

PSY 490 (Topics): ECOPSYCHOLOGY

Spring, 2006 • Wednesdays, 5:45-9:00 p.m. • LL21 JRC

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Course Description

Theodore Roszak (1992) said, "Psychology needs ecology and ecology needs psychology." The field of psychology cannot continue to ignore the ecological context of human life, and environmentalists need psychologists to help them understand human behavior -- the root cause of all environmental problems. This course explores the emerging discipline of "eco-psychology." Topics include the psychological implications of the human disconnect from nature, therapeutic approaches toward healing that disconnect, and methods and benefits of staying connected in a contemporary urban context.

Instructor's Goals for Students

This course is designed as an introductory immersion into the field of ecopsychology. Topics and readings will give students a sampling of primary contributors within the field of psychology, as well as those outside the discipline whose ideas have served as inspiration to ecopsychologists. By the end of the term, students will understand:

- what ecopsychology is and where it fits in the larger discipline of psychology.
- why ecopsychologists see a link between our contemporary urban-industrial lifestyles and psychological distress and disorders.
- the techniques and ethical issues involved in eco-therapy as it is currently applied.
- the challenges faced by researchers studying eco-psychological concepts using traditional empirical methods.
- why ecopsychology has been distinct from mainstream psychological work on environmental problems, and how the "greening" of mainstream psychology is beginning.

These goals will be met through a variety of learning techniques including lecture, discussion, small-group activities, and an off-campus experiential week at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center.

Required Readings

Roszak, T., Gomes, M. E., & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.) (1995). *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 1-20). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. [SELECTED CHAPTERS]

Additional readings as listed in the Class Schedule.

Assignments, and Grading

Participation & Questions for Discussion (20% of grade)

You are expected to attend class and to participate in the group discussion and activities. We will be engaging in active learning that will be successful only if every student is responsible about attending class and being prepared. For each *on-campus* class you will write two discussion questions based on the assigned reading. These questions should not be merely factual; they should reflect deeper thinking about concepts or issues in the reading. I will be looking for evidence that you have read and *thought about* the assigned material. One way to approach each reading is to ask yourself why I am having you read it. What are the main themes and how does this reading fit into the structure of the class?

Eco-Autobiography & Biophilia (15% of grade)- **due in class February 22**

What was your relationship with nature when you were a child? Do you recall favorite books, play settings, or activities that might tell you about your biophilic/biophobic attitudes? How did you feel about animals? Based on these memories of childhood and your critical thinking as an adult, what do *you* think about the biophilia hypothesis? Do you think it is a good foundational concept for ecopsychology? What are your thoughts on biophobia? Tell me in 5-6 typed pages, using material from the assigned reading, class discussion, and your personal experiences to support your perspective.

Applied Ecopsychology Journal (30% of grade)- **due in class March 29**

During the midterm break, we will be traveling to Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in northern Minnesota where we will be doing a variety of experiential activities designed to enhance your understanding of ecopsychological topics. *For each of the five topics we cover* you will write a journal entry reflecting upon your experience of the activities and tying your reflections to the assigned readings and overall course themes. Your journals will be evaluated in terms of depth of reflection and integration of the experiences with course content.

Mall of America Observation (15% of grade) - **due in class April 19**

For this assignment you will spend two hours at the Mall of America in Bloomington, MN. Your task is to assume the role of an *environmental psychologist* and observe the setting and the behavior of people in that setting. You will be amazed at what you notice when you adopt a critical observer's perspective on the Mall! Tell me about your observations in 4-5 pages. Be sure to make explicit and specific links to course themes, readings, and discussion-- especially content on restorative environments and material consumption.

Final Paper: An Empirical Approach to Ecopsychology (20% of grade) - **due May 17, Finals Week**

A primary criticism of ecopsychology—and the main reason why it is often rejected by mainstream psychologists—is that very few of the theoretical constructs (e.g., biophilia, sense of place, the ecologically-connected sense of self) have been subject to empirical scrutiny. For this 6-8 page paper, you will select a theoretical concept from the course, describe your understanding of it, describe *specifically* how you would operationally define it, and explain how you would employ this operational definition to empirically test its hypothesized role in psychological well-being. (Be sure to consider issues of diversity discussed in class.) Address the limits you see in your operational definition, if any. Additionally, I would like you to comment on your reaction to the empirical approach to ecopsychology: do you think it is worthwhile, or not? necessary, or not? practical, or not? Support your opinions.

