The student will select a topic related to land stewardship, and the presentation must be a minimum of **eight minutes and a maximum of ten minutes**. Students will utilize a PowerPoint template provided to them. Additionally, we will include deadlines for the presentation topic, abstract, outline, and PowerPoint draft. This project will be assessed by the rubric attached to this document and will be discussed in further detail during the semester.

A Top Presentation Award will also be selected for each cohort. The awardee will win an additional \$100 towards their stipend.

Participation

Student participation is essential for the successful completion of this course. Participation is defined as, but not limited to, the following:

- Completing and turning in all TQCs as required on time
- Participating in a meaningful and productive way during class discussions each session
- Exit tickets must be completed after the facilitated discussion and submitted via a Google form
- Attendance: Attending **7 out of 8** of the regular class sessions and **both** of the special weekend-long sessions

Course Policies and Information for Students

Inclusive Learning Environment Statement

The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At The Witte Museum and the East Foundation, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to arrive on time at their designated meeting places and remain for the entirety of the scheduled time. They will attend a minimum of 7 out of 8 regular program sessions and both of the weekend-long full group sessions.

COVID-19 Statement

All sessions will be formatted according to the latest CDC guidelines per local onsite meeting locations. If the situation arises that the cohorts cannot meet in person, we will utilize the Zoom platform to meet virtually.

Attire

Students will be expected to dress in business casual attire with closed-toed shoes. Pants, Land Stewardship nametag, and Land Stewardship Ambassador Polo are appropriate. If LSA polo is not available, a blouse/shirt with sleeves and a collar is appropriate. No t-shirts, midriffs/crop-tops or sleeveless shirts, and no jeans with holes.

Plagiarism

Academic integrity is vital to the success of the Land Stewardship Ambassadors program. Each student's level of understanding, knowledge, and ability to connect readings, videos, and discussions must be demonstrated by submitting original work, which will be assessed via the exit ticket and final project. Submissions are thoroughly reviewed and compared to AI-generated work to ensure that students do not use AI for their submissions.

Stipend

The \$400 stipend will only be awarded to students who successfully complete the course. The requirements for this are as follows:

- Student attended 7 out of 8 of the regular class sessions (must be an approved absence in advance)
- Student attended both of the weekend-long sessions
- Student completed all coursework in a timely manner (even if a class is missed, the work is expected to be submitted)
- Student completed a final project and presented it to a group of their peers in accordance with the provided rubric
- Students who complete all work (TQCs, Exit Tickets, Post-Test, Exit Survey, Exit Essay, Final Presentation) will receive an additional \$50 gift card. The valid timestamp of submissions will be what is submitted via the Google Form within the Google Classroom.

Land Stewardship Ambassadors 2026

Important Dates to Remember

December 7, 2025 – Student and Parent Informational Meeting

January 10-11, 2026 – Overnight at The Witte Museum*

January 25, 2026 – Regular Meeting

February 1, 2026 – Regular Meeting

February 8, 2026 – Regular Meeting

February 15, 2026 – Regular Meeting

March 1, 2026 – Regular Meeting

March 15, 2026 – Zoom Meeting

March 22, 2026 – Field Trip Meeting

March 29, 2026 – Regular Meeting

April 11-12, 2026 – Overnight at East Foundation's San Antonio Viejo Ranch*

April 30, 2026 – Deadline for Final Presentation, Post-Test, Exit Survey, Exit Essays, and LSA Videos

May 17, 2026 – LSA Graduation

* - Denotes Mandatory Overnight

Preliminary Schedule of Readings, Topics, and Other Assignments *(subject to change)

Date	Topics/Assigned Readings	Assignments Due
December 7, 2025	Parent Informational Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bexar cohort will meet at The Witte Museum, 3801 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209 Cameron cohort will meet at Camp Rio, 280 Fish Hatchery Road, Brownsville, Texas 78520, U.S. Webb cohort will meet at Falcon Bank 7718 McPherson Rd # A, Webb, TX 78045 on the 2nd Floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Test at meeting Distribute course materials via Google Classroom Submit signed commitment form, W-4, medical release, liability release
January 10-11, 2026	Mandatory – Overnight at The Witte Museum, San Antonio, TX Theme: What is a Land Steward? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Witte Museum Weekend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Bexar Cohort to meet at The Witte Museum on Saturday *Cameron cohort will leave Brownsville on Saturday and return on Sunday *Webb cohort will leave Laredo on Saturday and return on Sunday Time and locations will be shared as we get closer to the date Instructors will distribute books and additional materials at The Witte Museum Students will practice TQC at The Witte Museum Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of The Witte Museum from website https://www.witemuseum.org/history/ East Foundation - Maintaining our Legacy East Foundation - Impacting the Future History of LSA program An American Land Ethic by N. Scott Momaday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All About Me Slide Meal Questionnaire
January 25, 2026	Theme: History of Conservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned Chapter from: <i>Nature's Allies: Eight Conservationists Who Changed Our World</i> by Larry Nielson or <i>Beloved Beasts: Fighting for Life In An Age of Extinction</i> by Michelle Nijhuis, assigned chapter <i>Nature's Allies: Eight Conservationists Who Changed Our World</i> by Larry Nielson, Chapter 3 – Aldo Leopold <i>Horses to Ride, Cattle to Cut</i> by Wyman Meinzer and Henry Chappell, pages 11-97 A Conservation Timeline: Milestones Of the Model's Evolution by Robert Brown, Ph.D. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TQC will be done on their assigned chapter, refer to Google Classroom list- due on January 23, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.

