

**Nature Immersion (ENVA 285; 2 units )**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Fridays, Aug. 22 to Oct. 24, 3:30-4:35pm**

***Course Description***

What is the nature of our relationship with nature? How do you imagine yourself in relation with nature? What is the quality of this relationship? Are there multiple ways of relating with the natural world -- and are some more beneficial than others? What are the links between our connection with the natural world and our sense of self, work, who we are in the world, and what it means to be human?

This course explores these questions through a combination of traditional seminar-style discussions focused on select readings; interactive exercises; experiential learning (nature outings, hikes, overnight camping); self-guided excursions, reflection and observation practices. Reviewing different perspectives and our own, we look at the ways that we tend to relate with nature, from the naturalist urge to identify and measure, to the more phenomenological mode of direct sensory experience and reverie. When possible, we will convene outside.

Readings are selected to inspire, spark, provoke and elicit questions and personal reflections. We will use the tools of seminar discussion, journal writing and short writing assignments to support our individual inquiries into these topics.

***Learning Outcomes***

Students will be able to:

- communicate the type and quality of their relationship to the natural world as it evolves through a series of immersive experiences in nature
- evaluate how different types of nature experiences—e.g., solo vs social, urban nature vs remote wilderness—affect the quality of nature connection
- critique assumptions about traditional notions of “nature” and “wilderness” to arrive at a pragmatic proposal for organizing and structuring nature experiences that can reconnect people to the natural world

**Assessment:**

*Nature Immersion Exercises (20%):* Four exercises (5% each) will require you to spend time in a natural setting observing and reflecting. The first requires you to “observe the universe of things” around you and explain how they came to be. The second requires

you to develop a relationship with a tree and then describe your relationship to that tree. The third requires you to document every emotion you feel throughout the course of a 24-hour period and then reflect on what your emotions have to do with your relationship to nature. The final exercise requires you to develop a “nature language” (i.e., a vocabulary to describe the ways in which people interact with nature) by observing people in natural settings.

*Journal/Notebook (60%):* Your responses to and reflections on a series of exercises, to be completed sometimes on your own and sometimes in class, will be documented in your journal/notebook. You will also document in your journals/notebooks your experiences on our nature outings. Your journals must be submitted by November 25. They will be evaluated based on completion of the exercises and outings and the depth and breadth of your responses to exercises, your observations, and your reflections.

*Contributions to the Learning Community (20%):* A score will be given reflecting your commitment to and involvement with the learning community created by the class. This includes attendance, preparation for class discussions, contributions to class discussions and exercises, participation during outings, and other indicators of engagement with the learning process. Most important is your contribution to an atmosphere of acceptance, trust, understanding, equality and compassion—the essential ingredients of a culture of care and mutual respect.

### **Honor Code**

Higher education should nurture and develop a "life of the mind." Such a life is rooted in contemplation, reflection, and analysis, among other activities. It is not rooted in competition. Cheating is a strategy taken to by students who are either lazy or who believe that they are competing for something that requires certain grades they are not capable of achieving on their own. If you are unable to uphold the standards of honesty and integrity in your academic work, necessary action—including but not limited to failure on any assignment for which the honor code has been violated—will be taken. All students are expected to know and adhere to the University’s Honor Code. You can find the full text of the [honor code](#) online. Here is the Academic Honor Pledge:

I pledge to demonstrate the core values of the University of San Francisco by upholding the standards of honesty and integrity, excellence in my academic work, and respect for others in my educational experiences, including supporting USF’s mission.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability or disabling condition, or if you think you may have a disability, please contact [USF Student Disability Services](#) (SDS) at 415 422-2613 within the first week of class, or immediately upon onset of disability, to speak with a disability specialist. If you are determined eligible for reasonable accommodations, please meet with your disability specialist so they can arrange to have your accommodation letter sent to me, and we will discuss your needs for this course. For more information, please visit: [USF Student Disability Services](#) or call (415) 422-2613.

## Required Books

- Pfeiffer, Bill. 2013. *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*. Moon Books.
- Abram, David. 2010. *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*. Vintage Books.

## Other Requirements

- A journal or other type of bound and, ideally unlined, notebook for the purpose of documenting your experiences in course exercises and outings.
- Attendance at two or more one-day weekend nature outings OR at the weekend camping trip.

## Course Schedule

### August 22

Readings:

- Syllabus

### August 29

Readings:

- "The Elm Stand," Chapter 6 in *Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order* by Thomas Princen
- "My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization," by Chellis Glendinning
- "Listening," Chapter 6 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- "Feeling and Healing," Chapter 7 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*

### September 5

Readings:

- "Holistic Approaches: Gestalt and Transpersonal Psychology," Chapter 7 in *Ecological Psychology: Healing the Split Between Planet and Self* by Deborah Du Nann Winter
- "Nature Immersion and Connection," Chapter 8 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- "The Power of Story," Chapter 9 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- "Ceremony," Chapter 10 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*

### September 6

One-day Nature Outing option: Mt. Tam "mountain to the sea" hike

### September 12

Readings:

- "Play," Chapter 12 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*

- "Stillness," Chapter 13 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- "Vision and Manifestation," Chapter 17 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- "Final Thoughts," Chapter 18 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*

### **September 19**

Readings:

• "[A Nature Language: An Agenda to Catalog, Save, and Recover Patterns of Human–Nature Interaction.](#)" Peter H. Kahn, Jr., Jolina H. Ruckert, Rachel L. Severson, Aimee L. Reichert, and Erin Fowler. 2010. *Ecopsychology* 2(2):59-66.

