A. DESCRIPTION AND AIMS OF THE COURSE

This course introduces students to the full sweep of what is currently meant by the term ecopsychology. Ecopsychologists assert that the relationship between humans and nature is definitive of human psychology, viewing all psychological and spiritual matters within the context of our membership in the natural world. By expanding the focus of psychology to include the relationship between humans and nature, they aim not only to develop a truer picture of human psychology but also to draw attention to the psychological dimensions of the ecological crisis. As a field, ecopsychology is increasingly making its way into the academy, consulting room, and popular imagination.

Covering the psychological, philosophical, practical, and critical dimensions of ecopsychology, the course aims to foster an appreciation for the significance and exciting nature of this new field. Ecopsychology has gained popularity in the form of “eco-therapy.” This includes wilderness therapy, nature-inclusive psychotherapy, group practices to help face “eco-anxiety” and “eco-despair,” and other nature-connecting activities. Beyond such practice, however, a number of thinkers have developed eco-centric psychological theories that fundamentally reconceptualise humans, nature, and psyche. Ecopsychology has, moreover, been envisioned as an ecologically transformed and explicitly political psychology that is dedicated to creating the subjective conditions for an ecological society. The course will progress through these various topics, allowing students to determine for themselves the relevance of ecopsychology to their own interests. Specific topics to be covered are listed in Section E below.
A final goal of the course is to introduce students to the experiential dimension of ecopsychology. Ecopsychology is a whole-person response to the ecological crisis rather than a strictly intellectual or managerial one. Students are therefore expected to engage in personal explorations (including brief solo time outdoors) and to share some of their experience with the rest of the class. They are also expected to have appropriate winter gear for outside activities, including a field trip to a nearby wilderness location.

Specific learning outcomes intended for the course include the following:

- A good introductory knowledge of the range of thought and activity associated with ecopsychology, including a familiarity with the main figures to have developed the field to date.
- An ability to situate ecopsychology relative to conventional psychological approaches, including specific philosophical, methodological, and political differences.
- A familiarity with the experiential practices of ecopsychology, gained in part via first-hand experience.
- Improved interpersonal and oral skills, and an improved ability to draw on subjective or personal material in a scholarly way.

B. ORGANIZATION OF COURSE

This course takes place over the Spring Recess, including the two weekends at the start and end of the recess period. It is a 3 credit course in nine days. Students are expected to dedicate as much time as possible to the course in order to benefit from its highly intensive format. They are also expected to get started on the readings before the course begins, so that they can “hit the ground running” when it does. A recommended reading schedule for students to follow in January and February is included below under the Reflection Journal heading. In previous years, students have found it very hard to keep up if they wait until the March recess to complete the readings.

A typical classroom session includes: a) a presentation on the day’s topic by the course director; b) class discussion on the topic; c) discussion of the assigned readings; d) an experiential exercise (generally related to the day’s topic) and/or a video; and e) an orientation to the readings for the next day.

The field trip is designed to bring the course material out of the classroom and into a wilderness setting. Students are expected to participate in group “council” processes, as well as structured exercises involving the natural, more-than-human world. Such experiential work is a distinguishing feature of ecopsychology. **Note: the field trip is an all-day event.**
The course concludes with students presenting their ideas-in-progress for their final projects (due three weeks following the completion of the course).

**Note:** Communication with the course director throughout the course is via email. Students are expecting to check for messages *every morning* prior to class.

### C. EVALUATION AND COURSE POLICIES

In addition to the following material on evaluation and course policies, students should be aware of the requirement to follow the University of Vermont’s Code of Academic Integrity, covered under Section G below.

**Attendance and Class Participation (25%).**

The class has a seminar format. Students are expected to attend each day of the course, to have completed the required readings for the day, and to actively participate in the discussions and experiential exercises. The course material comes alive only if it is engaged personally by the students.

Students are evaluated based on their attendance and punctuality, and on the level and quality of their participation. Quality of participation is assessed according to the degree of the student’s knowledge of the readings, demonstrated thoughtfulness, ability to relate the course material to their lives, engagement with the experiential exercises, and contribution to a healthy exchange of ideas that support the class dialogue. Each student is also expected to complete a self-evaluation of their participation at the end of the course. Students receive a participation grade of zero for any missed days that are not excused by the course instructor.

**Reflection Journal (4% each x 5 logs = 20%).**

Students are expected to keep a journal in which they reflect on the course readings. Reflections are guided by questions specific to the group of readings assigned for each class for Days 1-5. The questions are provided in Section F below. They are only aids for reflection; students do not need to answer all of them and are free to go beyond them. Journal entries for each group of readings should be 1-2 pages (500-1,000 words) long, single spaced, using full sentences.

Journal entries are graded based on: evidence that the readings have been completed and understood (or wrestled with); thoughtfulness of the reflection (demonstration of critical
thinking, open-mindedness, insight); adequate length; and how well the student has related the reading to their own life experience, development, or academic interests.

