

CURRICULUM FOR THE BIOREGION

**Resources in the Curriculum for the Bioregion Curriculum Collection¹
that Involve Reflective and Contemplative Activities****Essays**

Eaton, Marie, and Kate Davies, Jean MacGregor, and Sarah Williams. “Why Sustainability Education Needs Pedagogies of Reflection and Contemplation”

This essay sets out a rationale and framework for pedagogies of reflective and contemplative practice and makes an argument for why they are critically important to sustainability education.

Eaton, Marie. “Contemplation to Action: the Role of Strategic Question Asking”

Discussions of sustainability issues often include an examination of complex issues with many competing perspectives. This essay offers some reflective and contemplative activities related to strategic questioning that may help students engage conflicting multiple perspectives and inter-related systems as they try to imagine possible solutions.

Eaton, Marie. “Environmental Trauma and Grief”

This essay explores the dimensions of environmental grief and trauma, and the strong emotions often raised in our classrooms as we and our students negotiate the dual strands of the despair and hope that are part of teaching and learning about Earth devastation. The essay examines the intersections and differences between this kind of grief and our more commonly understood kinds of bereavement, and draws on the significant work that has been done around how to manage grief in the arena of death and dying.

Gaul, Karen. “Voices of Practice: Teaching yoga, Sustainability, and Justice”

This essay describes experiments in a practice-based model of teaching at The Evergreen State College. Integrating yogic texts such as the *Yoga Sutra* with community efforts in sustainable living means an embodied set of skills for students responding to today's world.

Hoelting, Kurt. “The Practice of Inner Habitat Restoration: A Contemplative Approach to Sustainability Studies”

This essay explores "the contemplative arts" as a component of sustainability studies, based on my work as a wilderness guide in Alaska. I lead students on week-long kayaking expeditions that link ecological literacy with the practice of contemplative silence. I make the case for contemplative practice as an essential tool for cultivating resilience and navigating despair in a time of tumultuous ecological decline.

Martin, Peter. “Second Language Learning and Teaching and Reflective Practices”

There is a noticeable lack of interest in and practice of reflective and contemplative pedagogy in the teaching and learning of second languages in spite of the demonstrated importance of attention to affective ways of learning in second language acquisition. This essay looks at possible reasons for this disconnect and offers examples of ways in which reflective practices have been effective.

¹ <http://serc.carleton.edu/bioregion/index.html>

Romano, Rosalie. "Making Space for Mindful Practice in College Classrooms"
Rationale and approach for initiating mindful practice in a college classroom.

Sikes, Elizabeth, and Sarah Williams. "Bateson's Left Hand: What the Right Hand Cannot Say about the Sacred."

The paper begins with the results of an experiment done in an Evergreen State class using yoga nidra as a form of stress reduction. When students were asked to give feedback about their experience in quantitative form using a Scantron input, many refused to respond appropriately, drawing smiley faces and other doodles instead. We analyze this in terms of Gregory Bateson's notion of an epistemology of the sacred, an epistemology of not-knowing and taboo. An analogy is made between Williams' students' refusal to reflect on their experience in quantitative terms and Gregory Bateson's example of a tribe of Native Americans who refused to have their peyote rites filmed by an ethnographer who wanted to use the footage to argue on their behalf of for continued legal use of the drug as part of a legitimate religious ceremony. Even though this could have potentially saved the rite and their religion, they were not willing to compromise the religion in order to save it. It seems that what would have been saved would no longer have been their religion. We argue that in both cases with the introduction of the camera or the Scantron evaluation, the locus of control or knowing becomes deterritorialized, shattering the integrity of meaning as this locus moves from inside the circuit to a subset outside, from internally organized and set terms of knowing to foreign ones. The role of conscious purpose and its material reification in the film camera are considered.

Williams, Sarah and Jules Unsel. "Minding Education's Business in an Evergreen Program: Reflections on Money's Value, Soul's Worth."

This essay describes a year-long, interdisciplinary, and team-taught cultural studies of business program at The Evergreen State College that had an explicit agenda. In addition to providing literary, quantitative, historical, neuroscientific, and case study perspectives and activities, we wanted to teach students and learn with them in ways that put money's value into conversation with soul's worth. Our working definition of soul took the form of a Gregory Bateson-like question: "What if the soul is an awareness of the subjective experience of interconnectivity?"

This essay, which includes student voices and faculty reflection, was partially funded by TESC's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Activities and Courses Appropriate to a Variety of Disciplines

Davies, Kate. "Seeing Sustainability"

This assignment requires students to reflective observations of a particular place and to identify signs of sustainability and unsustainability.

Gillespie, Mike. "Quiet Noticing: Reflective Activities for Environmental Ethics"

A series of reflective activities (quiet noticing) that engage students personal dimensions of questions of values and ethical commitments, such as in environmental ethics courses. The activities and assignments might also be adaptable for other courses where a sustained reflective component is desired.

