

Syllabus

WS 320 Ecofeminism

Meeting Time: Wednesday, 3 - 6PM

Instructor: Danielle Wirth, Ph.D.

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* Schedule is subject to change

Office hours: by appointment weather and speaker availability.

Course as described in catalog:

Women's relationships with the earth, non-human nature, and other humans. The course explores the connections between the mastery of women and the mastery of nature; origins of ecofeminism and its relation to the science of ecology and to other branches of feminist philosophies. Grounding for ecofeminist practice rests within ecology, feminist theory, ethics, and history. Critique of modern science, technology, political systems as well as *solutions* will be included.

Prerequisites: 3 credits in Women's Studies or permission of instructor.

Course description/overview:

Students will examine definitions of ecofeminism, explore various branches within ecofeminist thought, and learn how ecological feminism differs from other branches of feminism. They will acquire an understanding of ecology and feminist ethics needed for an ecofeminist praxis. Students will explore issues such as biological and cultural diversity, industrial and animal agriculture, biotechnology, international development, war and violence, spirituality, globalism, history, power and politics. To navigate these issues, they will examine competing conceptual frameworks related to modern science, technology, and political systems.

Learning objectives/outcomes:

1. Students will understand ecofeminist principles.
2. Students will be able to compare and contrast different ecofeminist viewpoints taking an eclectic approach to synthesizing their own ecofeminist practice based on principles of sound science and contemporary feminist theory.
3. Students will learn an ecosystem identification approach for recognizing plants and animals native to this ecoregion.
4. Students will be able to understand and define ecological terms associated with local bioregions; and relate land use practices, current natural resource utilization patterns and environmental health concerns to contemporary cultural and political systems.

5. Students will be able to articulate environmental and feminist issues and the relationships between them, drawing upon empirical data.

Expectations:

1. Students will complete assigned readings and be able to discuss ideas in class.
2. Students will engage in outside activities as part of learning a sense of place.
3. Students will produce a field journal to record ecological and social explorations in the local bioregion.
4. Students will undertake a major project that incorporates and explores/extends an ecofeminist topic.
5. Students will respect the differing viewpoints of fellow students.
6. Students will participate in active listening during the final projects of other students and evaluate the personal learning event as it “fits” with their growing understanding of ecological feminism.

Required Course Materials:

* Breton, Mary Jo. 1998. *Women Pioneers for the Environment*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

* Hofrichter, Richard (ed.), 1996. *Toxic struggles: the theory and practice of environmental justice*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers

* Shiva, Vandana. 2000. *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

* Williams, Terry Tempest. 1991. *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*. New York: Random House.

320 Coursepack

Highly Recommended Materials: *Prairie in Your Pocket* by Mark Mueller and Journal (blank) made from “tree-free” or recycled paper.

Format/Teaching Method: Course will combine lectures, field trips/outside activities, discussion, informal question-and-answer sessions, guest lecturers and student-led topics.

Evaluation

Class Participation (30 points)

- * Reading assignments, as evidenced by assigned written summaries and sharing insights in class each week
- * Formulating thought-provoking questions that stimulate class discussion.
- * Occasionally leading discussions as assigned

Field Journal (30 points)

* Weekly entries, to be reviewed at the end of each month by instructor, including detailed field notes, sketches from outdoor field trips, contemporary application of ecofeminist principles, and personal reflections. Typical journal entry will include:

- Date and time of day
- Location and general comments about season, weather, wildlife etc.
- Detailed written description of observations. Key word entries are fine for on-site entries, but details should be filled in later while your memory is fresh.
- Sketches - as best you can do considering weather and your artistic leanings. Try some color! This is not mandatory, but you will find this to be more enjoyable and accurate. This will also help you document the seasonal changes as the Iowa plant community enters dormancy often with dramatic color change in foliage.
- Reflections - how did this experience affect you? Feelings? Thoughts? Relatedness to other classes?
- Upon review, instructor may ask you to refer to field guides or other sources to provide more detail and also answer questions you may have about natural history/ conservation biology.

Major Project (30 points)

- An individual or group project, with topic pre-approved by instructor, presented in class during the term and completed by the end of the term. We've had presentations (with strict academic underpinnings included) from ecofeminist dumpster diving, martial arts as ecofeminist through ecofeminist weddings/ day care, ecofeminist nature writers and "fast food".

Active Listening (10 points)

- Attend the final project presentations of classmates and produce a short summary of their presentation including:

- * Main theme
- * How was it "ecofeminist", or not?
- * What was the most important thing you learned?
- * How has this presentation added to your depth of understanding of ecofeminism?

