

**Honors 2109: Intellectual Traditions
Foundations of Ecological Thinking
Ecology and Legacy**
Humanities and Sustainability Designation
Spring 2021

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Course Description

Honors 2109 is a semester-long Environmental Literature and Philosophy course that uses as a spring board the concept and practice of Ecological thinking. At the heart of Ecological thinking is the understanding of the interconnectedness of things, and the ability to see the “big picture.” One way to go about this is to explore various perspectives and lenses in our engagement with subjectivity, community, politics, ethics, philosophy, science, and citizenship. We will pay special attention to what some call an “Eastern” point of view. The object of Honors 2109 is for students to experience the wide breadth of texts that continue to inform ecological thinking, just as we will address contemporary environmental philosophy and poetics. We will also address sustainability as a practice and a state of mind. We will divide each class into a discussion of contemporary issues, discussion and exercises in regard to the weekly readings, just as we will devote time to writing and oral presentations. Assignments will be graded throughout the semester with personal growth as a scholar and contributor to our small community as the major means of assessment.

In this course we will write two short research papers as an introduction to research practices. We will also write one essay where we will address issues of sustainability. Students will choose their own topics relating to course readings and discussions. The class will be conducted in what I consider a contemplative format where we value first person experience, our friendships, families, and communities, and the library as a bottomless source of adventure. As in all my classes, we will use creative process exercises to help open us to new possibilities of discourse.

By the end of the course, the students will . . .

- encounter seminal environmental texts that continue to inform ecological thinking today
- engage in introductory research projects that lay the foundation for upper-division Honors writing courses
- experiment with various forms of “writing”
- explore the various dimensions that define ecological thinking
- develop “big picture” thinking, interconnectedness, and the ability to connect the dots
- create a map that addresses sustainable practices
- value personal experience as a guide for learning

The Readings

The course will be framed by using an East/West perspective. From the East we will look at Buddhism (and to a small extent the Vedas), which has informed many environmental writers. From the West we will look at neoplatonic philosophy, which also has been a major influence on how we approach the earth and sky, rivers and rock of ourselves.

Texts

Required:

Crazy Brave, Joy Harjo
Become What You Are, Alan Watts

(readings that include the ideas of major environmental thinkers will be available on Canvas throughout the course.)

Course Policies and Procedures

Assignments and Grades

Several assignments work toward achieving a better understanding of university and disciplinary practices. Please note that the assignments may change according to our needs throughout the term. The final grade will be afforded by percentage.

Reading Essay One (10 points)

The purpose of this assignment is to follow a path of thinking and research that leads to depth on a particular topic. You will be asked to take a topic from any of our readings or class discussion and write a paper that includes a summary and context of topic, followed by a body that includes categories of response that help deepen the discussion by way of reduction. The conclusion might address why the analysis is important and what we, as scholars, might do with the information in regard to sustainability.

The Haibun: A Personal Approach (15 points)

For this exercise, write an essay that includes three sections of prose and three haiku. The prose sections should include three aspects of a single relationship, or three aspects of three relationships. This is a meditation that somehow captures the fragile bridge between us all. At the essence of this exercise is the important truth that personal journeys and experience bring meaning and purpose to the world, and we are always and forever involved in relationships of one kind or another. Your job is to bring tears to my eyes.

Oral Presentation: Dangerous Ideas (10 points)

Photographic Essay (15 points)

This assignment asks you to explore a chosen urban “patch” that you delineate at the beginning of the semester. (We’ll talk about this in class.) Once you’ve determined a patch, you can begin photographing various components over the course of the semester. Using these photographs and short riffs of prose, you’ll create a narrative that in some way addresses urban spaces and ecological thinking. 10 photos, 10 writings.

Ecological Thinking Map (10 points)

You will create a map addressing an issue of sustainability or ecological thinking.

Final Exam Essay (10 points)

Using class notes and your writing on the Canvas discussion board, write an essay that describes your semester journey. Make sure to address all four integral quadrants. 4 pag

Rant (5 points)

All other exercises & class participation (approximately 25 points)

Letter Grade Values by Percentage

100-95 A
94-91 A-
90-88 B+
87-84 B
83-80 B-
79-77 C+
76-74 C
73-70 C-
69-67 D+
66-64 D
63-60 D-

Class participation and attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence. On every subsequent absence your grade will be lowered by a half point (A to A-, B+ to B, etc.).

Please note that all assignments are to be handed in on time. Late papers are very hard on me, and it’s not fair that some students turn their work in on time while others don’t.

Students are encouraged to bring personal computers to class, which are to be used for note taking or other course related purposes. Computers, cell phones, tablets and other electronic media may not be used for surfing the web, emailing or other non-course related matters.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the quarter to discuss any necessary accommodations.

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Plagiarism is using the work of someone else and calling it your own. In this class we will learn to paraphrase, or in the case where you do use someone else's work directly, how to cite it.

Daily Class Schedule

(may be changed as warranted)

Week 1 (Jan. 20)

Introductions

Reading: "What Climate Collapse Asks of Us"

Alan Watts

Week 2 (Jan. 27)

Introduce Patch Photo Essay

Reading: Alan Watts; "Symbiogenesis"

Week 3 (Feb. 3)

Due: Research Paper One

Reading: Alan Watts; Heraclitus

Week 4 (Feb. 10)

Introduce Haibun
Sustainability
Reading: “Blue Mountains Constantly Walking,” Snyder;
Finish Alan Watts

Week 5 (Feb. 17)

Integrated Thinking/Systems
Reading: “Nature”—Emerson; Cold Mountain Poems

Week 6 (Feb. 24)

Haibun due
Luciano Lecture
Reading: “Song of Myself”

Week 7 (March 3)

Dangerous Ideas
Reading: Diane Di Prima; Ann Waldman
Jack Newell Lecture

Week 8 (March 10)

Mental Health Day (no class)
Reading: Thoreau; Leopold

Week 9 (March 17)

Dangerous Ideas
Reading: Joy Harjo

Week 10 (March 24)

Mapping
Reading: Joy Harjo

Week 11 (March 31)

Mountains and Rivers Without End/Native American
Reading: “The Nature of Desert Nature”

Week 12 (April 7)

Latin America/Africa
Reading: “Howl”

Week 13 (April 14)

Rant
Mapping
Reading: “The Gift”; Braiding Sweetgrass

Week 14 (April 21)

Final Projects

Week 15 (April 28)

Lyric Presentation

