ECOPSYCHOLOGY

"Ecopsychology must radically reinterpret the human animal in a way that integrates us into a living earth....The key to this integration, I think, is the idea of turning the psyche inside out. Although there are many ways to understand this idea, it refers one way or another to reversing the process of locating psyche solely within the human individual. It means reanimating or reensouling the world." - Andy Fisher

Overview and Course Objectives:

At its most basic level, Ecopsychology is about human interaction with nature. It’s a relatively nascent field, so there are diverse views from those within it about just what this discipline is and where it’s going. And some argue it’s not a discipline at all, but rather an all-encompassing project. In this course, you will become familiar with these competing ideas, which should aid in your development of your own sense of this field/discipline/project. More substantively, you will likely come to have a thorough and embodied understanding of the core concepts within ecopsychology, such as the idea of the interdependence of humans and nature, and why many of our current mental afflictions (such as depression) can be traced to our separation from the nonhuman, living world – and not just in the superficial sense (e.g., people don’t spend enough time in nature) – but rather, quite deeply: most of us are not connected to nature in an interdependent, embedded way. As the radical ecopsychologist Andy Fisher says: “Ecopsychology must radically reinterpret the human animal in a way that integrates us into a living earth.”

This is a philosophical course (after all, Philosophy is the mother of Psychology) and we’ll talk about philosophical concepts and try to experience ‘them.’ For example, we will read about nondualistic approaches to being and knowing and engage in various exercises to encourage the process of moving from an egocentric worldview to an ecocentric one – to ensoul the whole world. You’ll take part in biophilic, nature-experiences with the class and on your own to enrich your understanding of ecopsychology. As Andy Fisher writes:

“I argue that an experiential approach is crucial because it is through our experience that we contact and interpret the claims of nature. The marginalization and mystification of subjective experience in modern times, and the rise of an “academic-corporate-government elite” who tell us how to think and live, is then central to our alienation from nature. Learning to work skillfully with bodily felt experience is in this light both a therapeutic and a political act. If we find in our bodily experience not so
much the workings of a machine but rather a source of wisdom and guidance that comes from the force or spirit of life, a creative force that calls for healing, growth, liberation, and resistance to oppression, then can our scholarship make room for this natural moment we find within our experience? Appreciating that the body senses and carries knowledge about the situations in which we find ourselves, can we allow new ideas or theories to be not just the achievement of a disembodied mind but a development of the life itself—trusting in this—then we are researching in a manner quite different than mainstream psychology.  

And finally, you will no doubt gain more of an appreciation for the eco-grief we humans feel and will learn about various ecopsychological perspectives (social, political, scientific, therapeutic) for healing our minds and the planet.

**Required reading:**


http://www.amazon.com/Ecopsychology-Science-Totems-Technological-Species/dp/0262517787


Some readings will be on Blackboard under the Course Documents section for this course, any many are linked here within the schedule of this syllabus. All readings are due on the day where they are listed in the schedule. Be prepared to talk about the readings in class.

**Determining your final grade:**

1. Eco-Journal (up to 50 points)
   
   a. Eco-praxis: Connecting w/Nature or Sustainable Agriculture experience (10 hrs)
   
   b. Ecopsychological thoughts
   
   c. Reflections on reading
   
   d. experience with outdoors and meditation

   Criteria for assessment will be based on the quality and quantity of the entries, plus a good balance of the four. You must also, of course, do the “field-work”/eco-praxis.

2. Paper (Up to 25 points)
   
   Times New Roman or Calibri, 12 pt. Double-spaced; 3,000 - 4,000 words (12-16) pages; APA style (reference page, citations within the paper, and the title page). The final
On 5 April Talk

**Please email your topic to me by March 5th: andrewsa@newpaltz.edu**

3. Student-share (10 points)
Talk to us about your paper — at whatever point you are at. Each student will have about 15 minutes to share with 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion.

4. Take-home final. Two pages. Times New Roman or Calibri, 12 pt, single-spaced. (Up to 15 points)

5. Self-assessment (Not for points, but you must hand this in to get a grade!)
Though not an easy task, briefly evaluate your overall class work. (No more than ½ a page.) At the conclusion, give yourself a letter grade for the course.

