



Office of Extended Education • Humboldt State University

**California Wilderness Program:
Perspectives on Nature**

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS 481)
3 semester units

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course looks at the perspectives toward nature characteristic of three general varieties of human culture: hunter/gatherer, agricultural and industrial. Focus will be on representative perspectives as revealed through worldview, mythic images, religious practice, and daily life-support activities. Emergent post-modernist perspectives will also be reviewed including environmental justice, bioregionalism, transpersonal ecology, and ecopsychology. Throughout the course students will work towards an understanding of specific environmental perspectives and traditions, the historical framework within which these perspectives are located, and the articulation of a personal environmental viewpoint.

COURSE OVERVIEW

At the outset, the general concerns of the course will be introduced: the diversity and relativity of worldviews, and more specifically, the diversity and relativity of cultural attitudes toward nature. Students will be encouraged to write about and discuss their own attitudes toward nature and to try to discern how they came to these attitudes: what is universal, what is cultural, what is familial.

Then attention will be given to the Paleolithic and to hunter-gatherer culture. Recognizing the limitations of generalities, archaeology, and ethnography, the broad patterns of tribal relationship to place will be discussed. Specific focus will be given to the native Californian cultures of course field locales and the Dagara of West Africa. Lecture and readings will examine methods of subsistence, social structures, religious beliefs and practices, and the role of orality in cultural transmission.

Focus for the next segment of the course will be on the advent of agriculture and how human relationships to the earth changed during the Neolithic. The archaeological evidence (and its various interpretations) of Goddess-oriented cultures will be examined. Farming technology (the digging stick to the plow) will be correlated to evolving social practices. Seasonal cycles with their associated rituals, mythological stories, symbols of fertility and harvest, and gender relations will be discussed.

We will continue by exploring the historical development of modern Western culture. Greek and Hebrew roots will be delineated. The influence of Christianity and its various attitudes toward nature will be discussed. The Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution will be considered for their innovations and impact. Lectures and readings will draw out the significance of such philosophical concepts as rationality, materialism, objectivity, and mechanism. Modern urban life with industry, technology, globalization, and consumerism will be analyzed for underlying attitudes toward nature.

The final weeks will be used for considerations of environmentally conscious trends in American culture such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, ecopsychology, environmental justice, and bioregionalism. Through the completion of their final project, students will explore how their own perspective on nature has been influenced by two months in the field.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) To understand the outlines of human evolution, both physical and cultural.
- 2) To develop a sense of the great range and diversity of human cultures, as observed vertically through time and horizontally through geography.
- 3) To note the broad distinctions and ramifications of three societal types: hunter/gatherer, agricultural, and industrial.
- 4) To see how a peoples' relationship with nature is shaped by the multiple factors that make up their cultural worldview.
- 5) To place current American attitudes toward nature in a coherent understanding of Western culture's origins and development.
- 6) To understand one's own perspective on nature: what it is (self-inquiry and articulation), how it got there (cultural and personal history); how it might be altered and deepened (ecopsychology).

COURSE OUTLINE

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| <p>I. Nature and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. The range and relativity of worldviewsB. The range of interactions between people and ecosystemsC. Uncertain terms: nature/culture, wild/domestic, backcountry/frontcountry <p>II. Hunter/Gatherers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Human evolution and the PaleolithicB. Ecological balance, carrying capacity, lifestyleC. Native American cultures<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. California Indians2. environmental ethics3. shamanism and earth-based religionD. Dagara of West Africa: indigenous perspectives on nature, ritual, healing and community <p>III. Agricultural Societies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Plowing the earth, controlling the waterB. Goddess worship in EuropeC. Sedentary lifeways, population increases, politics <p>IV. The Roots of Western Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Greek philosophy and scienceB. Judaism and ChristianityC. Patriarchy and the oppression of the feminine <p>V. The Rise of Modernism and Industrial Civilization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Scientific revolution: Bacon, Descartes, NewtonB. Nature as commodity, universe as mechanism | <p>C. Adam Smith and Karl Marx</p> <p>VI. Environmental Philosophy in the Twentieth Century—the Expansion of the Ethic of Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Deep Ecology<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. biocentrism and inherent value2. self-realization3. the practice of compassionB. Ecofeminism<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. critique of patriarchy2. alienation of the “other” from wild natureC. Environmental Justice<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. the relationships between race, class, and environmental destruction2. bringing inclusivity to the environmental movement <p>VII. Ecopsychology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. the effects of technology on our relationship with natureB. consumerism: an examination of false and true human needsC. poetry as a language of ecopsychology <p>VIII. Bioregional Philosophy and Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. definitions of bioregionB. central tenets of bioregionalism: natural systems as source of human physical/psychic health; anarchy; spiritual developmentC. assessing and cultivating the relationship between self and bioregion |
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REQUIRED TEXTS

Kanner, Roszak, Gomes. *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*. Sierra Club, 1995.

Margolin, Malcolm, ed. *The Way We Lived*. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1981.

Oliver, Mary. *New and Selected Poems*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992.