Total (100 points)

NOTE: Begin reading *Women Pioneers*, *Stolen Harvest* and *Refuge* very soon. They are longer assignments and will take some time. Part of your 30 point class participation grade will depend upon your choosing 5 women from the *Pioneers* book, writing about their accomplishments (trail blazing, environmental advocacy, etc.) explaining why you believe their accomplishments are illustrations of ecofeminist praxis and finally; choosing your favorite pioneer and sharing your reasons with the class.

Classes Week-by-Week

Week 1 - Ecofeminism: What it Means, How it Looks and Feels

Overview of course and expectations, Introductions - What is Ecofeminism to you?
Introduction to Field Sketching: A brief encounter with Iowa's outdoor environment
Earth Spinners Video (Agenda 21/WEDO) and Community Report Card

***Assignment: for next week (Sept 3) read Epstein (Toxic Struggles), Gaard, Wirth & Boddy, & King in coursepack and prepare a short paper (3-5 pp.) that shows you have done this reading. You may write about what resonates for you, what puzzles you, and what topics appeal to you, etc.)

Week 2 - Grounding Ecofeminism

Discuss: Epstein, Gaard, Boddy/Wirth and King - hand in papers.
Founding theorists and theories; ecofeminist metaphors
Patriarchy, the System: "An It, not a He, a Them, or an Us"
Revisiting/Redrawing the Ecofeminist map. Guest lecturer Diane Phillips, a doctoral candidate, will present her analysis of Gaard's ecofeminist map.

Assigned readings for next week:

J. Plant (2 readings), H. Forsey and S. Jewitt

Note: Class next week convenes at student organic farm

Week 3 - Knowing Home Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism

Visit to ISU Student Organic Farm (Hint: this is journal material)

Note: **TODAY** Class convenes at Student Farm. Guest Lecturer, Karen RM Joslin, Graduate Research Assistant with Horticulture and Sustainable Agriculture.
Discuss readings (time permitting), turn in written assignments
Learning a Sense of Place - Begin: The Bioregional Quiz (from course pack)

Assignment: by Sept 25 read TT Williams and write reaction paper (3-5 pp.)

Week 4 - Ecofeminists Afield Prairie Visit - With Dr. Deb Lewis, Botany Dept. and Curator of Iowa State University's Herbarium collection.

Note: **TODAY** Class meets at the native Prairie behind Ames High School. Bring field journals, writing/drawing tools and Prairie in Your Pocket. Class challenge: Be bold, try crayons!

Assigned Readings for Next Week:

TT Williams, LaDuke, Plant, Forsney and Jewett in coursepack - discussion of Refuge, The White Heron and the other readings. Prepare a short paper on each reading assignment. Please note: the minimum paper length for the book Refuge, is 3 pages.
Journals due next week

Week 5 - Voices of the Land Women Speak for/with the Land

Discuss: Forsney, Jewitt, LaDuke, Plant, Williams and complete the bioregional quiz.

Guest lecturer, Karen Craft, Parks Library will lead a discussion on the "other voices of the land". Karen is a local "animal communicator". This session promises to be provocative.

****Turn in journals

Assigned Readings for Next Week: C. Adams; Crouch; Shiva

Week 6 - Agriculture . . . THE environmental issue in Iowa

Midwestern Industrial Agriculture: Monoculture, Factory Farms & Genetic Engineering. Discuss readings. Turn in reaction papers.

Guest presenter(s): Stephanie Weisenbach, Humane Society of the United States on Animal Welfare, Factory Farms and Genetic Engineering.

Assigned Readings for Next Week: Eisler, Krause, Mellor, Shiva,

Week 7 - Ecofeminist Coalitions/Ecofeminist Practice/Ecofeminist Politics

Link Arms Dear Sisters (featuring Iowa Activists)

Continue discussions on Adams, Crouch and Shiva. Introduce and discuss Eisler, Krause, and Mellor

Guest lecturer: Jean C. Eells, Prairie River RC & D and Elizabeth Horton-Plasket, Executive Director of the Iowa Environmental Council.

Week 8 - Globalization and what it means for Environmental Quality/

East/West/North/South: Ecofeminism in a Global Economy

Continue to discuss: Eisler, Krause, Mellor and Shiva

View: Trading Democracy

Assignment for next week: Adler, Starhawk (Building Community)

Week 9 - Science as Power

Discuss: Adler and Starhawk. Hand in Assignments

Guest lecture: Dr. Carolyn Heising, Nuclear Engineering On the nature of science, engineering and feminism.

Assigned Readings for Next Week: Starhawk (Circles and Webs)

Week 10 - Spiritual Dimensions of Ecofeminism. Featuring Dr. Nikki Bado-Fralick,

President of the Midwest American Academy of Religion and

Assistant Professor in Religious Studies

Assigned Readings for Next Week: Seager and Kelly

Week 11 - Ecofeminist Power: From Athena to Xena - physical, intellectual and psychological. What is "power"? Who has it? Does the nature and worldview of the 'user' affect how power is employed?