On teaching this course; an excerpt from Andy Fisher’s *Radical Ecopsychology* (2013):

“As an example of the thoroughgoing transformation of psychology that needs to be undertaken if it is to counter the ideology of individualism, I wish to consider here the recent book by Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman, Toward Psychologies of Liberation. Watkins and Shulman begin by noting: “Though we have been trained as psychologists, we have each found it necessary to defect from professional interpretations focused entirely on individuals and families, and on mental constructs separated from the cultural, social, and economic worlds in which they are embedded.” Their book is an exercise in rethinking the goals and practice of psychology in a world traumatized by economic globalization, legacies of (neo)colonialism, ecological ruination, war and genocide—all of which “mark this era as one requiring extraordinary critical and reconstructive approaches.” Watkins and Shulman use as a metaphor for their work the idea of “assisted regeneration,” a term they borrow from an ecological practice that helps damaged lands recover biodiversity and that is “based on a deep trust in the regenerative capacity of nature.” In short, in the kind of psychology they advocate the psychologist is viewed less as an expert with scientific models applied from the outside and more as a guide in creating conditions in communities that free up the life in the people who dwell there to creatively foster social and personal regeneration. “Here the role of the psychologist becomes that of a convener, a witness, a coparticipant, a mirror, and a holder of faith for a process through which those who have been silenced may discover their capacities for historical memory, critical analysis, utopian imagination, and transformative social action.” Such a research approach “seeks to democratize the generation of understanding” by placing the process of knowledge creation largely in the hands of ordinary people working together. While empirical methods are not excluded, this kind of psychology emphasizes research that is life-filled: participatory, dialogical, artful, and action-oriented. Founded on an ethic of relatedness and interdependence, and embracing the growing number of grassroots psychologies emerging on the margins of Western psychology around the world, it asks of psychologists that they make themselves vulnerable. This includes being willing to disrupt disciplinary boundaries, “allowing debates and research in disciplines such as anthropology, education, performance studies, cultural studies, art, religion, sociology, and philosophy to enrich theorizing about the practice and research of psychology.” Finally, Watkins and Shulman highlight the devastating effects of colonialism and globalization on human-place relations, insisting that liberation psychologies “also be eco-liberation psychologies that attend to the mutual interdependence of the natural and built environments, animals, and humans.” In
many respects, I think Watkins and Shulman have presented the psychology of the future, given the radical nature of our times. Lest it be said, though, that such cultural and community-oriented approaches deny the sovereignty or dignity of the individual, I think what they propose actually achieves the opposite. As I noted in chapter 4, anthropologists such as Tim Ingold observe that a sense of individuality and autonomy may be strengthened by rich communal ties, whereas it is the lonely, isolated individual of our own culture, suffering from a gnawing emptiness and crippling doubts about their worth, who is prone to the defense of mass conformity.”

Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Readings</th>
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| Feb 3  | What is Ecopsychology? (First generation) | Syllabus and intro
Ecopsychology pp. 1-12;
Roszehak:
http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2008/ENSz237Um/Roszak_Ch_1.pdf
Ecotherapy, pp. 30-36;
Smith:
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31ecopsych-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0;
Doherty:
http://www.joannamacy.net/theworkthatreconnects/theoretical-foundations.html
Bb: Metzner, 65-67
Bb: Eisenstein
Watch:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wviYuKDLKs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRtc-k6dhgs |
| Feb 17 | Radical Ecopsychology (Beyond 2nd gen.) | Ecopsychology 79-109;
http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/eco.2013.0031 [links to html and/or pdf] |
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Interiority:</td>
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<td>-A. Fisher</td>
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<td>Mar 3</td>
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<td>Ecopsychology as a</td>
<td>Paper topic due by email no later than March 5</td>
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<td>Mar 10</td>
<td>Guest: Joseph Jastrab</td>
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<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>Spring break</td>
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<td>Mar 24</td>
<td>Ecotherapy</td>
<td>Ecopsychology 115-136; Ecotherapy 13-29; 37-68</td>
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<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>Ecotherapy</td>
<td>Read several chapters that interest you in Ecotherapy. Respond</td>
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<td>in writing to an idea/ideas that interest you (in your journal</td>
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<td>Student share</td>
<td>and/or type up) and be prepared to share</td>
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<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Student Share</td>
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<td>Apr 14</td>
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<td>Apr 21</td>
<td>Guest: Andrew Faust</td>
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<td>Apr 28</td>
<td>field trip</td>
<td>paper due</td>
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<td>May 5</td>
<td>field trip</td>
<td>See Blackboard (Joanna Macy, Bill Pfeiffer)</td>
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<td>Eco-Journal due</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Final 10:15</td>
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N.B. Readings and schedule subject to change.
Eco-praxis (choose one)

I. Connecting with Nature experience (10 hours)

I encourage you to the following, but feel free to connect with nature however you wish. Walking across campus with your iPhone doesn’t count! Connecting with nature should be sustained, solitary, and without distractions.

A. "Sit-spot" practice, championed by nature guru Jon Young and recommended to me by Scott Sampson. Pick an easily accessible spot (a backyard, for example) and go to it regularly. Sit there for 30-40 minutes. While there, Scott suggests dividing up the time into 3 or 4 10-minute chunks and taking notes in a journal about what you observe. But you may do this exercise however you please. For example, just take it all in and then write. Scott writes: “The key is to open up all of your senses and try to understand the natural drama occurring all round. Practitioners often learn to identify a handful of local birds, as well as their calls, as a means of assessing the shifting "mood" of a place and even determine the arrival of predators.” For a bit more information on sit-spots and "bird language," check out his blog post and the references listed at the bottom:

(http://scottsampson.blogspot.com/2012/12/learning-bird-language.html). I don’t expect you to recognize bird calls, etc., just observe, listen, and feel.

