

Instructor: Dr. Peter Kahn
Psychology 503
Winter 2004
Office: 210D Chemistry Library
Office Phone: (206) 616-9395
Office Hours: Monday 2:00-3:00 pm and by appointment
Research Lab: Roosevelt Commons Building B
4311 - 11th Ave NE, Suite 400
See website for directions and map to lab: <http://faculty.washington.edu/pkahn/>
Email: pkahn@u.washington.edu

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY **AND THE HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE**

Course Description

For much of human evolution, the natural world constituted one of the most important contexts children encountered during their critical years of maturation. It would not be too bold to assert that experience of nature has been and may possibly remain a critical component in human physical, emotional, intellectual, and even moral development. Despite this possibility, our scientific knowledge of the impact and significance of nature during varying stages of childhood is remarkably sparse. For example, we remain largely uninformed about the following questions:

- Do young children form deep connections with the natural world, or is that idea actually a myth?
- What are the evolutionary origins of children's relationships with nature?
- Are people's environmental values and reasoning mentally organized (structured), and do such structures develop such that our societal discourse on environmental issues has its genesis in childhood?
- What is the place of wildness and wilderness in the human psyche?
- Do animals provide a means by which children come to care about non-sentient nature? Or about other humans?
- How does culture affect environmental commitments and sensibilities?
- Are there universal features in children's relationship with nature?
- Does it matter that many children today encounter substantially fewer opportunities for direct experience with healthy natural systems?
- What is the significance of increasing the human exposure to nature through technologically mediated interactions – as occurs with televisions, computers, plasma displays, robotic pets, “telegardens,” and computer simulations?

Even partial answers to these questions could have enormous significance in areas such as child rearing, education, land use planning, and the design of the natural and human built environment.

In short, our goal is to gain depth in developmental theory, and to use it to investigate the ontogenesis of the human relationship with nature.

Required Texts

1. Kahn, P. H., Jr. (1999). *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
2. Kahn, P. H., Jr., & Kellert, S. R. (2002). (Eds.) *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
3. *Course Reader*. The reader is on e-reserve at the UW library.

Grading

- 10% Class participation
- 20% Presentation and discussion leader of an article
- 70% Short weekly papers

Section 1 – Conceptual Investigations of the Human Relationship with Nature.

At the start of this course, we broach two questions: Why care about nature? And, What does environmental philosophy (and common sense) have to say about our relationship with nature? Our readings begin with two selections from analytic environmental philosophy. Kohak then moves us from argument to metaphor as we read personal narratives of nature experience. Leopold bridges narrative with an environmental ethic. And Wilson grounds environmental ethics on evolutionary biology.

Baxter, W. F. (1986). People or penguins. In D. VanDeVeer and C. Pierce (Eds.), *People, penguins, and plastic trees* (pp. 214-218). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Original work published 1974)

Regan, T. (1986). The case for animal rights. In D. VanDeVeer and C. Pierce (Eds.), *People, penguins, and plastic trees* (pp. 32-39). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Original work published 1985)

Kohak, E. (1984). *The embers and the stars: A philosophical inquiry into the moral sense of nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (pp. ix-xiii)

Dean, B. (1992). Hunting a Christmas tree. *Orion*, 11(1), 9-15.

Somé, M. P. (1995). *Of water and the spirit: Ritual, magic, and initiation in the life of an African Shaman*. New York, NY: Penguin. (pp. 1-13; 232-248)

Turner, J. (1996). *The abstract wild*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press. (pp. 19-37; 107-125)

Muir, J. (1976). The philosophy of John Muir. In E. W. Teale (Ed.), *The wilderness world of John Muir* (pp. 311-323). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Leopold, A. (1970). *A sand country almanac*. New York: Ballantine Books. (pp. 237-264)

Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (pp. 1-37; 119-140)

Kahn, P. H., Jr. (1999). *The human relationship with nature: Development and culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Introduction; Chapters 1 & 2)

Further Readings

Regan, T. (1983). *The case for animal rights*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Callicott, J. B. (1985). Intrinsic value, quantum theory, and environmental ethics. *Environmental Ethics*, 7, 257-275.

Stone, C. D. (1986). Should trees have standing? - Toward legal rights for natural objects. In D. VanDeVeer and C. Pierce (Eds.), *People, penguins, and plastic trees* (pp. 83-96). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Original work published 1974)

Meadows, D. H. (1991). *The global citizen*. Washington DC: Island Press.

Rolston, H., III. (1989). *Philosophy gone wild*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

Turner (1996). *The abstract wild*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press.