February 1, 2026	Theme: Public Benefits of Conservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Private Lands Public Trust"</i> by Steve Nelle <i>Last Child in the Woods</i>, chapter 12* TWA Article: Ecosystem Services Poised to Change the Landscape by Lorie A. Woodward Introduce LSA Economics Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TQC - Due on January 30, 2026 @ 11:59 p.m. Final Presentation Topic Due
February 8, 2026	Theme: Public Speaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop led by professional public speaker Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ethos, Pathos, Logos</i> Handout <i>Better Public Speaking Becoming a Confident, Compelling Speaker</i> - by Mind Tools Content Team <i>Storytelling for Connection and Change</i> by Rachel Szczytko in <i>Environmental Education</i> Pre-viewing assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YouTube: <i>How to sound smart in your TEDx Talk</i> by Will Stephen https://youtu.be/8S0FDjFBj8o?si=HUUqJzW89qjSd2-o 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Sixth Tool Quote at Meeting TQC - Due February 6, 2026 @ 11:59 p.m. Final Presentation Abstract Due
February 15, 2026	Theme: Water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Making the Connection: Watersheds and our water supplies"</i> by Anna Huff <i>"Where the First Raindrop Falls"</i> by Larry D. Hodge <i>"Soil and Water"</i> by Steve Nelle Who's Wasting Our Water? - Pre-assigned teams of 3 to one of the sub-articles (assigned Feb 9th); Summarize and identify solutions For next week: Identify a current natural resource issue within your community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TQC - Due February 13, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. Final Presentation Outline Due
March 1, 2026	Theme: Politics and Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"How Laws are Made"</i> https://www.usa.gov/how-laws-are-made Pre-viewing assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Schoolhouse Rock: America- I'm Just a Bill</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFroMQJKiag <i>What is the Difference Between Policy and Politics</i> https://youtu.be/lfR-gL06URU?si=E9QTjThnJLTjDBJE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TQC - Due February 27, 2026 at 11:19 p.m. Draft PowerPoint Presentation Due Identify a current natural resource issue within your community.
March 15, 2026	Theme: Diversity in Conservation (Meeting via Zoom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Black Faces White Spaces</i> by Carolyn Finney, Chapter 5 <i>The Home Place</i> by Drew Lanham Pre-viewing assignments: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TQC - Due March 13, 2026 at 11:59p.m. Final Presentation PowerPoint Due

March 15, 2026 (continued)	Theme: Diversity in Conservation (Meeting via Zoom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Accessible Outdoors https://vimeo.com/920277620 	
March 22, 2026	Theme: Wildlife Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pre-reading assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The Wildlife Techniques Manual, Volume 2: Management</i> by Nova Silvey (Chapter 31) ○ “The Basic Skill” by Steve Nelle ● Pre-viewing assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>North American Model of Wildlife Conservation - Conservation Field Notes with Steven Rinella</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukqzPNckrbg ○ <i>Ranching with Ocelots</i> https://youtu.be/8bK8CtKKkHI?si=FdGIG0aAysZhKiXU ● Bring the following: sack lunch, water bottles, close-toed shoes, hat, sunscreen, binders, journals <p>Time and location of meetings is TBA for all cohorts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which principle from NAMWC resonated with you and why? 300 words ● TQC - Due March 20, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.
March 29, 2026	Theme: Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pre-reading assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TXN Return on Conservation Index https://texanbynature.org/roc-index/ ○ “How America Uses its Land” https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2018-us-land-use/ ○ “The Economic Value of Hunting” by Amanda Gobeli and Dale Rollins ○ “The Economics of Conservation” by Steve Nelle ● Pre-viewing assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Herd Impact” ft. Deborah Clark & Emery Birdwell https://youtu.be/EBTINTcBbE?si=KC43VKSyKnc-Mgwv 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TQC - Due March 27, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ● LSA Economics Group Project Presentation
April 11-12, 2026	Mandatory – Overnight at the San Antonio Viejo Ranch, Hebbronville, TX Theme: Bringing it all Together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● East Foundation’s San Antonio Viejo Ranch, Saturday-Sunday ● All cohorts will travel to San Antonio Viejo Ranch, Hebbronville, Texas, on Saturday and return on Sunday; Times and location are TBA ● Pre-reading assignment: Wyman Meinzer, <i>Horses to Ride, Cattle to Cut</i>, pages 99-185 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post-Test

April 30, 2026 - Deadline for Final Presentation, LSA Video Promo, Post-Test, Exit Survey, Exit Essay
May 17, 2026 - LSA Graduation