Hughes, Holly. "Using Reflection Activities in the Field to Deepen Student Learning."

This activity offers one of the reflection activities we developed in our learning community "Exploring Natural History in Word and Field." In this class, the students learn about natural history by reading natural history essays and participating in field trips. In this activity, we use reflection before and during a field trip to an Old Growth Forest to help our students clarify their own stance for a Position Paper on whether and under what conditions logging should be allowed in Old Growth Forests.

Kennedy, Cynthia. "Sustainability From the Inside Out: A Learning Community Guided by Patanjali's Yoga Sutras"

This is a description of a year-long, interdisciplinary, learning community program and how explored the challenges inherent in pursuing sustainable living in today's world and offered concrete tools to move toward a positive global future. Based on the idea that effective community action stems from careful self-reflection, the program focused on a simultaneous journey inward as well as outward.

Litfin, Karen. "Who am I in a Changing Climate?"

Concluding a study of climate change in a course on Global Environmental Politics, students engage in a reflection exercise intended to develop their capacities for self-inquiry, self-awareness and integrative learning.

MacGregor, Jean. "Don't Just Do Something, Sit There: Suggestions for Observing in Nature"

A workshop for enabling students to sit quietly and observantly in the natural world.

Ryan, Maureen. "Ecological Autobiography"

The ecological autobiography is a multi-stage reflective and written exercise that draws on students' personal history and experiences as they consider the ecological context of some period of their lives. The goal is to individually and collectively explore how the landscapes and ecological communities we have inhabited influence us as individuals, set the context of our lives, and influence our expectations of landscape.

Ryan, Maureen. "Migration: An Empathy Exercise"

Migration: An Empathy Exercise is a multi-step reflective exercise designed to build empathy and personal insight into processes of loss, change, and reconnection associated with the disruption of personal and cultural connections to landscape.

Ryan, Maureen. "What is the West?"

What is the West? is a written reflective exercise, with associated readings and discussion, designed to 1) build insight into how personal experiences shape our perception of landscapes, 2) enhance knowledge of the geography and ecology of the American West, and 3) illuminate the role of water (or lack of water) in the natural and cultural history of the American West.

Sikes, Elizabeth. "Wilderness Practice within the Circumference of the Collegiate Home"

This is a field activity that reinforces the concept of what Gary Snyder calls "a practice of the wild," that is, a practice that engages and connects the whole person within the local ecological community broadly conceived.

Activities developed by the Philosophy/Religious Studies Faculty Learning Community

Chamberlain, Gary. "Meditation and Collection: 'Garbage Reduction'"

The basic principle at the heart of both of these "exercises" is sustainability. In order to assess the students' awareness of their own "ecological imprint", students engage their inner-selves through brief meditation and conducting an inventory of their mental garbage as well as tracking concrete evidence of their own waste habits through a garbage tally.

Kalton, Michael. "We're Screwed!"

This course is designed to address the interlocked problems of unwillingness to confront the dimensions of the environmental crisis and the feelings of helplessness and despair that often accompany perceiving the gravity of the situation.

Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia. "Race, Class, Gender and the Earth Crisis: Sustainability and Social Justice Meet"

Students work collaboratively to construct knowledge about the intersection of social justice and ecological integrity. Students will choose a consumer product that has adverse ecological and social justice impacts and develop a set of proposals for action that would challenge, dismantle, or diminish those adverse consequences.

Morris, Randy. "The Great Turning Bioregional Community Fair."

This learning activity is a community fair that is organized and implemented by the students themselves and which draws upon the resources of our surrounding bioregion. Such an exercise in bioregional public education can be undertaken in a wide variety of courses in many different disciplines. This particular activity takes place within a class entitled "Foundations of the Great Turning". As described in the class syllabus, "The Great Turning refers to this historical moment in which we live, as our civilization moves from an industrial growth society to a sustainable earth community. Students examine the basic premises of the Great Turning, from holding actions in defense of life on earth, to envisioning new alternatives, to the philosophical and spiritual resources needed for this transformation." The Bioregional Community Fair will be organized around these three themes, with guest speakers, demonstrations, and digital posters created by the students themselves.

Nascimento, Amos. "Community Questions, Global Answers, and the Ethics of Environmental Responsibility"

This submission is a course and an activity using the bioregion as a resource for environmental ethics. The first part of the course is devoted to questions (fact gathering) related to the bioregion. The second part is reflecting and focused on global answers.

O'Brien, Kevin. "A Lifestyle Project for the Humanities"

Students take what they are learning in an introduction to environmental studies course and through a series of writing assignments, they can reflect and explore and choose an array of potential approaches to personal and social change.

