

# PHOTOGRAPHY: NATURE AND SPIRIT

SPRING 2026

A "choose-your-own-adventure" course exploring the relationships between art, nature and spirituality.

## **COURSE INFORMATION**

Class Days/Time: Tuesdays, 5-9  
Classroom: TBD  
Instructor: Carrie Chema  
Email Address: carrie.chema@evergreen.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesday, 4-5 PM in Photoland

## **TEXT & SUPPLIES**

Required items: - any kind of camera that you feel comfortable using (DSLRs or SLRs supplied by Media Loan as needed)  
*I strongly suggest working digitally rather than shooting on film. You will have weekly projects and the time demands will go up significantly if you select film. Only choose the film route if you have experience and are VERY motivated in that direction.*  
- journal for weekly observation, creative work, and reflections (recommend unlined, thick paper for mixed media work)  
- collage materials (old magazines, calendars, books, food wrappers, etc. – things you can cut up to use to make collages. Sky is the limit!)  
- art materials that you prefer – pens, pencils, paints, markers. Some items will be available in shared class supplies but if there are things you like to use and that are mobile enough to use for field work, please use them.

Suggested items: - External Hard Drive for storing and backing up your images, if working digitally.  
- SD Card, 16GB (comes with the camera checkout, you may want to pick up one of your own.)  
- Tripod (supplied by Media Loan as needed)  
- Field Recorder (supplied by Media Loan as needed)

Texts: *On Landscape and Meaning* Richard Misrach  
*Photography's Other Histories*, Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Peterson  
*Photography Changes Everything* by Marvin Heifermann

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

We will investigate ways in which connection with nature through immersion and observation may be deployed in service of creative innovation through photography, collage, audio/video, and/or mixed media approaches to artmaking, and writing. Students taking this course will consider their own relationships with nature and spirituality, allowing these relationships to inform their art practices. This is a course that is suited for any level of photography and/or art experience. We will focus heavily on conceptually driven explorations into our relationships with nature, spirituality and art-making rather than technical considerations.

Throughout the quarter, students will keep an observation journal containing their photographs, field notes, writings, drawings, collages and more that will be crafted in response to weekly "creative invitations". These invitations will act as prompts for students to consider their relationship with nature -- landscapes, plants, animals, the elements, etc. -- and then to make art that is informed by these ideas.

In addition to maintaining a consistent art-making practice throughout the quarter, students will respond to weekly self-selected readings that consider a variety of perspectives on ways of thinking about nature, photography, art, and ourselves including topics related to the ethical, social, and historical functions of the relationship between nature, art, and spirituality.

## **GOALS**

To explore and develop artwork that examines the relationship between nature, spirit and art practice. To think critically about the stories that students wish to tell, research these stories, and create artwork that expresses their weekly learning, reflecting critical thought towards their visual objectives and outcomes.

**This course will stress project development over lecture to accomplish learning objectives and outcomes.**

## **TOPICS**

Topics will include making photographs and mixed media artwork that engage issues relevant to conceptual understanding of personal, social, historical perspectives on nature and spirituality. Students will self-determine their weekly learning within an overall umbrella of the class theme. Various forms and methods of image creation, social and societal uses of photography, and a survey of historical and contemporary imagery and artists whose works relate to concept-driven "creative invitations".

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Apply focused attention to artmaking practices, linking form and concept.
2. Expand observational skill and application of observations to chosen themes and concepts.
3. Develop and/or expand visual literacy.
4. Critically and ethically evaluate their relationship to the subjects of their work.
5. Link thematic, self-selected readings to creative research.
6. Apply concepts from readings to artistic practice to expand research skills.
7. Develop presentation skills and abilities related to verbal articulation of artistic practice.

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Understand of methods for communicating ideas and feelings, familiarity with concepts related to the function of images in expression of concepts related to nature and spirituality, synthesis of ideas gained through related readings with an art practice through consistent art and observation exercises. Through the completion of image-based, student-directed creative assignments and the review of historical and contemporary photographers, students will gain a fluent, critical understanding of historical and contemporary images and image making relevant to the themes of the class.

1. Create exploratory artwork based on a chosen photographic medium, such as, cell phone, consumer grade camera or digital SLR along with writing and observation.
2. Create compelling artworks that speak to the theme of weekly creative exercises.
3. Understand and discuss photography, art, nature and spirituality within a cultural and theoretical context.
4. Understand and critique photographic works from both a technical and conceptual standpoint.
5. Weekly printing of images in support of creative projects. Gained skill in image preparation for printing and web uses.
6. Assemble a final portfolio that consolidates learning across the quarter.

## **FORMAT**

An experiential project-based course comprised of demonstrations, weekly student presentations, creative prompts, readings, discussions, and critiques/reviews. Class meets one day per week for four hours. During class sessions, students will present on their creative project from the previous week along with their selected reading. Each week, students will select a project to explore from a list of “creative invitations”, prompts to initiate student’s creative research for the week ahead. In tandem, students will also select a reading each week from the class reading list. Anticipate 6 hours of work per week outside of class time.

## **CREATIVE INVITATIONS: Choose your own adventure!**

Students will receive a list of creative research prompts on a wide range of themes related to nature and spirituality. Each week, students will select one prompt to complete for their weekly project. These involve a range of approaches to artmaking. Photography is heavily featured. Audio recording, drawing, painting, writing and more are also possibilities. Many of these prompts involve self-directed field work. Students should expect to spend time outdoors in natural environments to complete weekly projects.

## **READINGS : Choose your own adventure!**

In tandem with weekly creative invitations, students will select a reading from the class reading list to help inform their creative research. These readings will be available digitally and are excerpts from longer texts, articles, interviews, and more. A short selection of the authors and artists on the reading list includes: Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Rebecca Solnit, Terry Tempest Williams, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Thich Nhat Hanh, Richard Misrach, Drew Lanham, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Alison Deming, and many more...

