

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE
SUMMER QUARTER 2001

FINDING THE VOICE IN ALL THINGS: Ecopsychology and Nature Writing

Faculty:

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Meeting Times:

Second Session - Fridays, August 3-31,
Times: 1:00-5:00 & 6:00-10:00 p.m.

Location: Library 3500

4 quarter hours; Upper Division Credit

Close Looking:

We are nature, long have we been absent, but now we return,
We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,
We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side...
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, pervious, impervious,
We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and influence of the globe,
We have circled and circled till we have arrived home again, we two,
We have voided all the freedom and all but our own joy.
Walt Whitman, from "We Two"

Course Description:

What is the relationship between nature, language, and human psychology? We are all aware of our earth's ecological troubles and many of us grieve the loss of species due to our human activities. Most of us value nature and an ecologically sustainable environment and work on ways to solve this problem, yet we often feel depressed, hopeless, and guilty about the ways we still contribute to it. This touches us deeply on the psychological and spiritual level. As writers, activists, artists and critical thinkers, what can we do to respond to the challenges we face? How do shifts in language and perception effect our view of nature? What can we do to find the voice in all things?

This course combines creative writing, storytelling, myth, literature, natural history and ecopsychology. We will develop skills in writing, critical reading, and nature observation as we explore current issues in the relationship between psyche and nature. The class will involve field study, lectures, and workshops on historical and socio-cultural perspectives in psychology, ecopsychology, and creative writing. We will study mythology related to the psychology of nature and culture, and we will read a number writers, naturalists, psychologists, and philosophers that explore our human experience of the more-than-human world.

Close Listening:

I wonder if the ground has anything to say? I wonder if the ground is listening to what is said? Though I hear what the ground says. The ground says it is the Great Spirit who placed me here...The same way the ground says it was from me human beings were made. *From a speech given by Young Chief of the Cayuse in 1855*

Required Texts: (We will read selections from the following texts.)

-Ras B. (Editor), and Robert W. Bly. *News of the Universe: Poems of Twofold Consciousness*. Sierra Club Books, 1995. ISBN: 0871563681.

This book is in two editions, 1. (1980) Bly, and 2. (1995) Ras and Bly. It is currently being re-printed, so the Evergreen bookstore did not receive their order. Two copies of the (1980 edition) book are on reserve in the Library. Used copies of both editions are available, but you will have to order them on your own. Orca Books is your best bet. They are tracking down used copies, so please ask at the counter. Powell's Bookstore in Portland, and Amazon.com. have used copies.

-Metzner, Ralph, Ph.D. *Green Psychology: Cultivating a Spiritual Connection with the Natural World*. Inner Traditions Intl Ltd; 1999. ISBN: 0892817984

-Ross, Carolyn, *Writing Nature: An Ecological Reader For Writers*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. ISBN: 0312103913.

-Roszak, T., Gomes M.E., and Kanner, A.D. (Eds.) *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. 1995. 0-87156-406-8.

-Snyder, Gary. *The Practice of the Wild*. North Point Press, 1990. ISBN: 0865474540

Strongly Recommended: (We will read selections from the following texts. The anthology is expensive, but well worth having in your library. A copy will be available on reserve in the library.)

-Finch, Robert, and John Elder (Editors)). *Norton Book of Nature Writing*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1990. ISBN: 0393027996.(QH 81.N67 1990b)

-Oliver, Mary, *New and Selected Poems*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. ISBN 0-8070-6819-5

Supplemental Readings:(For your interest, we have ordered the following books.)

-Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous*. New York: Vintage, 1996.

-Hogan, Linda Hogan (Editor), Brenda Peterson (Editor) *The Sweet Breathing of Plants : Women Writing on the Green World*. North Point Press, 2001. ISBN: 0865475598

-McEwen, Christian, and Mark Statman (Editors). *The Alphabet of the Trees: A Guide to Nature Writing*. Teachers & Writers, 2000. ISBN: 0915924633.

-Petersen, David H. Emerson Blake *Writing Naturally : A Down-To-Earth Guide to Nature Writing*, Johnson Books; ISBN: 1555662730.

Course Equivalencies: Students can receive a total of four quarter hours credit for college level work in psychology, literature, or environmental studies.

[Careful Description](#)

Early in May, the oaks, hickories, maples, and other trees, just putting out amidst the pine woods around the pond, imparted a brightness like sunshine to the landscape, especially in cloudy days, as if the sun were breaking through mists and shining faintly on the hill-sides here and there. On the third or fourth day of May I saw a loon in the pond, and during the first week of the month I heard the whippoorwill, the brown-thrasher, the veery, the wood-pewee, the chewink, and other birds.
Henry David Thoreau, Walden

Learning Goals:

1. To gain an understanding, both conceptually and experientially, of the importance of connecting psychology, and ecology and of the inseparability of mind and nature.
2. To experience the challenges of reading, understanding, talking, and writing about oral, textual, and cinematic representations of nature writing, psychology, and environmental studies.
3. To survey and develop an appreciation for the historic context, authors, and literature of nature writing, in both poetry and prose, and to develop an introductory knowledge of the emerging literature connecting eco-psychology and environmental studies.
4. To expand our understanding and practice of journaling, editing, revision, and various writing or storytelling techniques.
5. To research, explore, write, and present some aspect around the themes of eco-psychology or nature writing that intrigue you.
6. To explore the history of the human experience of nature and creativity, including indigenous animism/shamanism, mythology, and literature, as well as the historical and philosophical roots of our current ecological, social and psychological crises. To gain an understanding of new paradigms in science, philosophy and psychology which may help us resolve the old Western division between mind and world, psyche and nature.
7. To gain an understanding of the roots of eco-psychology theory in various psychological theories of the self, as well as in various environmental philosophies such as deep ecology, eco-feminism and social ecology. To examine and explore the strengths and possible limits of various theories. To understand some of the implications of these ideas applied to language, creativity, and creative writing.
8. To increase our personal awareness of our psychological and spiritual connection with the natural world and what it means to have a sense of the ecological Self. To explore our personal embeddedness in the natural world, increase our sense of interdependence with other beings, both human and non-human, and explore our own boundaries and identifications with the natural world as well as the human world. To be able to draw more deeply from nature as a deep wellspring of wisdom and creativity both within us and around us.

Expectations:

- Faithfully attends and fully participates at all meetings, workshops, and seminars.
- Reads and responds to the texts faithfully.
- Takes notes on class lectures and discussions, and completes all experiential exercises each week which connect theory to personal experience. These exercises will be done as inner work, writing activities, in dyads or in small groups. Place your notes and handouts for these workshops in your portfolio.
- Maintains a portfolio of class handouts, class notes (on lectures, workshops), papers, and cumulative work. These will be reviewed at the final evaluation conference.
- Successfully completes all individual or group projects, presentations, workshops, writings, or assignments on time. Note that 4 credits in 5 weeks of upper division work should involve 20 hours a week of work (on average), including class time.

Assignments:

- 1) Reading response papers turned in promptly at each weekly seminar (1-2 pages, typed). These papers will allow you to: 1) comment upon the readings, and 2) summarize, reflect upon, and integrate program topics, themes, and issues. (See Guidelines to reading responses.)
- 2) A final draft, edited and revised during in-class writing workshops of: 1) either a personal essay (3-5 pages), or 2) 3-5 poems. These can be developed from writing workshops done in class.
- 3) Final Project: You will present your project to the class sometime during the last night of class. Projects may be done individually or collaboratively. The following options are available:
 - a.) Write a typed, double-spaced, research or reflective paper (5-7 pages). This paper may involve doing research on a particular work, or on some aspect of ecopsychology or nature writing.
 - b.) Artistic, creative, or performance projects. These may involve poetry readings, art work, storytelling, theatre, song writing, or a combination of artistic mediums.
 - c.) A community-oriented project such as connecting ecopsychology or poetry to environmental /social activism, an ecological restoration project or to an organization where you work.
 - d.) Other options can be developed. If you are unsure if a particular project is acceptable, please discuss your ideas with the instructors.
- 4) Nature Journal. This is your chance to develop your personal relationship with nature work. Choose a special place in a natural setting that you will get to know in depth - ecologically, psychologically and spiritually. Commit to spending at least 60 minutes there a week (this can be done in one 60 minute block, in two 30 minute periods, or so on. Each item in this journal must be dated. A handout with suggested meditation and perceptual awareness tools will be offered to you for your work with your relationship to your special place. Keep a journal of your observations and experience. Feel free to use artwork and poetry.

Class Portfolio:

Each student is required to keep a class portfolio throughout the class. This will be turned in at the end of the summer to be reviewed at evaluation conferences. Include your name and a table of contents. **Record the topic and date of each item** in your portfolio. Each section should be arranged chronologically. The portfolio must be kept in a loose leaf three ring binder with dividers and should contain the following:

Course syllabus and all class handouts

Note: Date and chronologically order each entry.

1. Class notes: lectures, speakers.
2. In-class workshops. (Date and title each entry)
3. In-class writing workshops and notes (date each entry)
4. Seminar notes
5. Weekly reading responses to required texts. Follow format on reading response handout. (A section of reading notes is strongly recommended.)
6. Personal Essay or poetry: Final copy, early drafts, and editing workshop notes.
7. Planning notes for individual or group final presentations. (for example, if you do a research paper -- include planning, research & development notes; copies of all drafts, etc.
8. Self and Faculty evaluations (Three signed copies on official forms at the end of the class.)

Assignments and Due Dates: See handouts for details on projects.

Weeks 1-5: Reading responses are due promptly at the beginning of each seminar.

Week 2 Special project or research topic statement

Week 3 First draft: Poems or personal essay

Week 4 Sign-up for evaluation conferences

Second Draft: Poems or personal essay

Week 5 Final Draft: Poems or personal essay

Final Portfolio

Final Presentation

Self and Faculty Evaluations (Three copies, signed.)

Rebecca Chamberlain, M.A., is a Northwest writer, storyteller, and educator, holds an M.A. in English Literature from the University of Washington with an emphasis in Medieval Literature, oral narrative, and Puget Sound Salish storytelling traditions. She teaches courses in literature, storytelling, writing, illuminated manuscripts, comparative mythology, and cultural studies.

Steven Fenwick, Ph. D., in Psychology and Environmental Philosophy is a Diplomate in Process-oriented Psychology. He also has a degree in Biology and Environmental Studies. He has taught ecopsychology courses at Antioch University. He has over twenty years experience as a therapist and group facilitator and maintains a private practice. He is writing a book on a process-oriented approach to ecopsychology.

Student: "How do you draw grass?"
Jenny Keller: "You need to ask the grass. Otherwise you miss out on all the things grass is."

Disclaimer: The following schedule is a general guide and is subject to revision.