Assignments and exams will be evaluated according to the following standards:

- A = **Outstanding work.** Student demonstrates depth of thinking that goes beyond mastery of the material; writing is excellent, with no spelling errors or grammatical mistakes.
- B = **Very Good work.** Student has fulfilled the requirements of the assignment and demonstrates above average mastery of the material; writing quality is above average.
- C = **Satisfactory.** Student has fulfilled the requirements of the assignment; writing quality is average.
- D = **Less than Satisfactory.** Work falls short of requirements for the assignment and/or writing quality is poor.
- F = **Unacceptable.**

Scores will be assigned to papers according to the scale below:

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	59 and below
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A- 90-92

B 83-86
B- 80-82

C 73-76
C- 70-72

D 63-66
D- 60-62

CLASS SCHEDULE

PART 1: ECOPSYCHOLOGY: THEORIZING THE HUMAN CONNECTION WITH NATURE

FEB 1 ORIENTATION TO THE COURSE

Film: *Ecopsychology*

FEB 8 THE EMERGENCE OF ECOPSYCHOLOGY

Roszak, T. (1995). Where Psyche meets Gaia. In T. Roszak, M. E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 1-20). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Fisher, A. (2002). The project of ecopsychology. In *Radical ecopsychology: Psychology in the service of life* (pp. 3-27). New York: State University of New York.

FEB 15 EXPERIENTIAL KNOWING

James, William (1899/2001). On a certain blindness in human beings. In *Talks to teachers on psychology and to students on some of life's ideals*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. [available at <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/jcertain.html>]

Sabini, M. (2002, Ed.). Consciousness slipped from its natural foundation. In *The earth has a soul: The nature writings of C. G. Jung* (pp. 67-76). Berkley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Fisher, A. (2002). Beginning with experience. In *Radical ecopsychology: Psychology in the service of life* (51-89). New York: State University of New York.

FEB 22 THE BIOPHILIA HYPOTHESIS: EVOLUTIONARY & DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

Kellert, S. R. (1997). The notion of biophilia. In *Kinship to mastery: Biophilia in human evolution and development* (pp. 1-10). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Kahn, P. H., Jr. (1997). Developmental psychology and the biophilia hypothesis: Children's affiliation with nature. *Developmental Review*, 17, 1-61. [PDF AVAILABLE]

MAR 1 NATURE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

Louv, R. (2005). "Why the young (and the rest of us) need nature." In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-deficit Disorder* (pp. 39-114). Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books.

Melson, G. (2003). Child development and the human-companion animal bond. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(1), 31-39. [PDF AVAILABLE]

MAR 8 THE HUMAN-NATURE DISCONNECT as PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

Metzner, R. (1995). The psychopathology of the human-nature relationship. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 55-67). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Gullone, E. (2000). The biophilia hypothesis and life in the 21st century: Increasing mental health or increasing pathology? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1, 293-321. [PDF AVAILABLE]

MAR 15 TRIP ORIENTATION: Overview, logistics, gear check, expectations, etc.
FILM: *Koyaanisqatsi*

PART 2: APPLIED ECOPSYCHOLOGY: HEALING THE DISCONNECT

----- IMBEDDED EDUCATIONAL EXPEDITION (8 days during spring break) -----

The imbedded experience will take place at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in Finland, MN. Wolf Ridge offers classrooms, 2000 acres of boreal, mixed hardwood, and maple forests, wetlands, two lakes, and two rivers as a field campus, two Ojibwe campsites with firepits, a high ropes course, indoor rock climbing, dormitory housing, dining hall meals, and naturalist staff. This location will allow us to experientially explore several topics central to ecopsychology: Class topics, associated activities, the learning goals for the activities, and assigned readings are explained below. Campfire Circles and Evening Discussions are times for group reflection on activities. Time unaccounted for in this schedule will be time for students to attend meals in the dining hall, do assigned readings, write journals, and take advantage of the recreational opportunities at Wolf Ridge.

