



ECOPSYCHOLOGY

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

INSTRUCTOR:	Susan J. Cummings, Ph.D.
QUARTER:	Summer 2026
QUARTER HOURS:	4
TIME:	Tuesdays, 6p.m.-8p.m.
LOCATION:	Zoom (Evergreen State College)

COURSE INTENTION

Mind and nature are inseparable. The natural world is not outside of us or separate from us, but it *is* us. Ecopsychology is an exciting emerging perspective that explores the connection between psychological and ecological health. Many of our psychological ills and our addictions are directly related to our lack of awareness and our perceived disconnection from our natural origins. The very destruction of our habitat is an expression of this lack of connection to the ground of our being. There are many emerging approaches to deal with this, such as the greening of playgrounds, nature-based therapy, architecture that aims to connect us with a healthy habitat, and the exploration of our assumptions.

We will explore the historical and cultural influences underlying and leading up to this perceived separation from nature, cultural differences in perspectives, assumptions in psychology, the connections between pathology and this perceived separateness from nature, and the role of connectedness with nature in child development.

We will also explore the role of innovation, creativity and Active Hope in ecopsychological healing.

Students will review the literature, engage in experiential activities and projects, and brainstorm solutions.

Various videos will be provided, in addition to the reading material, for students to review and reflect on.

SPECIFIC GOALS:

1. To allow students to gain a deepening understanding of historical and cultural influences on our perceptions of our place in the ecology.
2. To gain a deepening understanding of the impact of our perceptions, beliefs and cosmologies on the ecology and our psychological wellness.
3. To explore personal change and transformation.
4. To explore the “Three Stories of Our Times”: Business as Usual; The Great Unraveling; The Great Turning.
5. To examine the role and relevance of Ecopsychology in psychological health.
6. To examine the role of psychological health and Active Hope in planetary transformation.

DEMONSTRATION AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Progress toward the learning goals will be demonstrated through thoughtful participation in class discussions, experiential activities and through the following assignments:

1. The student will keep a daily journal. Each session the student will share a brief (one-two page) sample shared from the journal. The student will upload this into Canvas for me to review. The student will be prepared to share the content of this paper at each session in a small group or with the class as a whole (depending on class size).
2. The student will engage in a self-exploration exercise at home involving an in depth values clarification and an exploration as to how these values are actualized.
3. “The Listening Post in Nature” AKA Mandala exercise. Plug in to a root system that draws up insight and inspiration for you. More to be described in class.
4. The student will present a final piece that expresses the student's view his/her/their place in the ecology. This could be poetry, a painting, collage, or music.
5. Eco-challenge: Identify goals and resources for yourself.

6. “What’s Working” – the student will conduct research on a program, project, or movement that is truly providing a positive benefit to planetary health.
7. Various videos will be assigned for review. You will discuss these in the discussion section on Canvas.

REQUIRED READING*

Kahn, Peter H., Hasbach, Patricia H., Editors (2012) *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems & the Technological Species* Cambridge: The MIT Press
Haskell, David G. (2018) *The Songs of Trees* New York: Penguin Group

RECOMMENDED READING:

Roszak, Theodore, Gomes; Mary; Kanner, Allen, Editors (1995) *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*_San Francisco: Sierra Club Books

Macy, Joanna; Johnstone, Chris. (2012) *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in Without Going Crazy*_California: New World Library

Haskell, David George (2012) *The Forest Unseen: A Year’s Watch in Nature*_New York: Penguin Group

Frank, Adam (2009) *The Constant Fire* California: University of California Press

Stager, Curt (2014) *Your Atomic Self: The Invisible Elements that Connect You to Everything Else in the Universe* New York: St. Martin’s Press

COURSE OUTLINE

Session I General Topics: Introductions

- A course overview
- “The Great Rift”: How did we get here? A historical exploration.

Session II General Topics:

- Business as Usual
 - Ego Boundaries: Assumptions of Western Psychology
- Reading prior to Session II: Intro, Chapter 1- Eco; Songs-Preface- page 30*

Session III General Topics:

- The Great Turning: The Dimensions
 - Identity Expansion: Ego Vs. Eco Psychology
- Reading prior to Session III: Eco- Chapter 2; Songs- Pages 31-82*

Session IV General Topics

- Ongoing discussions re the Great Turning and resilience.

Reading prior to Session IV: Eco- Chapter 3; Songs- Pages 83-103

Session V General Topics:

- The Great Turning: Eco-challenge exploration
- Gratitude & Positive Psychology
- **Reciprocity**
- What’s Working Presentations On ZOOM

Reading prior to Session V: Eco- Chapters 4; Songs- Pages 104-123

Session VI General Topics

- What’s Working Presentations on ZOOM

Readings Prior to Session VI: Eco- Chapter 5; Songs- Pages 124-154

Session VII General Topics

- What’s Working Presentations
- Your Narrative; your perceived place in Nature presentations On ZOOM

Readings prior to Session VII: Eco- Chapters 6, 7; Songs- Pages 155-187

Session VIII General Topics

- What’s working presentations on Zoom
- Your Narrative, your perceived place in Nature presentations on ZOOM

Readings Prior to Session VIII: Eco- Chapter 8; Songs- Pages 188-214

Session IX

- Your narrative; your perceived place in Nature presentations on Zoom

Readings prior to Session IX: Eco- Chapters 10-11; Songs- Pages 215-240

Session X General Topics

- Poems, art to be presented on ZOOM.

Readings prior to Session X: Eco- Afterword; Songs- Pages 241-252

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Selected Journal Entries.Sessions II through X
 Your Narrative presentations.....Sessions VI, VII, VIII
 Expressive Project Sessions VIII & X
 Eco-challenge presentations..... Sessions V, VI, VII
 What’s Working presentations.....Sessions VII, VIII, X
 Hikes.....Sessions IV, VI, IX

**Presentation dates may change, depending on class size.*

GROUND RULES

Attendance- All sessions will be attended. Only emergencies or illnesses will excuse absences. If you are going to be absent, please call TESC and leave a message for me or email me at crowsgirl28@gmail.com. If you are absent without notifying me or without a valid reason this could jeopardize your credit.

Punctuality- To maximize exposure to the class sessions and minimize disruption to the class, it is expected that you will be on time, i.e., 6 p.m.

Confidentiality- Sharing personal material is of course at each student's discretion. Given the nature of the class, it is most probable that some sharing of a personal nature will occur. Therefore, in order to ensure the privacy of others as well as your own, and in order for there to be a climate of psychological safety within the classroom, confidentiality is mandatory. Breaking of confidentiality could be grounds for dismissal from the course.

Respect For Other Views- In the interest of honest exploration and inquiry and mutual learning, and in order to maintain an air of openness, respect for views other than one's own is essential. Dialogue, rather than argument, will be the form of exchange.

Participation- Each student will be responsible for their level of participation. It is recognized that different people participate in different ways; some will be more verbal than others. Of main concern is that the student be engaged in the material of this course- both didactic and experiential.



“Grandmother Tree” Pastel by Sue Cummings