Printed copies of the journal entries are due at the start of the class on the day for which the readings are assigned, including Day 1. Late journal entries are not accepted, and the student receives a zero grade for that reading.

**It is highly recommended that students complete the readings prior to the meeting dates in March.** A good schedule to follow is to complete:

- Day 1 readings by Jan 23,
- Day 2 readings by Jan 30,
- Day 3 readings by February 6,
- Day 4 readings by February 13,
- Day 5 readings by February 20.

Students may wish to complete their reflection journal entries using the same schedule, though if they wait until the classes begin they will benefit from the additional context provided the course as it unfolds. In the latter case, it is strongly recommended that students take good notes on the readings as an aid to writing up their journals when the time comes.

**Ecological Autobiography (20%).**

An ecological autobiography is a brief paper in which the student describes significant places, people, animals, and activities from their personal history that have influenced their relationship with the natural world, both positively and negatively. It focuses especially on memories of early childhood, including the sensations, feelings, and thoughts associated with them. Because recalling early memories can for some people bring up difficult feelings, students are free to opt out of this assignment (in which case, the student must inform the course instructor early in the course that they are choosing this option, and their grade for the course is based on adjusted percentages for the other three areas). More details on this assignment are provided on Day 1 of the course.

The grade for the ecological autobiography is based on how well the student enters the spirit of this exercise, the extent and depth of their exploration, and the quality of their writing.

**The ecological autobiography is due at the beginning of Day 6 of the course, in which class students will present what they have written.**
Final Project (35%).

The major assignment for the course is a final written project that reflects the student’s encounter with ecopsychology. It is either an essay (2,000-2,500 words) or another form negotiated with the course instructor. The focus of the project can be one particular topic or the field of ecopsychology considered more generally. What matters is that the student feels engaged in their chosen subject matter and that they bring their own unique perspective to bear on it in a coherent manner.

Because the final project is open-ended, students are encouraged to discuss their ideas for the project with the course instructor as they are developing. Students also present their ideas-in-progress to the rest of the class on the last two days of the course (this presentation counts for 5 of the 35 marks for the project). This allows the whole class to hear how the course material has been taken up by each student. It is also a way for each student to receive feedback, clarify their thinking, and feel confident that they have a workable project.

The grade for the final project is based on the degree to which it meets the following criteria:

- For the presentation of ideas-in-progress: clear, well-organized presentation of the questions or thesis the student is considering, and of the format for the project; identification of the materials they are drawing on; and ability to consider and incorporate feedback from the rest of the class. (5 marks)
- Demonstration of thoughtful, creative, and original engagement with a topic of personal interest, drawing on appropriate materials and on the student’s own life experience where appropriate. The project is clearly framed within the context of ecopsychology. Suitable length. (20 marks)
- Writing is well organized (with a clear development of ideas or themes), interesting, eloquent, and well argued (where argument is called for). (4 marks)
- Accurate use of reference materials, properly attributed, with a consistent and proper citation style. (3 marks)
- Correct grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling; consistent style. (3 marks)

The final project is due three weeks following completion of the course, Monday March the 31st. It is to be submitted by email to the course instructor. Students will be penalized for late submissions at the rate of 1 mark per day. Projects submitted greater than one week late will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the course instructor.

Final Grade

The student’s final numerical grade is converted to a letter grade as follows.
98 and greater = A+ 93 to 97.9 = A 90 to 92.9 = A-
87 to 89.9 = B+ 83 to 86.9 = B 80 to 82.9 = B-
77 to 79.9 = C+ 73.0 to 76.9 = C 70 to 72.9 = C-
67 to 69.9 = D+ 63 to 66.9 = D 60 to 62.9 = D-
Less than 60 = F

D. REQUIRED READING

Required readings are found in the following two texts, in the course reading kit (available at the UVM bookstore), on e-reserve with the Bailey/Howe library, and on-line as indicated below.


E. SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course meets daily throughout the course period. The first five classroom sessions are each designed to cover a major topic area. Additional readings for these sessions are included below as possible reference material for students’ final projects. Day 6 is dedicated to the ecological autobiography assignment and to wrapping up the lecture portion of the course. Day 7 is the field trip dedicated to experiential ecopsychology. On Days 8 and 9, students present their ideas-in-progress for their final projects, and the course is concluded.

Note: This schedule may need to be modified depending on the number of students who enrol in the course. The general progression of topics and activities, however, will be maintained.