MON MAR 20 WILDERNESS THERAPY

Assigned Readings:

Harper, S. (1995). The Way of Wilderness. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 183-200). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Powch, I. (1994). Wilderness therapy: What makes it empowering for women? *Women & Therapy*, 15, 11-27.

Krakauer, J. (1995). Loving them to death. *Outside Magazine*.

Schedule:

8:00 a.m.	Depart from UST
11:00	Arrive Two Harbors, Lunch at restaurant
12:30-1:30	Visit to Soltreks (wilderness therapy provider)- <i>pending</i> 2643 Hwy 3, Two Harbors, MN
3:00ish	Arrive Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center Check-in & Orientation Tour by WR Staff
5:00	Dinner
7:30-9:00	Spring Equinox Campfire Circle- Ojibwe site

Learning Goals:

Students will be reading about the theory and practice of wilderness therapy, which is outside of the mainstream therapeutic approaches in psychology (and is sometimes practiced by non-psychologists). Our visit to Soltreks will give them the opportunity to interact with staff who provide wilderness therapy and ask questions regarding techniques, ethical issues, and effectiveness for diverse clientele.

TUE MAR 21 RECONNECTING I: PERCEIVING A SENSE OF PLACE

Assigned Readings:

Sewall, L. (1995) The skill of ecological perception. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 201-215). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Schedule:

7:30	Breakfast
8:30-11:30	Naturalist-Guided Hike/Snowshoe
12:00	Lunch
1:30-2:45	Perception Exercises
3:00-4:15	Tracking Skills
5:00	Dinner
6:30-8:00	After Dinner Film: <i>Grizzly Man</i> (104 min.) Discussion about Sense of Place

Learning Goals:

A fundamental goal of ecopsychological therapy is to help clients reconnect with the rest of the natural world. The idea of reconnection assumes a prior connection—which, in contemporary urban, living may be more of a soul-connection than a practical connection. Because we have the privilege of living without awareness of the natural context (relying on others for food, shelter, and other things), most of us grow up relatively oblivious to the natural world around us. A first step in reconnecting is to awaken the senses and practice exercises in perception that help us to notice and know the bioregion in which we find ourselves. This day will be devoted to opening students' eyes (and ears, etc.) to the upper Midwest bioregion in which we live.

WED MAR 22 RECONNECTING II: WILDERNESS AS HOME

Assigned Readings:

Greenway, R. (1992). The wilderness effect and ecopsychology. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 122-135). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Gonzales, L. (2003). *Deep survival: Who lives, who dies, and why* (pp. 151-192). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Schedule:

7:30	Breakfast
8:30-11:30	Wilderness survival skills (aka “primitive technologies”): Fire-making, shelter building, edible plants, etc
12:00	Lunch
1:30-3:30	Wilderness skills continued
5:00	Dinner
6:30-8:30	High Ropes Course

Learning Goals:

Because people in modern urban settings live disconnected from the natural environment, they often come to view wilderness as uncomfortable at best and threatening at worst. Distaste and fear of wilderness are barriers that must be overcome before individuals can feel truly connected to the rest of the natural world. This day will be devoted to sampling skills that will help students open their minds to the possibility of surviving as their ancestors did (and hunter-gatherer societies still do), where “wilderness” does not exist as a concept separate from “home.”

THU MAR 23 THE ECOLOGICALLY-CONNECTED SENSE OF SELF

Assigned Readings:

Macy, J. (1995). Working through environmental despair. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 240-259). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Schedule:

7:30	Breakfast
8:30-11:30	Council of All Beings, Part 1- meeting room with refreshments
12:00	Lunch
1:30-4:15	Council of All Beings, Part 2
5:00	Dinner
7:30-9:00	Council of All Beings, Part 3, Campfire Circle- Ojibwe site

Learning Goals:

The Council of All Beings was designed by John Seed and Joanna Macy in the 1980s as a “re-earthing” workshop to help participants *experience* their connection to the natural world—emotionally and spiritually, instead of just intellectually. The two-day workshop, inspired by deep ecology philosophy, consists of a series of exercises and rituals that help participants let go of the socially-constructed individual sense of self and feel an interconnectedness to, and empathy for, other people and the rest of the natural world. By actually participating in a Council of All Beings (as opposed to just learning about it), students will have a much more profound understanding of it, from which they can draw conclusions about its effectiveness as a therapeutic tool.

