

Nature Immersion

ENVA 285

Meeting Dates: Feb. 11, March 25, April 8, April 29-30

Instructor: Prof. Steve Zavestoski
Office Hrs: K Hall 117; MW 2:15-3:45pm
Email: smzavestoski@usfca.edu
Phone: (510) 375-9523

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
- articulate the place of the other-than-human world in sense of self

Assessment

Nature Immersion Exercises (20%): Four exercises (5% each) will require you to spend time in a natural setting observing and reflecting. Detailed exercise descriptions are on Canvas.

Field Journal (60%): For this course you will keep a field journal that should, ideally, be bound and not spiral. You will document in the field journal your experiences in course exercises, reactions to readings, observations during meetings, and reflections during and on outings.

Field journals 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.

Broadly speaking, field journals will be evaluated for evidence that you have attempted to work towards the course's learning objectives.

Finally, you should also include some "meta" reflection—that is, reflection on the observations and reflections that you put down throughout the semester. Going back and reading over what you wrote, what are your thoughts? Review your field journal carefully and provide a final reflection before turning the journal in at the end of the semester.

In particular, you might want to address some of the big questions we will grapple with. These include the question of what is nature, and whether a certain quality of nature is required for the type of nature immersion necessary to nurture a human connection with the natural world. Of course, you may feel that there has never been a loss of human connection to the natural world. If so, then reflect on whether nature immersion experiences are needed. If not, why not? If so, what should these experiences look like (e.g., solo or in groups? structured with activities and exercises or unstructured? in what types of environments? for how long?)? The course may not have led you to answers to any of these questions. That's OK. If the course raised more questions than it answered, then explain the questions that arose for you.

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. Attendance is mandatory so is not a part of your contributions to the learning community. Instead, this component of the grade is about the seriousness with which you undertake the type of listening described in the reading “Listening,” your work towards maintaining the learning community as a safe place for sharing feelings, the respect you show others in the community, and your openness to the alternative approaches to learning that we will explore. You are also expected to come prepared for each meeting. 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.

Grading

Each assignment will be assigned a grade on a 100-point scale according to criteria laid out for each assignment. Point totals will be weighted as indicated above and summed for a Final Grade calculated on the following scale: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (88-89); B (83-87); B- (80-82); C+ (78-79); C (73-77); C- (70-72); D (60-69); F (< 60).

Other Policies

Absences

This class meets four times. An absence would mean you missed about 20-25% of the semester. Absences due to extraordinary circumstances may be able to be made up.

Late assignments

Except in cases of documented illness or family emergency, you may not turn work in late. You accept a 0 for that assignment.

Makeups/Extra Credit

The assigned work in this course is relatively light in terms of the number of hours to complete it. Focus on organizing your time so that you allow yourself sufficient time to do your best work on each assignment. Poor performance on an assignment is usually due to lack of preparation and dedication. Allowing makeups would be like rewarding lack of preparation and dedication.

Required Texts/Materials

- A “Field Journal” (a standard bound composition notebook, either lined or unlined)
- All assigned readings are either hyperlinked below or available on Canvas

Meeting Schedule

FIRST MEETING–Nature Immersion: Modes of Learning and Modes of Knowing

Date/Time/Location: Sat., Feb 11, 9am, USF Garden

TO PREPARE FOR FIRST MEETING:

- Complete the readings below in the order listed
- Get a blank (lined or unlined, your choice) durable field journal
- Record any thoughts or responses to the readings in the journal
- Bring the journal to our meeting
- Identify a small object that has special meaning to you and bring it to the meeting
- Watch [“Self Discovery–Anake Outdoor School Curriculum”](#)

WHAT TO BRING FOR FIRST MEETING:

- Journal (see above)
- Meaningful object (see above)
- Lunch, snacks and water
- Comfortable walking shoes (on your feet)
- Layers (it will be sunny but temps will be cool 50-58°)
- Hat, sunglass, sunscreen (if you are sensitive to the sun)

READINGS FOR FIRST MEETING:

- “What if Teaching Went Wild?” Anthony Weston, *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 9, Spring 2004
- “The Way of Wilderness,” Steven Harper, in *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (1995): 183-200.
- “Listening,” Bill Pfeiffer, Chapter 6 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*. Moon Books

OUTLINE OF FIRST MEETING:

- Introductions (USF Garden)
- Nature Exercise (Golden Gate Park)
- Talking Circle (Golden Gate Park)
- Lunch (Golden Gate Park)
- Nature Exercise (Golden Gate Park)
- Talking Circle (Golden Gate Park)
- Discussion (USF Garden)
- Preparation for Second Meeting (USF Garden)

SECOND MEETING—Being in/with Nature: Modes of Feeling/Modes of Knowing

Date/Time/Location: Sat., March 25, 9am, USF Garden

TO PREPARE FOR SECOND MEETING:

- Complete the readings below in the order listed
- Record Exercise 1 in your journal and turn your journal in sometime before 3pm on Feb 24
- Record Exercise 2 in your journal and turn your journal in sometime before 3pm on March 10
- Record Exercise 3 in your journal and be prepared to share your experience with the exercise at our second meeting on March 25

WHAT TO BRING FOR SECOND MEETING:

- Student ID/Muni pass
- Journal
- Lunch, snacks and water
- Comfortable walking shoes (on your feet)
- Layers
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen (if you are sensitive to the sun)

READINGS FOR SECOND MEETING:

- “Nature Immersion and Connection,” Bill Pfeiffer, Chapter 8 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*. Moon Books

- “Feeling and Healing,” Bill Pfeiffer, Chapter 7 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*. Moon Books
- “The Elm Stand,” Chapter 6 in *Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order* by Thomas Princen
- "Recovery from Western Civilization," Chellis Glendinning
- ["Is Our Disconnect From Nature a Disorder?"](#) Michael Todd
- ["No More Nature Deficit Disorder,"](#) Richard Louv

OUTLINE OF SECOND MEETING:

- Travel to Mt. Tam (USF Garden)
- Start “mountain to the sea” hike (Mt. Tam)
- Solo Nature Walking exercise (Mt. Tam)
- Lunch (Mt. Tam)
- Talking Circle (Stinson Beach)
- Return to campus

THIRD MEETING–Nature Language and Human/Nature Stories

Date/Time/Location: Sat., April 8, 9am, USF Garden

TO PREPARE FOR THIRD MEETING:

- Complete the readings below in the order listed
- Listen to episode 10 of HumaNature podcast: [The Moon and the Possum](#) and watch the interview with storyteller Paul Taylor on the podcast page (or [here](#)).
- View ["Flight from Embodiment"](#) (4 min.) and ["An Encounter at the Edge"](#) (6 min.)
- Prepare to discuss first two-weeks of your sit spot practice (see “Solo Time” exercise)

WHAT TO BRING FOR THIRD MEETING:

- Student ID/Muni pass
- Journal
- Lunch, snacks and water
- Comfortable walking shoes (on your feet)

- Layers
- Hat, sunglass, sunscreen (if you are sensitive to the sun)

READINGS FOR THIRD MEETING:

- “The Power of Story,” Chapter 9 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- "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.
- “On being human in a more-than-human world,” David Abram
- “Storytelling and Wonder: On the Rejuvenation of Oral Culture,” David Abram

OUTLINE OF THIRD MEETING (further details forthcoming):

- Travel to Mt. Diablo or other location TBD (USF Garden)
- Discussion
- Start hike
- Storytelling
- Lunch
- Talking Circle
- Return to campus

FINAL MEETING–Crossing Boundaries/Coming Home

Date/Time/Location: Sat., April 29, 8am, USF Garden (returning April 30, 6pm)

TO PREPARE FOR FINAL MEETING:

- Complete the readings below in the order listed
- Review thoroughly the document “Portola Redwoods Overnight” in Files

WHAT TO BRING FOR FINAL MEETING:

(see “Portola Redwoods Overnight” in Files)

READINGS FOR FINAL MEETING:

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

- “Crossing the Wilderness Boundary” by Robert Greenway
- “Ecofeminism and the Longing for Home,” Karen J. Warren, *Longing for Home*, Ed. Leroy Rouner, 1996
- “Vision and Manifestation,” Chapter 17 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*
- “Final Thoughts,” Chapter 18 in *Wild Earth, Wild Soul*

OUTLINE OF FINAL MEETING

(see “Portola Redwoods Overnight” in Files)

University Policies

Academic Integrity

As a Jesuit institution committed to *cura personalis*—the care and education of the whole person—USF has an obligation to embody and foster the values of honesty and integrity. USF upholds the standards of honesty and integrity from all members of the academic community. All students are expected to know and adhere to the University's Honor Code. You can find the full text of the code online at <http://myusf.usfca.edu/academic-integrity/>. The policy covers:

- Plagiarism — intentionally or unintentionally representing the words or ideas of another person as your own; failure to properly cite references; manufacturing references.
- Working with another person when independent work is required.
- Submission of the same paper in more than one course without the specific permission of each instructor.
- Submitting a paper written by another person or obtained from the internet.
- The penalties for violation of the policy may include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade in the course, and/or a referral to the Academic Integrity Committee.

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: <http://www.usfca.edu/sds> or call (415) 422-2613.

Behavioral Expectations

All students are expected to behave in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and other University policies (see <http://www.usfca.edu/fogcutter/>). Open discussion and disagreement is encouraged when done respectfully and in the spirit of academic discourse. There are also a variety of behaviors that, while not against a specific University policy, may create disruption in this course. Students whose behavior is disruptive or who fail to comply with the instructor may be dismissed from the class for the remainder of the class period and may need to meet with the instructor or Dean prior to returning to the next class period. If necessary, referrals may also be made to the Student Conduct process for violations of the Student Conduct Code.

Learning & Writing Center

The Learning & Writing Center provides assistance to all USF students in pursuit of academic success. Peer tutors provide regular review and practice of course materials in the subjects of Math, Science, Business, Economics, Nursing and Languages. Other content areas can be made available by student request. To schedule an appointment, log on to TutorTrac at <https://tutortrac.usfca.edu>. Students may also take advantage of writing support provided by Rhetoric and Language Department instructors and academic study skills support provided by Learning Center professional staff. For more information about these services contact the Learning & Writing Center at (415) 422-6713, email: lwc@usfca.edu or stop by our office in Cowell 215. Information can also be found on our website at www.usfca.edu/lwc.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Our diverse staff offers brief individual, couple, and group counseling to student members of our community. CAPS services are confidential and free of charge. Call 415-422-6352 for an initial consultation appointment. Having a crisis at 3 AM? We are still here for you. Telephone consultation through CAPS After Hours is available between the hours of 5:00 PM to 8:30 AM; call the above number and press 2.

Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, and Sexual Assault

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related

to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on USFs campus with the University. Here are other resources:

To report any sexual misconduct, students may visit Anna Bartkowski (UC 5th floor) or see many other options by visiting our website: www.usfca.edu/studentlife/safer

- Students may speak to someone confidentially, or report a sexual assault confidentially by contacting Counseling and Psychological Services at 415-422-6352.
- To find out more about reporting a sexual assault at USF, visit USFs Callisto website at: www.usfca.callistocampus.org.
- For an off-campus resource, contact San Francisco Women Against Rape (SFWAR) (415) 647-7273 (www.sfwar.org).

Student Accounts - Last day to withdraw with tuition reversal

Students who wish to have the tuition charges reversed on their student account should withdraw from the course(s) by the end of the business day on the last day to withdraw with tuition credit (census date) for the applicable course(s) in which the student is enrolled. Please note that the last day to withdraw with tuition credit may vary by course. The last day to withdraw with tuition credit (census date) listed in the Academic Calendar is applicable only to courses which meet for the standard 15-week semester. To find what the last day to withdraw with tuition credit is for a specific course, please visit the Online Class Schedule at www.usfca.edu/schedules.

Financial Aid - FAFSA priority filing deadline (undergraduates only)

March 2 - Priority filing deadline for FAFSA (The Free Application for Federal Student Aid - <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>) for continuing undergraduates.