### **September 20**

One-day Nature Outing option: Sunrise hike

### **September 26**

Readings:

• "[The Way of Wilderness.](#)" by Steven Harp

### **September 27**

One-day Nature Outing option: Sunset hike

### **October 3**

Readings:

• "[Is Our Disconnect From Nature a Disorder?](#)" Michael Todd

• "[No More Nature Deficit Disorder.](#)" Richard Louv

### **October 4**

One-day Nature Outing option: Urban Nature hike

### **October 10**

Readings:

- View "[Flight from Embodiment](#)" (4 min.) and "An Encounter at the Edge" (6 min.)

### **October 10-12**

Weekend Camping Trip option: Portola Redwoods State Park

### **October 17**

Readings:

- "[Can't Get Away From It All? The Problem Isn't Technology — It's You.](#)" Matt Honan, *Wired Magazine*

- "Thought Trap 6: Humans Have Lost the Connection to Nature," in EcoMind: Changing the Way We Think, to Create the World We Want, Francis Moore Lappé (2013)

## **October 24**

Readings:

- *Becoming Animal* (Abram)

## **Descriptions of Outings**

### **Mt. Tam "Mountain to the Sea" Hike (Sept. 6)**

This involves a commitment of 8-10 hours to include transportation time. We encourage you to use public transportation! Or coordinate a ride with classmates. This outing will involve a one-way hike of about 6 miles, mostly downhill. We'll begin along Panoramic Highway just below the summit of Mt. Tam. The hike will take us through forest to the Pantoll Ranger Station and then onto open hillsides as we complete the hike down into Stinson Beach. Depending on the speed of the hiking, we may be able to spend time on the beach before taking the West Marin Stagecoach bus back up the mountain to our starting point. We will return to campus at around 4pm. Bring comfortable shoes for walking and at least one liter of water. Bring a jacket for wind and/or rain. If the forecast looks cold, you may also want to bring an additional layer. Bring a light lunch or snack. We'll make a trailside stop to eat. You'll also have a chance to buy something to eat in Stinson Beach. Lastly, bring a backpack to carry all of the above, as well as your notebook.

### **Bird Language Workshop with Weaving Earth, Penngrove (Sept. 21), 9-4:30pm**

We have a unique opportunity to participate in a Bird Language workshop, a program offered by Weaving Earth at their site in Penngrove. "Bird Language is an ancient skill that people have used to help them survive and thrive for thousands of years. It is a skill which has been largely forgotten by modern peoples, but which is sorely needed at this time of cultural change and nature's shifting patterns." During this event, you will join a group of mentors and learners led by Lauren & Dave Hage, founders of Weaving Earth. We will self-organize transportation to the site (TBD). Bring lunch, notebook and layers for cool weather. See <http://www.weavingearth.com/programs/bird-language/>

### **Modes of Nature in Point Reyes Station (September 27), 9-4:30pm**

We will spend the day experiencing the nature of Point Reyes, and in conversation with a variety of people who connect with the land and nature in distinct and varied ways.

Bring comfortable shoes for walking and at least one liter of water. Bring a jacket for wind and/or rain. If the forecast looks cold, you may also want to bring an additional layer. Lastly, bring a backpack to carry all of the above, as well as your notebook. Logistic details to be provided.

## Urban Nature Immersion Hike

**(Self guided, to be completed solo whenever convenient)**

This hike is designed to move you back and forth between San Francisco's densely populated urban areas and one of its best-known urban parks. Making the transitions from residential and commercial streets to developed park areas or isolated trails should give you ample opportunity to reflect on the how the "quality" of nature affects your nature immersion experience.

You may begin from any point on the route mapped [here](#). You may also want to print or save to a device this official [Presidio Trail Map](#). The following description is based on a start from USF:

Climb over LoMo and through Loyola Village to Anza. Find your way however you like from Anza to the Presidio Wall Entrance to the Presidio at W. Pacific and Spruce (I'd recommend a left on Anza to Cook; cross Geary on Cook and then when Cook hits Euclid cross and jog left to Heather; jog left again when Heather hits Mayfair to get onto Spruce; follow Spruce to W. Pacific where you'll enter the park).

