



Course Outline

EDUC 6111 – Eco-texts: Sustainability and the Cultural Imagination

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Howard
Office: School of Professional Studies
Telephone: 563 1300
E-mail: patrick_howard@cbu.ca
www.patrickhoward.ca
www.facebook.com/cbueducation

Acknowledgement of First Nations

This course begins by acknowledging that Cape Breton University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq people signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties do not deal with surrender of lands and resources but recognize Mi'kmaq title and establish the rules for what is an ongoing relationship between nations.

Department Mission and Core Focus

The Department of Education at Cape Breton University is committed to preparing teachers for their responsibilities as educators in both local and global contexts. To achieve this, we provide programs in both pre-service and continuing teacher education that emphasize disciplined professional inquiry while reflecting the best classroom practice and the results of current research on teaching and learning. The Department of Education is dedicated to preparing teachers, who will be knowledgeable, skillful, flexible, caring pedagogues and responsible members of the profession.

A core focus for the Education programs at Cape Breton University is Education for Sustainability (EfS). This vision of EfS is inclusive of the three realms of sustainability – environment, society and economy and addresses content, context, pedagogy, global issues and local priorities. Teachers and teacher candidates will engage in learning designed to cultivate, critical thinking, creativity, knowledge, and skills to actively address challenges with sustainable solutions. EfS supports the values of interdependence, empathy, equity, personal responsibility, social justice and holistic perspectives required to participate in society and to live sustainably and well.

Course Overview

This course will introduce students to the field of ecologically oriented cultural studies, or ‘eco-criticism’. It will critically examine various cultural constructions of sustainability in a range of texts exemplifying different discourses (e.g. fictional, philosophical, scientific) and genres (e.g. film, documentary, narrative, poetry). In addition, consideration will be given to the emergence of a number of distinct approaches within eco-critical studies.

Students will also engage creatively with different genres of text understanding that text is an inclusive term that captures many forms of representation including print, film, digital media and other ways of representing. Students will have the opportunity to create texts based on their interests, on the places they live, on sustainability issues, and explore their own eco-texts by pursuing a creative practice.

It is to be understood that students do not require prerequisite creative skills or artistic abilities. The course is designed as introductory, exploratory, discovery-based, and aims to enhance the creative development of participants.

Course Goals

- understand how knowledge is culturally constructed through many forms of representation
- demonstrate the ability to empathize with the problems of others including issues affecting global communities
- demonstrate the ability for systemic thinking
- work and think from a futures-oriented perspective
- demonstrate through a creative practice a deeper understanding of sustainability issues and trends
- develop self-instigative creativity, develop experimentation, discovery, risk-taking, innovation, critical thinking, reading, and viewing skills

Course Objectives

- develop an understanding of the implications of ecological thinking about cultural studies
- enhance ability to recognize and discuss critically the cultural assumptions about sustainability informing a variety of significant texts
- become familiar with several distinct approaches within eco-critical cultural studies and learn to apply at least one of these
- become more aware of the implications of their own assumptions regarding sustainability for their self-understanding, relations with others and mode of being in the world.
- develop skills in the areas of research, creativity, critical thinking, analysis, interpretation, and communication.
- engage in a creative practice to more deeply explore sustainability issues relevant and appropriate to the students' communities and cultures

Topics

1. Introduction to Cultural Studies and Ecocriticism
2. Connecting Sustainability Education and Creative Practice
3. Place based Teaching and Learning
 - writing place
 - local history
 - eco-composition
 - journaling
4. Bioregionalism – Re-inhabiting Place through Language and Creativity
5. Novel Study – Fiction and Non-fiction Book Review

Required Texts

Students will be required to purchase a novel of their choice from a prescribed list. See <https://orionmagazine.org/the-orion-book-award/> However, students may wish to access the novel or book of their choice through the library.

Assignments and other Course Requirements: students will be provided detailed descriptions of all course assignments.

1. Discussions and Seminars: participation and contributing to discussions on course readings. The discussions may take the form of Moodle Discussion Forums and/or audio/video slide deck contributions.

2. Creative Practice Portfolio: During the course students will make contributions to a creative portfolio that explores issues and topics of relevance to the student. Experimenting with various creative texts is encouraged including: writing (different genres); digital media; video, photography and other ways of representing. **

3. Book Talk: over the term students will choose one book to read from the list compiled by Orion magazine – both annual award winners and runners up can be chosen. * Students can also propose a book not on this list but that meets the criteria. Students will lead a ‘book talk’ and present their book to the class.

4. An Ecocritical Reading: students will choose a scholarly article or book chapter to read and present their thoughts and findings.

5. Place based Pedagogy and Bioregionalism: Students will formulate written responses to a simulated Q/A designed to explore key understanding taken from the module readings on place and bioregionalism.

**** It is expected that students will make all or parts of their creative practice available to share with the class. A final decision of what to share rests with the student. With student permission, some pieces may be shared more widely through social media or as part of a course archive of creative projects.**

Evaluation:

1. Creative Portfolio	35
2. Assignments	40
3. Discussions & Contributions	10
4. Book Talk	15

A Note on Grades

Grades in the range of 90-100 indicate work that is of exceptional quality that represents achievement that is quite rare; all course outcomes are met and exceeded. Grades in the range of 80-89 reflect a level of achievement that is excellent and indicate a high degree of sustained effort and a demonstration of mastering most course content and skills. A grade in the 70 -79 range communicates a good effort with many course concepts and skills being mastered and an acceptable quality of course work being produced. e grades below 70 communicate that the core course outcomes have not been met by the student.

Code of Student Behaviour

All students should read carefully the section in the University calendar pertaining to “Ethical Behaviour in Academic Matters”. This information can be found in the CBU calendar.

All online interactions will be subject to Guidelines for Moodle Discussion Forums that will be made available as part of the course resources.

Course Schedule and Tentative Plan

Term 1

Week	Topic
Week 1 -3	Introduction to Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies
Week 4	Building a Creative Portfolio – Getting Started
Week 5 -8	Ecological Literacy Choosing a book

	Place Based Teaching and Writing
	Bioregionalism
Week 9	Writing Place – Growing the Creative Portfolio
Week 10	Book Talks

Week 11 -12	Presenting creative Portfolios

** a detailed list of due dates will be made available as part of the course resources