FRI MAR 24 SUSTAINABLE LIVING: THE PERMACULTURE WAY

Assigned Reading:

Chiras, D. (2003). It takes an ecovillage. *Mother Earth News*, 198, 58-64.

Schedule:

7:30	Breakfast
8:30-9:45	Introduction to Permaculture & Sustainable Living
10:15	Depart for Grand Marais
11:30	Arrive Grand Marais, lunch at Gunflint Tavern
1:00-4:30	Sustainable Living Tour (building design, humanure, solar energy, etc.)
5:00- 7:30	Dinner/social time
7:30	Depart for WR
8:30	Arrive at WR

Learning Goals:

A major challenge once individuals feel reconnected to their natural origins is identifying ways to behave in line with their new perspective—particularly when the social norms of their communities do not encourage such behaviors. Some individuals make small changes in a sustainable direction (e.g., buying less packaging, driving less), while others make substantial lifestyle changes in their food, shelter, material consumption, energy use, work, and social relationships. In the morning, I will do a 45-minute presentation on Earthhaven Ecovillage, an intentional community in North Carolina that pursues environmental and social sustainability by utilizing Permaculture principles (I visited the community during our recent spring break). After the presentation, we will set out for Grand Marais where naturalist and resident Kent Jones will guide us on a tour of permaculture principles in practice and we will meet individuals who have made significant shifts in their lifestyles.

SAT MAR 25 SUSTAINABLE LIVING, cont.

No Assigned Readings

Schedule:

- 7:30 Breakfast
- 8:30 Depart for Round River Organic Farm for tour & service day
- 5:00 Dinner
- 7:30-9:00 Closing Campfire Circle

Learning Goals:

(From the farm’s website: Round River Farm primarily produces organic fruit and vegetables in the hills of Lake Superior’s north shore. Dairy, wool, meat, livestock, holiday wreaths and crafts supplement farm income. Our family-run "micro-farm" is the only commercial fruit and vegetable farm within a five thousand square mile area. The farm runs a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) operation where members pay an annual fee for weekly deliveries of coolers filled with fresh produce during the growing season. We are powered by solar and wind and use an intensive cropping system. We use green manures, crop rotations and companion planting on our sandy loam soils. Our philosophy evolved from Conservationist Aldo Leopold's writing, "The current is the stream of energy which flows out of the soil, into plants, thence into animals, thence back into the soil, in a never-ending circuit of life." From this concept we drew our farm's name, Round River. We have set forth to create a lifestyle and agriculture system that is as cyclical and natural as Leopold's Round River.) This site visit will involve a tour of the farm and a service opportunity for the students. Here we will see additional examples of sustainable practices by individuals who have opted for an ecologically-connected lifestyle. The owners, David and Lise Abazs have previously hosted college interns from Wolf Ridge and are eager to educate others about their sustainable agriculture (especially in return for some labor).

SUN MAR 25 RETURN to UST

- 7:30 Breakfast
- 9:00 Depart for UST, Lunch in Duluth en route

-----END OF IMBEDDED EDUCATIONAL EXPEDITION-----

MAR 29 REFLECTING ON THE TRIP—JOURNALS DUE

PART 3: REINTEGRATION: STAYING CONNECTED IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

APR 5 PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS of RESTORATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Kaplan, S. (1995). The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* (Special issue: Green Psychology), 15(3), 169-182.