O'Brien, Suzanne Crawford. "Sacred Meals: Food, Community and Place in Indigenous Traditions"

This assignment focuses on the importance of cultivating awareness of the interdependency of people and place. This core concept intersects with a central big idea of the course: how subsistence traditions maintain reciprocal relationships between human and ecological communities.

Schneider, James. "Interconnectedness in The Upanishads and Upon Our Sheds"

In this workshop students gain understanding of the Hindu concept of monism and how it can be related to the sustainability concept of interconnectedness to classroom community as well as the natural environment on campus.

Activities developed by the English Faculty Learning Community

Bube, June Johnson. "Investigating Local Food: Meet Your Washington Farmers"

This assignment sequence seeks to stimulate students' thinking and writing about food production in the western Washington bioregion through a series of activities combining readings, class discussion, fieldwork, and writing assignments. Collaborative work in and outside of class culminates in students' interviewing local farmers and vendors at farmers markets and writing a surprising informative essay.

Byrd, Kathleen. "A Sense of Place Collage Essay"

The "collage" format of this paper offers students the opportunity to explore a sense of place from multiple perspectives without needing to demonstrate a "stance" as is usually expected in a thesis-driven essay.

Chamberlain, Rebecca. "Writing and Walking, Pilgrimage and Process: Working with the Essays of Linda Hogan and Henry David Thoreau"

By comparing and contrasting the essays of Hogan and Thoreau, students begin to develop a more complex understanding of their own identity and sense of place; the historical and cultural context around issues of sustainability and environmental ethics.

DerYeghiayan, Tara. "Civic Stewardship and Interdependency: Rethinking Our Local Patterns of Consumption and Development"

This "Exploratory Essay" writing assignment asks students to acknowledge themselves as stakeholders in their communities, to take a closer look at the urban or suburban town they call home, and to re-examine notions of entitlement.

Gray, Danielle. "Toxic Hygiene: How Safe Is Your Bathroom?"

Students learn about potential safety and health concerns of personal hygiene products. Students examine labels and advertisements of these products and then engage in rhetorical and cultural analysis of these advertisements.

Hughes, Holly. "Reading & Writing Poetry as Contemplative Practice"

These activities offer ways to incorporate contemplative practice into the teaching of reading and writing poetry, with specific handouts/assignments and sample poems provided.

Hughes, Holly. "Using Reflection Activities to Deepen Student Learning"

This activity offers one of the reflection activities we developed in our learning community "Exploring Natural History in Word and Field." In this class, the students learn about natural history by reading natural history essays and participating in field trips. In this activity, we use reflection before and during a field trip to an Old Growth Forest to help our students clarify their own stance for a Position Paper on whether and under what conditions logging should be allowed in Old Growth Forests.

Hughes, Holly. "What's Up With Your Stuff?"

Through a quarter-long series of assignments students determine their ecological footprint and explore their relationship with consumer culture. Students are given an opportunity to participate in a "service-learning" activity.

Jeffers, Robin. "Recognizing the Impact of Dominant Culture Privilege"

This sequence of five assignments, starting with the study of texts, has students taking a look at the concept of dominant culture privilege and then moving them out into their own world to analyze what they're seeing there.

Leising, Jared. "Maps and Legends: (Re)placing Composition"

Because maps tell stories, offer perspectives, and make arguments, maps also act as a metaphor for the writing assignments students are given. The writing that students do in this class creates maps to where students have been (writing stories from memory), where they currently are (writing profiles from observations of places), and where they're headed. This course approaches sustainability from the viewpoint of learning to value the places in which we live through listening to and telling stories about those places.

Luckmann, Chuck. "Transportation: Waterways to Interstate Highways"

Students practice open-ended inquiry, guided inquiry, synthesis and expository writing as they explore personal and public modes of transportation, past and present, in the Puget Sound bioregion. This activity can be adapted to any region.

Lundberg, Todd. "Building a Public Knowledge Base: The Wiki-cadia Node Assignment"

The center of this sequence of assignments is a collaborative "new media" writing project that involves students publishing to a wiki a synthesis of knowledge about how humans inhabit places.

Plevin, Arlene. "Where/How Do We Live: The Power of Ads and Sustainability."

Writing and thinking activities inviting students to consider the cultural milieu of advertisements and the concepts of sustainability they promote, or don't promote?

Reavey, Kate. "Mapping Place, Writing Home: Using Interactive Compositions On and Off the Trail."

Using writing prompts, text-based research, and close observations in the "field" (the chosen place), students will create a "mashup" of spatially referenced pop-up balloons. These will include researched and narrative prose, citations and links, and some visual images, embedded into a map via Google Earth technology. Note: This assignment was created by an instructor who considers herself a novice in technical realms.

Teory, Matthew. "Welcome to My Home"

Students are encouraged through writing and research activities to discover a greater sense of place and express their increased awareness of local ecosystems and cultural communities.