Day 1 (February 28): *Introducing and Situating Ecopsychology*

Class Topics:
Introductions and course overview
Ecopsychology as a corrective to the human-centeredness of modern psychology
The first and second waves/generations of ecopsychology
History and varieties of ecopsychology
Boundary trouble: ecopsychology versus environmental and conservation psychology
Philosophical, methodological, and political issues

Required Reading:


Video: Ecopsychology

Assignment: Ecological autobiography

Additional Reading:

Esbjö̈n-Hargens, Sean and Michael E. Zimmerman. Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the


“Promoting Environmentalism” special issue. Journal of Social Issues 56.3 (Fall 2000).


Day 2 (March 1): Nature and Psyche

Class Topics:

► The psychological task of ecopsychology: psychology in the spirit of ecology
► Ecopsychology as a psychology of cyclicity and human-nature kinship
► Turning the psyche inside out: animism/panpsychism, the soul of the world
► Nature in/and human psychological development
► Children and nature
► Human relationships with animals and plants
► Ecopsychology and the tradition of depth psychology
► Ecological identity/self
► Literary/art ecopsychology

Required Reading:


Videos: The Awakening Universe
Play Again

Additional Reading:


**Day 3 (March 2): Human-Nature Practice**

**Class Topics:**

- The ecopsychological imperative for contact with more-than-human nature
- Ecopsychology and depth psychological practice
- The therapeutic “benefits” of contact with (wild) nature
- The “greening” of psychotherapy: ecotherapy, horticultural therapy, pet therapy, equine-assisted-therapy, etc.
- Eco-spirituality/theology
Recollective practices: vision questing/fasting, (neo)shamanism, dream tracking, sitting in council, etc.

The nature-connection (“new nature”) movement

The politics of appropriating Native American culture/spirituality

Videos: Naturally Attracted: Connecting with Michael J. Cohen

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:


Ecotherapy website (http://www.ecotherapyheals.com/)

Glendinning, Chellis. “Yours Truly from Indian Country.”

http://www.chellisglendinning.org/docs/yourstruly.pdf#view=fit
Mahdi, Louise Carus, Nancy Geyer Christopher and Michael Meade, eds. Crossroads: The Quest for Contemporary Rites of Passage. Chicago: Open Court, 1996.

Day 4 (March 3): Ecopsychology as Cultural Therapy

Class Topics:

► Ecopsychology as a cultural intervention: creating cultural forms that integrate mind and nature and that promote ecopsychological literacy
► Cultural regeneration as a necessary condition for nature connection
► The psychology of environmentalism and consumerism
► The emotional and spiritual needs of ecological activists
► Therapy for peak times (the “endarkenment”): eco-anxiety/despair/paralysis
► Death and dying work as ecopsychological culture building
► Environmental/place-based education and ecopsychology
► Permaculture and ecopsychology: a good match?
► Tending the soul of place (“terrapsychoogy”)
► Replacing psychotherapists with elders; the need for “cultural artists”
► Ecopsychological analysis of the culture of virtual reality/digital media

Videos: David Sobel: Global Climate Change Meets Ecophobia
         Joanna Macy: The Work that Reconnects
         Lost Borders: Coming of Age in the Wilderness

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:

Class Topics:

- The morals and politics of (eco-)psychology
- Critical theory/psychology and its relevance to ecopsychology
- Ecopsychology as a radical transformation of psychology
- Ecopsychology’s relationship with the radical ecology movement
- Ecological society: ecological consciousness and ecological (re-)production
- Multicultural (eco-)psychology
- Ecopsychology as political education or critical pedagogy
- Climate change denial

Videos: The Future of Food
A Really Inconvenient Truth
Sacred Economics

Required Reading:


Additional Reading:

Cushman, Philip. “Why the Self is Empty: Toward a Historically Situated Psychology.” American Psychologist 45.5 (1990), 599-611.


**Day 6 (March 6): Ecological Autobiographies and Wrap-up to Lecture Sessions**

Ecological autobiographies due.

**Class Topics:**

► Student presentation of ecological autobiographies, and mapping of themes
► Place attachment
► Topics or activities of particular interest

**Days 7 (March 6): Field Trip**

Day 7 is a field trip to the Jericho Research Forest, a wilderness location where the exercises will involve group and individual experiences in a more-than-human setting. Students are expected to have good winter clothing and to spend solo time in the wilderness (though some accommodation can be made based on students’ comfort levels). This is an all-day outing.
Days 8 and 9 (March 7-8): Student Presentations and Course Conclusion

Class Topics:

► Student presentation of ideas-in-progress for their final projects
► The future of ecopsychology
► Course summary

Final project due on Monday March 30.

E. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR REFLECTION JOURNAL ENTRIES

Reflection journal entries are handed in at the start of each class for which the readings are due. See Section C for the basis of grading.

The following questions are offered only as a guide to your entries; they do not have to limit your reflections.

Day 1 Readings

The theme for Day 1 is introducing and situating ecopsychology. The five readings each give a different picture of ecopsychology. What are your initial impressions of ecopsychology? How would you define or characterize it? What are some difficulties it faces as a field? What approach among the readings most appeals or speaks to you? What questions does ecopsychology raise for you? What experiences from your own life most connect you to this subject matter?