APR 12 THE PSYCHOLOGY of CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION and VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

Kanner, A. D., & Gomes, M. E. (1995). The all-consuming self. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind* (pp. 77-91). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Rosenberg, E. L., (2003). Mindfulness and consumerism. In T. Kasser, & A. Kanner (Eds.), *Psychology and consumer culture: The struggle for a good life in a materialistic world* (pp. 107- 125). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

APR 19 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Zavestoski, S. (2003). Constructing and maintaining ecological identities. In S. Clayton & S. Opatow (Eds.), *Identity and the natural environment: The psychological significance of nature* (pp. 297-315). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kempton, W., & Holland, D. C. (2003). Identity and sustained environmental practice. In S. Clayton & S. Opatow (Eds.), *Identity and the natural environment: The psychological significance of nature* (pp. 317-341). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

(MOA Observations Paper Due)

PART 4: THE FUTURE OF ECOPSYCHOLOGY

APR 26 DIVERSITY IN ECOPSYCHOLOGY: MULTICULTURALISM AND GENDER

Roszak, T., Gomes, M. E, & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.) (1995). Ecopsychology and the deconstruction of whiteness: An interview with Carl Anthony. In *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 263-278). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Kahn, Peter H. Jr. (1999). The Brazilian Amazon study. In *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture* (pp. 147-165).

MAY 3 EMPIRICAL CHALLENGES: OPERATIONALIZING ECOPSYCHOLOGY?

MAY 10 THE GREENING OF “MAINSTREAM” PSYCHOLOGY: CONSERVATION PSYCHOLOGY

Saunders, C. D. (2003). The emerging field of conservation psychology. In C. D. Saunders & O. E. Myers (Eds.), *Exploring the potential of conservation psychology*. Human Ecology Review (special issue), 10(2).

MAY 17 FINAL PAPERS on EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO ECOPSYCHOLOGY DUE by 5 p.m.

Some books you might find of interest:

- Abram, D. (1997). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world*. Vintage.
- Clinebell, H. (1996). *Ecotherapy: Healing ourselves, healing the earth. A guide to ecologically grounded personality theory, spirituality, therapy, and education*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Cohen, M. J. (1997). *Reconnecting with nature: Finding wellness through restoring your bond with the earth*. Ecopress.
- Fischer, A. (2002). *Radical ecopsychology: Psychology in the service of life*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Glendinning, C. (1994). "My name is Chellis and I'm in recovery from Western civilization." Shambhala.
- Gonzales, L. (2003). *Deep survival: Who lives, who dies, and why*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Kahn, P. H., Jr., & Kellert, S. R. (2002, Eds.). *Children and nature: Psychological, sociocultural, and evolutionary investigations*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books.
- Melson, G. F. (2001). *Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Metzner, R. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.
- Myers, G. (1998). *Children and animals: Social development and our connection to other species*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Nabhan, G., & Trimble, S. (1994). *The geography of childhood: Why children need wild places*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Pinker, S. (2002). *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. Viking.
- Roszak, T. (2002). *Voice of the earth: An exploration of ecopsychology*. Phanes Press.
- Sabini, M. (2002, Ed.) *The earth has a soul: The nature writings of C. G. Jung*. Berkley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Sewall, L. (1999). *Sight and sensibility: The ecopsychology of perception*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Shepard, P. (1982). *Nature and madness*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Winter, D. D., & Koger, S. M. (2004). *The psychology of environmental problems* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Some websites you might find interesting:

<http://web.uvic.ca/~apadiv34>

Population and Environmental Psychology Division
of the American Psychological Association

www.ecopsychology.org

International Community for Ecopsychology

[http://www.rmetzner-greenearth.org/](http://www.rmetzner-greeneearth.org/)

Ralph Metzner's Green Earth Foundation

<http://ecopsychology.athabascau.ca/>

Eco-Psychology Online

<http://www.naropa.edu>

Naropa University has two relevant graduate programs: The MA Wilderness Therapy track within the Transpersonal Counseling Psychology Department (a clinical track with a strong ecopsychology perspective), and the non-clinical MA in Transpersonal Psychology: Ecopsychology

<http://www.johnemackinstitute.org/>

Ecopsychology Institute of the Center for
Psychology & Social Change

www.wildernesstherapy.co.uk

Provider of wilderness and adventure therapy in UK

www.ecopsych.com

Michael Cohen's Institute of Global Education

<http://www.global-mindshift.org>

Global MindShift "is a non-profit organization that promotes an expanded view of what it means to be human based on the knowledge of our evolutionary journey." (from the website)

<http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/>

The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy

<http://www.trackerschool.com/>

Tom Brown, Jr. Tracker School