B. Go to the rail trail (or a local spot that is quiet and free of culture—trails on the Shawangunks mountains, for example. Or here: http://www.nyquistfdtn.org/nyquist-harcourt-wildlife.html (right on Huguenot Street). Walk, hike, stand, sit – be there. Observe and take notes during and/or after your experience. Do some forest bathing! http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_bathing

II. Field work with SUNY New Paltz Sustainable Agriculture (10 hours)

In the coming weeks, we will get a visit from a couple of members of this group and we'll talk to them about this potential experience.

Communication with me:

I'll put important updates, like changes in the readings (additions/deletions, etc.), cancellation of class and/or a change in office hours on Blackboard and send out emails to your newpaltz.edu addresses. I'm a lover of email, so you're best off reaching me at andrewsa@newpaltz.edu rather than voicemail. Also, if my office hours conflict with your schedule, I’m happy to coordinate another time to meet with you – just see me after class or email me about it.

Attendance:

Since the class meets only 14 times, it's important that you not miss class. Also, please make every effort to be on time.
Cell phones:
Please turn your cell to silence mode. If you’re a caregiver and you need to be in touch with a child or parent, etc., please turn to vibrate mode and answer phone outside of class.

Inclement weather:
When snow or ice appear dangerous for driving, even if the college has not closed, you should check Blackboard and your email, in case I cancel class.

Campus-wide Policy Statements:

Academic Integrity:
From the SUNY New Paltz statement on academic integrity: “Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Cheating, forgery, and plagiarism are serious offenses, and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action.” For more information regarding the policy of academic integrity here at the college, you can go to: http://www.newpaltz.edu/studentaffairs/regulations/campus_rules.html#academic.

Also, if you’re unsure about what violates this policy, please ask me.

Disability Resource Center:
Any student who will need classroom and/or testing accommodations based on the impact of a disability should contact the Disability Resource Center, Student Union, Room 210, 845-257-3020. The DRC will provide an Accommodation Memo for your instructors verifying the need for accommodations. Students are encouraged to request accommodations as close to the beginning of the semester as possible.

SEIs:
Student evaluation of instructor forms (SEIs) will be available between April 23 - May 6 (you’ll get an electronic announcement prior to their release).

Suggested texts (not required):


CALL FOR PAPERS: Ecopsychology and the Long Emergency: Building Eco-resilience for Global Change, Trauma and Renewal

Submission Deadline: March 20, 2015


Local Resources:

SUNY New Paltz Mind-Body Healing Arts
https://www.facebook.com/groups/693411674083415/
http://www.newpaltzsa.com/organizations/spring-2013/meditation-club

SUNY New Paltz Farmers' Market
https://www.facebook.com/SUNYNPFarmersMarket

Environmental Studies at SUNY New Paltz
https://www.facebook.com/groups/252861454894962

New Paltz Climate Action Coalition
https://www.facebook.com/pages/New-Paltz-Climate-Action-Coalition/440970735951732

New Paltz Zero Waste Action Plan
http://www.newpaltzreuse.org

Environmental Task Force at SUNY New Paltz
https://www.facebook.com/groups/380303924777
https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/NPEnvironmentalTaskForce
SUNY NP Biology seminar

Gidon Eshel, of Bard College
Feeding 9 billion people: new insights from the US on the role of individual choices
Tuesday, February 3 in CSB Auditorium 4:30-5:30

Kara Belinsky, of SUNY New Paltz
Songs and the suburbs: what birds can teach us about communication and conservation
Monday, February 23 in LC102 6:00-7:00 (Part of the EvoS seminar series)

David Richardson, of SUNY New Paltz
Acid rain, fish and leech introductions and climate change: the dynamic sky lakes on the Shawangunk Ridge
Thursday, February 26 in LC102 7:00-8:00 (Part of the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership seminar series)

Chelsea Marcho, of UMASS, Amherst
X chromosome inactivation and developmental epigenetics
Thursday, March 5 in CSB Auditorium 5:00-6:00

David Lahti, of Queens College
Evidence of genetic biases to social learning
Tuesday, March 31 in CSB Auditorium 5:00-6:00

William Powell, of SUNY ESF
Return of the king: the development of a blight-resistant American chestnut tree
Tuesday, April 22 in CSB Auditorium 5:00-6:00 Earth Day! Special celebrations planned – stay tuned for details!

Some relevant links:

Ecopsychology Journal — peruse!  http://online.liebertpub.com/loi/ECO
http://www.wildethics.org/essays.html
http://spiritualecology.org
http://www.ecobuddhism.org/solutions/wde/eom/
http://ecopsychoanalysis.blogspot.com/p/about.html
http://www.ecopsychology.org/gatherings/
http://www.eomega.org/workshops/ecological-literacy-immersion-program