Discuss: Adler and Starhawk

Begin class presentations.

Assignment for next week: Warren and Cady

Week 12 - Ecofeminist Resistance to War and Violence - evaluate ecological damage due to Hypermasculinity and War-mongering in Contemporary and Historical Culture.

Guest lecturer: TBA

Assigned Readings for Next Week: An interview with Kate Clinton (handout)

Week 13 - Ecofeminism and Humor (the funny ecofeminist?) The Ethics of Humor - YOUR stories of ecofeminist humor

Student presentations

Assignment for Next Week: Student presentations

Week 14 -

Student presentations, Journals due!

Assignments due: Student Presentations

Week 15 - Conclusions

Student Presentations

Week 16 - Date TBA - Finals/Celebrations

Coursepack Readings

Adams, C. 2000. Chapter 6. Frankenstein's vegetarian monster, pp. 120 -131; Chapter 8. The distortion of the vegetarian body, pp. 156-177; and Illustrations, Figure 1, p. 32, Figure 2, p. 52, Figure 3, p. 76, Figure 4, p. 82, Figure 5, p. 83, Figure 6, p. 113, Figure 7, p. 154 in *The sexual politics of meat: a feminist-vegetarian critical theory*. New York: Continuum.

Adler, Margot. 1989. The juice and the mystery. Pp. 151-154 in Judith Plant (ed), *Healing the Wounds: the Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Crouch, Martha L. 2001. From Golden Rice to Terminator Technology: Why Agricultural Biotechnology Will Not Feed the World or Save the Environment. Pp. 22-39 in Brian Tokar (ed) *Redesigning Life? The Worldwide Challenge to Genetic Engineering*. New York: Zed Books.

Eisler, Riane. 1987. Chapter 8. The Other Half of History: Part I. Pp. 104-119 and Chapter 9. The Other Half of History. Part II. Pp.120-134. *The Chalice and the Blade*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Forsey, Helen, 1990, *Community: Meeting Our Deepest Needs*, pp. 83-85 in Andruss, V., Plant, C., Plant, J. & Wright, E., *Home! A bioregional reader*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Gaard, Greta. 1998. Pp. 11-52 in *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Jewett, Sarah Orne. *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*. (1989). Anchor Books/Doubleday, New York. A White Heron. pp. 161-171.

Kelly, Petra. 1997. *Women and Power*. pp. 112-119 in Karen J. Warren (ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture and Nature*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington.

Leonard, Charles, Jim Dodge, Lynn Milliman, and Victoria Stockley, 1990, *Where you at? A Bioregional Quiz*, Pp.. 29-30 in Andruss, V., Plant, C., Plant, J. & Wright, E. *Home! A bioregional reader*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Plant, Judith, 1990, *Revaluing Home: Feminism and Bioregionalism*, Pp. 21-23 in Andruss, V., Plant, C., Plant, J. & Wright, E. *Home! A bioregional reader*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Plant, Judith, 1990, *Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism*, pp. 79-82 in Andruss, V., Plant, C., Plant, J. & Wright, E., *Home! A bioregional reader*. Philadelphia: New Society.

Starhawk, 1997, Chapter 6. *Building community processes for groups*. Pp. 92-113 and Chapter 7. *Circles and webs: group structures*. Pp. 114-134 in *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Warren, Karen and Duane Cady. 1996. *Feminism and Peace: Seeing Connections..* pp. 2-15 in Cady, D. and Warren, K. *Bringing Peace Home: Feminism, Violence and Nature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

King, Ynestra. 1991. *Feminism and Ecology*. Pp. 76-84 in Hofrichter, Richard (ed.). 1993. *Toxic struggles: the theory and practice of environmental justice*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Kraus, Celene. 1993. Blue Collar Women & Toxic-Waste Protest: The Process of Politicization. Pp. 107-117 in Hofrichter, Richard (ed.). Toxic struggles: the theory and practice of environmental justice. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers

LaDuke, Winona. 1993. A Society Based on Conquest Cannot be Sustained: Native Peoples and the Environmental Crisis, pp. in. 98-106 Hofrichter, Richard (ed.), Toxic struggles: the theory and practice of environmental justice. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Seager, Joni. 1993. Creating a Culture of Destruction: Gender, Militarism, and the Environment. Pp. 58-66 Hofrichter, Richard (ed.), Toxic struggles: the theory and practice of environmental justice. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Epstein, Barbara. 1993. Ecofeminism and Grass-roots Environmentalism in the United States, pp. 144-152 in Hofrichter, Richard (ed.). Toxic struggles: the theory and practice of environmental justice. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.