Dawkins, R. (1976). *The selfish gene*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, E. O. (1998). *Consilience*. New York: Knopf

Section 2 – Children and Nature: The Structural-Developmental Approach. How are children's understandings and values of nature structured (mentally organized) and how do such structures develop? Are there universal features in children's environmental moral reasoning? Toward answering such questions, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Turiel get us versed in structural-developmental theory, and how it has been used to study children's cognitive, social, and moral development. Then we examine my own research which has drawn on structural-development theory to examine the ontogenesis of the human relationship with nature.

Piaget, J. (1960). *The child's conception of the world*. New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1960. (Original work published 1929) (pp. 1-32.)

Kohlberg, L. (1969). Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In D. A. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of socialization theory and research* (pp. 347-480). New York: Rand McNally.

Turiel, E. (1983). *The development of social knowledge: Morality and convention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pp. 52-68; 82-91)

Kahn, P. H., Jr. (1999). *The human relationship with nature: Development and culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Chapters 3 & 4; Appendix A And B)

Transcripts of two interviews with children. From Kahn, P. H., Jr., & Friedman, B., in collaboration with G. Mundine, Principal, Blackshear Elementary School (1991-1992). *Environmental science and values education for low-performing students in a black community*. Funded by the Texas Education Agency.

Kahn, P. H., Jr. (1999). *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Chapters 5 & 9)

Kahn, P. H., Jr. (1999). *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Chapters 11 & 12)

Further Reading

Tanner, T. (1979). Formative influences in the lives of citizen conservationists. In A. B. Sacks & C. B. Davis (Eds.), *Current issues V: The Yearbook of Environmental Education and Environmental Studies*. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education.

Tanner, T. (1998). On the origins of SLE research, questions outstanding, and other research traditions. *Environmental Education Research, 4*, 419-423.

Chawla, L. (1998). Research methods to investigate significant life experiences: Review and recommendations. *Environmental Education Research, 4*, 383-397.

Chawla, L. (1999). Life paths into effective environmental action. *The Journal of Environmental Education, 31*(1), 15-26.

Nevers, P., Gebhard, U., & Billmann-Mahecha, E. (1997). Patterns of reasoning exhibited by children and adolescents in response to moral dilemmas involving plants, animals, and ecosystems. *Journal of Moral Education, 26*, 169-186.

Kellert, S. R. (1997). *Kinship to mastery: biophilia in human evolution and development*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Myers, G. (1998). *Children and animals: Social development and our connections to other species*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Section 3 – Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations

In the final section, we examine other theoretical, conceptual, and empirical investigations of children and nature. Our readings draw on cognitive science, developmental psychology, ecology, education, environmental studies, evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, political science,

primatology, psychiatry, and social psychology. In turn, these readings are organized around three broad perspectives: biological, psychological, and sociocultural.

Verbeek, P., & de Waal, F. B. M. (2002). *The primate relationship with nature*.

Heerwagen, J. H., & Orians, G. H. (2002). *The ecological world of children*.

Coley, J. D., & Solomon, G. E. A. (2002). *The development of folkbiology: a cognitive science perspective on children's understanding of the biological world*.

Kellert, S. R. (2002). *Experiencing nature in middle childhood and adolescent development*.

Myers, G., & Saunders, C. D. (2002). *Animals as links toward developing caring relationships with the natural world*.

Chawla, L. (2002). *Spots of time: Multiple ways of being in nature in childhood*.

Katcher, A. (2002). *Animals in therapeutic education: Guides into the liminal state*.

Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (2002). *Adolescents and the natural environment: a time out?*

Thomashow, C. (2002). *Adolescents and ecological identity: Attending to wild nature*.

Orr, D. (2002). *Political economy and the ecology of childhood*.

Pyle, R. (2002). *Eden in a vacant lot: special places, species, and kids in the neighborhood of life*.

Further Reading

Aureli, F., and de Waal, F. B. M. (Eds.) (2000). *Natural conflict resolution*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Nabhan, G. P., & Trimble, S. (1994). *The geography of childhood: Why children need wild places*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Shepard, P. (1996). *The others: How animals made us human*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Ulrich, R. S. (1993). Biophilia, biophobia, and natural landscapes. In S. R. Kellert & E. O. Wilson (Eds.), *The Biophilia hypothesis* (pp. 73-137). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Nelson, R. (1993). Searching for the lost arrow: Physical and spiritual ecology in the hunter's world. In S. R. Kellert & E. O. Wilson (Eds.), *The Biophilia hypothesis* (pp. 201-228). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Diamond, J. (1993). New Guineans and their natural World. In S. R. Kellert & E. O. Wilson (Eds.), *The Biophilia hypothesis* (pp. 251-271). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Beck, A., & Katcher, A. (1996). *Between pets and people*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Kellert, S. R. (1996). *The value of life*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Medin, D. L., & Atran, S. (Ed.) (1999). *Folkbiology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.