Reader: instructor-compiled selection of readings from a variety of books and journals (available at cost)

Berry, Wendell. *A Timbered Choir*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998. (selections)

Devall, Bill and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology*. Salt Lake City, UT: G.M. Smith, 1985. (selections)

Dodge, Jim. "Living By Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice", from *Coevolution Quarterly*, Winter 1981.

Gaard, Greta. "Ecofeminism and Wilderness", from *Environmental Ethics*, Spring 1997.

LaDuke, Winona. *All Our Relations*. Cambridge, M.A.: South End Press, 1999. (selections)

LeGuin, Ursula K. "Women/Wilderness", from *Dancing at the Edge of the World*. Grove Press, 1989.

Macy, Joanna. "Awakening to the Ecological Self", from *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Judith Plant, ed. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1989.

Snyder, Gary. "The Etiquette of Freedom", from *The Gary Snyder Reader*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998.

Somé, Malidoma. *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*. Tarcher/Putnam, 1998. (selections)

Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance*. SF: Harper & Row, 1979. (selections)

----- *Dreaming the Dark*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1982. (selections)

Tokar, Brian. "Environmental Justice", from *Earth for Sale: Reclaiming Ecology in the Era of Corporate Greenwash*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997.

EVALUATION

1) *Class participation* (25%): consisting of 1) class attendance; 2) preparation (thorough reading, as demonstrated primarily through bringing, to each class meeting, questions of clarification and larger questions that take the group discussion more deeply into the material); and 3) involvement: focused contribution to the group discussion, demonstrating a mature awareness of how to listen, respond to and build on others' ideas, and facilitate equality of participation.

2) *Creative project* (20%): a creative expression that reflects or affects (or both) your personal perspective on nature and that is engaged in throughout the program and presented at end (series of poems or art works; short story; dance; songs; one-person play; crafts; etc.)

3) *Class presentations* (20%): two collaborative, small group presentations on the reading material. Presentations should be two hours in length and convey the key points in the reading, define important terms and provide the opportunity for group engagement with these ideas. A range of methods/learning styles is encouraged (verbal, visual/spatial, kinesthetic, musical, inter and intrapersonal). The one required element is the offering of discussion and/or journal questions and facilitation of group discussion. Students will also be evaluated on the degree of collaborative effort. This is assessed by the instructor through sitting in on a portion of each group's meetings as they prepare their presentations, as well as by observing the final presentations.

4) *Essay* (25%): a 1250 to 1750 paper addressing one of the essay questions provided by the instructor; essay topic may also be self-designed with instructor approval. Paper should include reference and citations to two or more authors; avoid loose generalities, clichés, and unsubstantiated sentiments; paper should be focused and intense, staying close and aware of your thesis at all times; first person perspective ("I") is welcome, especially if using it encourages you to push your limits a bit; write with authenticity and passion; because you will have no computer to edit your work, some concession is made for misspellings and cross outs, but the final product should be as tidy as you can make it.

5) *Warrior exam* (10%): A four-part writing exercise to be described by instructor following a reading from Trungpa's *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* and a sitting meditation practice period. Writings are shared with the group (or if this isn't comfortable, with the instructor).

The grades used in this course will be as follows:

A+	98-100	C+	77-79	F	Below 60
A	93-97	C	73-76		
A-	90-92	C-	70-72		
B+	87-89	D+	67-69		
B	83-86	D	63-66		
B-	80-82	D-	60-62		

COURSE SCHEDULE

The general structure of the California Wilderness program is that there are 5 separate backpacking segments throughout the 9 weeks. For information on the location of each segment, please see the California Wilderness “Program” web page. Each backpacking trip varies from 7 to 14 days. Usually, we hike in to a base camp over the first one or two days. Then we establish our academic routine, which consists of a class in the morning, an afternoon to do reading and other assignments, and then a second class around a fire after dinner.

The following table indicates the planned class meetings for this course during each backpacking segment:

<i>Backpack segment</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Class hours</i>
#1	Indigenous mind, ritual, healing & community	<i>Reader:</i> Some	Begin creative projects	3
#2	Overview of worldviews and cultural diversity Paleolithic and hunter/gatherer culture Shamanistic perception The Neolithic; goddess culture	<i>The Way We Lived</i> <i>Ecopsychology:</i> Gray Abram Armstrong <i>Reader:</i> Starhawk	Collaborative teaching presentation	21
#3	The roots of western culture Modernism & industrial civilization Deep ecology Ecofeminism Environmental Justice	<i>Ecopsychology:</i> Anthony, Gomes & Kanner <i>Reader:</i> Snyder Macy, Devall & Sessions Gaard, LeGuin Tokar, LaDuke	Continue creative project Collaborative teaching presentation	18
#4	Technology, consumption, and identity	<i>Ecopsychology:</i> Glendinning Durning Kanner & Gomes	Continue creative project paper	3
#5	Jungian psychology and the world unconscious Poetry as language of ecopsychology Bioregionalism	<i>Ecopsychology:</i> Aizenstat <i>New & Selected Poems-</i> <i>Mary Oliver</i> <i>Reader:</i> Dodge	Creative project presentation	9
				Total: 54