From the Presidio Wall Entrance, go right and then pass directly through Julius Kahn Playground (stopping to get dizzy on the little spinning thingies if you like). Just beyond the playground, look for Mountain Lake Trail and take it to your left. Turn right when you hit Ecology Trail, which you'll take up to the Inspiration Point Overlook. Next cross Washington Blvd and head for the Andy Goldsworthy Tree Spire sculpture. At this point you are 2 miles from the start.

From the Tree Spire, head away from the Presidio Golf Course Clubhouse on the Bay Area Ridge Trail. The trail drops you back on Washington in about a third of a mile. Turn left on Washington and take the first right onto Neuman Rd. At the end of Nauman, after it wraps around to your left, you'll see the continuation of the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Continue across Park Blvd., staying on the Bay Area Ridge Trail until you hit Washington again (the linked map above does not pass through the Rob Hill Campground as does the official Presidio map of the Bay Area Ridge Trail; if you wind up on Washington at the campground, you'll need to turn left for a couple hundred feet before picking up the trail dropping you down to Lincoln). Cross Washington and continue on the trail down to Lincoln. Cross Lincoln and take the trail down to Baker Beach.

Walk south past Battery Chamberlain almost to the end of Baker Beach and take the trail towards the parking lot. Either walk along Gibson Rd. and go right on Bowley to Lincoln, or find the trail opposite the parking lot that will take you to Lincoln directly across from your next reference point.

When you cross Lincoln, before entering the parking lot ahead of you, the start of the Lobos Creek Valley Trail will be on your right. Take this trail, which climbs up to Battery Caulfield Rd. Look back for a nice view, then head uphill for just a couple hundred feet on Battery Caulfield. Look for the Mountain Lake Trail on your right. Take the Mountain Lake trail all the way 5th (or all the way to the Arguello Gate if you want to do some more climbing). If you exit the park at 5th, then take 5th to Anza. At Anza and Arguello,

you can cut through the park and playground for one last urban nature experience. Exit the park on Edward, which wraps around to the right and becomes Willard. Then turn left on Turk, right on Stanyan, and left on Golden Gate to return to the start. Total distance: 8 miles.

## **Weekend Camping Trip: Portola Redwoods State Park Outing (October 17-19)**

**Meeting time:** 3pm

**Location:** Golden Gate Ave., in front of Harney

**Transportation:** USF suburbans. If you need to drive yourself because you can't make the meeting time or need to return earlier than 2pm on Sunday, please let me know ASAP.

**Destination:** Portola Redwoods State Park ([PDF park brochure](#))

**Directions:** ([PDF Google maps directions](#))

19th Ave/CA-1 South to I-280  
Exit Sand Hill Rd westbound  
Continue straight in where Sand Hill Rd. becomes Portola Rd.  
Veer right onto Old La Honda Rd.  
Turn left on Skyline Dr. (CA-35)  
Turn right onto Alpine Rd.  
Continue Straight onto Portola State Park Rd.

**Campground:** ([PDF of campground info](#))

We have two sites reserved. We will use a combination of one 4-person tent and multiple 2-person tents. The campground has bathrooms and coin-operated showers and each campsite has a fire ring.

**Meals:** You will work with your assigned partner(s) to plan and prepare your assigned meal. Keep receipts for anything you buy so I can reimburse you.

Lunch on Saturday will be prepared individually from a range of options that will be provided.

### **Schedule:**

We should arrive at the campground Friday around 5pm. Since we'll have limited sunlight, the focus will be on setting up camp and preparing dinner.

Saturday morning breakfast should be ready at 8am so that those wanting to go on the optional hike to Peters Creek Grove (see [Saturday Optional Hike Description](#)) can be ready to leave by 9am. Those not hiking will be on their own for the day. You might want

to explore the creeks and Tip Toe waterfall, or simply sit and observe. We will reconvene at 4:30pm for a group check-in.

Saturday dinner will be served at 6pm, followed by a campfire.

Sunday breakfast will be served at 9am, followed by a final group exercise and check-in at 10am. We will begin breaking down camp by 11:30am and aim to depart for USF by 12:30pm. Lunch on Sunday will either be snacking on leftover food on the drive home, or if there is a consensus, we can take the scenic coastal drive back and stop for lunch in Half Moon Bay.

**What to bring:**

Sleeping bag and pad

Pillow

Toiletries

Towel

Flashlight

Bowl/dish and utensils

Coffee cup/travel mug

Water bottle

Notebooks/journals

Comfortable (and, ideally, sturdy, walking shoes)

Long pants

One short- and one long-sleeve shirt

Fleece sweater or other type of warm layer

Rain jacket or other type of outer layer

Sun hat

Cold weather hat

Sunscreen

Mosquito repellent

A small amount of money in case we stop for lunch on the way back

**What will be provided:**

Tents

Two-burner cookstove

Pots and pans and other cooking supplies (cutting board, knives, serving utensils)

Coffee and tea

**Rules and Expectations:**

No alcohol or drugs

No rock climbing

If you plan to go exploring, take a partner and notify me

Quiet hours: 10pm to 6am

Be respectful