Honors 2109: Intellectual Traditions
Foundations of Ecological Thinking
Humanities Designation
Spring 2018

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Course Description
Honors 2109 is a semester-long, writing-intensive 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, 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 seminal texts that continue to inform ecological thinking, just as we will address contemporary environmental issues, problems, and solutions. 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 experiment with form. 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. We will also spend time outside of the class to encounter a wider breath of things both urban and wild. 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”
• consider the rhetorical tools used in environmental debate
• explore the various dimensions that define ecological thinking
• participate as team members in the evaluation and drafting of classmates’ work
• develop “big picture” thinking, interconnectedness, and the ability to connect the dots
• create a short new media presentation
• design and create a portfolio as a final project
• 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 Plato and Lucretius, one an idealist, the other a materialist, both having wide influence on how we approach the earth and sky, rivers and rock of ourselves.

Texts
Required:

On the Nature of the Universe, Lucretius
The Other Shore, Thich Nhat Hanh
The Wilds of Poetry, David Hinton
Desert Solitaire, Edward Abbey
An Unspoken Hunger, Terry Tempest Williams

Suggested:


(readings that include Emerson, Thoreau, Leopold and others will be available on Canvas.)

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.

Research Essay One (10 points)
In this essay you will learn what it is to follow a line of thinking, developing an idea, concept, or argument by building from one thinker to another. In a class outing to the library, we will spend our time searching for and skimming the introductions and indexes of books in an effort to land upon topics to follow to yet another book, introduction and index. The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to the exploratory process of academic research, and the importance of books in the investigative mode. We will call this form of research the “horizontal” mode.
Experimental Essay (10 points)
For this exercise please write a meditation from the first person point of view that portrays you or someone you know crossing the line from our technological entanglements into what we might consider the natural. The piece should integrate poetry (your own or something we’ve read in class) as a means of exploration and bridging.

Oral Presentation: The Photograph (10 points)
In this exercise students will project a single photograph on the screen and perform a close reading. The photograph should include an image that might be considered outside of the presenter’s cultural norm. What does the image teach the viewer about cultural norms? What does it say about notions of empathy, difference, and self-awareness? 3-4 minutes. The assignment includes a one paragraph summary of exercise turned in to Canvas.

Research Essay Two (15 points)
The purpose of this assignment is to follow a path of thinking and research that leads to depth a particular topic. You will be asked to take a topic that we’ve discussed in class and write a paper that includes a summary and context of topic, followed by a body that includes categories that help deepen the discussion by way of reduction. The conclusion should address why the analysis is important and what we, as a culture, might do with the information. We’ll call this mode of analysis the “vertical.”

Photographic Essay (15 points)
This assignment asks you to explore a specific theme from material introduced in class by of integrating photography, short interviews, and prose into a structured essay. Using a topic in the field of sustainability, you will set out on a journey to capture images that, with accompanying text, will open you to a fresh and compelling means of expression. 10 photos, 10 writings.

New Media Awesome Idea Presentation (10 points)
Students are expected to create a finely-crafted digital new media project that offers a reflection inspired by one of the texts we’ve encountered in class. The purpose of this exercise is to allow you the space to speak and expand upon a concept or idea that you believe is important enough to pass to others. The idea may be researched, though not necessarily so. Two to three minute presentation downloaded onto your portfolio and Canvas. The digital project will be an extension of a two to three minute in-class oral presentation “rough draft.”

Ecological Thinking Map (10 points)
You will create a personal map that using tools of your choice that shows layers of yourself or your community as you see it in terms of spiritual, physical, and intellectual ecologies.

Final Portfolio (10 points)
At the beginning of the semester you will create a webpage where all your work from our four months together, including exercises, will be displayed in an array of great beauty. Check out sites.google.com or choose from the many free portfolio templates online.
All other exercises & class participation (10 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).
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.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (Jan. 9, 11)  Introductions
                      Plato
                      Research Paper topics
                      Read: *On the Nature of the Universe, Book One*

Week 2 (Jan. 16, 18)  Introductions to New Media Awesome Idea,
                      Mapping, Websites
                      Read: *On the Nature of the Universe, Book 2*
                      Library

Week 3 (Jan. 23, 25)  Introduce poetic expression
                      Read: *On the Nature of Universe, Book 3*
                      Read *The Wilds of Poetry*, 1-25
                      *On the Nature of the Universe* group presentations

Week 4 (Jan. 30, Feb. 1)  Due: Research paper one
                           Ecological Thinking
                           Read: *The Other Shore*
                           Read: *The Wilds of Poetry*, 25-75

Week 5 (Feb. 6, 8)  Intro to Experimental Essay
                      Ecological Thinking
                      Mapping
                      Read: *The Other Shore*
                      Read: *The Wilds of Poetry*, 75-135

Week 6 (Feb. 13, 15)  Due: Experimental Essay
                      Research Paper 2 topics
                      Read: Emerson, Thoreau
                      Read: *The Wilds of Poetry*, 179-241

Week 7 (Feb. 20, 22)  Intro to Photograph Assignment
                      Contemplative Practices
                      Ecological Thinking
                      Sustainability
                      Read: *The Wilds of Poetry*, 241-end
Read: *The Other Shore*

**Week 8 (Feb. 27, Mar. 1)**
- Diet of a Small Planet
- Read: *Desert Solitaire*
- Photograph Presentations

**Week 9 (Mar. 6)**
- Photograph Presentations
- Reading: *Desert Solitaire*
- Introduction to Awesome Idea Presentations
- Introduce Research Essay Two

**Week 10 (Mar. 13, 15)**
- Reading: *Desert Solitaire*, finish
- Oral Midterm

**Week 11 (Mar. 20, 22)**
- Spring Break

**Week 12 (Mar. 27, 29)**
- Awesome Idea Presentations
- Ecological Thinking
- Read: *The Land Ethic*
- Read: *Spiritual Ecology*

**Week 13 (April 3, 5)**
- Awesome Idea Presentations
- Social Justice
- Read: *Spiritual Ecology*

**Week 14 (April 10, 12)**
- Due: Research Essay 2
- Read: *Spiritual Ecology*
- Read: *An Unspoken Hunger*

**Week 15 (April 17, 19)**
- Mapping
- Ecological Thinking
- Read: *An Unspoken Hunger*

**Week 16 (April 24)**
- Due: Photographic Essay
- Map Presentation
- Read: *An Unspoken Hunger*

**Week 17 (May 1)**
- Due: Final Portfolio Website