Day 2 Readings

The theme for Day 2 is the relationship between psyche and nature or mind/soul and world. These are terms that are normally kept separate or dichotomized; in what ways do the three readings make connections between them? What philosophical or conceptual problem does this involve? Why do you think developmental psychology is important to ecopsychology? The three readings take different approaches to the topic of psyche and nature. What are the merits or weaknesses of each of them? Which approach do you find most interesting? Why?

Day 3 Readings
The theme for Day 3 is human-nature practice. Ecopsychology insists on direct contact with the larger, more-than-human natural world. This practical, experiential dimension is a defining feature of ecopsychology (see Scull’s article in the Additional Readings list for Day 2). Without participating in practices that open us to connection with the living world it is hard to “get” ecopsychology or to sense the soul of the world. The five readings for this day cover the practices of wilderness vision fasting, ecological dream work, ecotherapy, and nature connection routines. Imagine yourself participating in each of these forms of practice. What do you think the experience would be like? Do any of these ideas or approaches resonate at all with your own experience, e.g., of dream figures? Do you think that engaging in practices of this sort (e.g., vision fasting) could have made a difference in your life? Does a sit spot routine appeal to you? How might our minds have to stretch or adjust in order to accept and engage in these kinds of practices?

Day 4 Readings

The theme for Day 4 is ecopsychology as a form of cultural therapy. If ecopsychology highlights our culture’s ecopsychological illiteracy then it must go beyond individual practice and introduce new cultural forms or regenerate our culture so that it is more oriented toward the tending of life (human and other-than-human) as an ultimate concern. How is this theme visible in these four readings? In what ways do they challenge our existing culture, including the culture of environmentalism? What difficulties do you imagine in trying to introduce a more psychological or interior approach to the environmental arena? What resistance do you think these approaches might encounter? How do psyche and nature come together in these approaches? What is your personal response to the discussions in these readings? Can you relate any of your own experience to the points the different authors make?

Day 5 Readings

Not only must ecopsychology be a form of cultural therapy, it also implies a challenge to social structures, institutions, or patterns that are harmful to life, whether life is regarded as nature or as psyche. This means that ecopsychology unavoidably has a political dimension. Focusing on the first four readings (i.e., ignoring the Jensen reading), what are some of the specific ways that ecopsychology links to politics? Discuss the different angles the four readings offer. What kind of politics is contained in a social psychological approach (Koger and Winter) versus the other three readings? What kind of actions do these different approaches suggest? Where do you yourself stand on the matter of ecopsychological politics? What kind of changes to the world does your own experience of our society’s relationship with the living world imply? What kind of actions do they call for?

G. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
All students are expected to follow the University of Vermont’s Code of Academic Integrity, found at [http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf).

The Code includes the following statement about standards of academic integrity:

All academic work (e.g., homework assignments, written and oral reports, use of library materials, creative projects, performances, in-class and take-home exams, extra-credit projects, research, theses and dissertations) must satisfy the following four standards of academic integrity:

1. All ideas, arguments, and phrases, submitted without attribution to other sources, must be the creative product of the student. Thus, all text passages taken from the works of other authors must be properly cited. The same applies to paraphrased text, opinions, data, examples, illustrations, and all other creative work. Violations of this standard constitute plagiarism.

2. All experimental data, observations, interviews, statistical surveys, and other information collected and reported as part of academic work must be authentic. Any alteration, e.g., the removal of statistical outliers, must be clearly documented. Data must not be falsified in any way. Violations of this standard constitute fabrication.

3. Students may only collaborate within the limits prescribed by their instructors. Students may not complete any portion of an assignment, report, project, experiment or exam for another student. Students may not claim as their own work any portion of an assignment, report, project, experiment or exam that was completed by another student, even with that other student’s knowledge and consent. Students may not provide information about an exam (or portions of an exam) to another student without the authorization of the instructor. Students may not seek or accept information provided about an exam (or portions of an exam) from another student without the authorization of the instructor. Violations of this standard constitute collusion.

4. Students must adhere to the guidelines provided by their instructors for completing coursework. For example, students must only use materials approved by their instructor when completing an assignment or exam. Students may not present the same (or substantially the same) work for more than one course without obtaining approval from the instructor of each course. Students must adhere to all course reserves regulations, including library course reserves, which are designed to allow students access to all course materials. Students will not intentionally deny others free and open access to any materials reserved for a course. Violations of this standard constitute cheating.
Students found responsible for violating the Code are subject to a variety of possible sanctions, including (though not limited to) a Zero on the indicated course work; a grade of XF in the course (“failure resulting from academic dishonesty”); and suspension from the University. Students with questions regarding academic integrity are urged to speak with the course instructor.