

# **EDUC 8Y15: Environmental Education/Outdoor Education**

## ***Instructor***

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## ***Introduction***

Environmental/Outdoor Education is the planned use of out of classroom environments and situations to enrich students' learning experiences about the "natural" world around them. These sites may include the school yard, urban and rural environments, outdoor education centers, private for profit facilities, and public facilities such as conservation areas and provincial parks. Environmental/Outdoor Education has its roots in the Science and Social Studies but also addresses the objectives and outcomes of many other subject areas. It is truly an interdisciplinary field.

In a highly urbanized culture such as ours opportunities for children to interact with the natural world become all the more important. Through personal experience we come to know, respect and develop an appreciation for the mystery of that which we are part of.

While the stimulus for learning is the "outdoors", several sessions will demonstrate how to bring the outdoors into the classroom. As well, although Environmental/Outdoor Education is broadly conceived to include a variety of learning situations in many contexts, the focus is the *environment* and our relationship with it (*ecology*).

Becoming *ecological literate*--citizens possessing knowledge, skills, dispositions, and actions of and for the environment--is a major course objective. Concepts such as *sustainability*, *interconnectedness* and *interdependency* will be introduced through theoretical readings and practical activities. *Sustainability*, a concept frequently maligned by other agenda, is foundational to the course, despite its varied definitions. For our purposes and context these three concepts are interwoven into what has been referred to as *ecopedagogy*—the practices we employ as teachers to prepare the next generation of children to live carefully, respectfully, receptively, and thoughtfully with the earth.

## ***Meet Time and Location***

We meet Wednesdays from 3:00pm-5:00pm in Room 16. When field trips have been organized we will meet at those sites. To allow for travel time, off-campus sessions will begin at 3:30pm. Directions will be provided in advance. Please consider, where feasible, environmentally friendly ways of getting to these sites.

## ***Course Aims and Objectives***

- to provide teacher candidates with rudimentary theory on ecological literacy; themes of *interconnectedness, interdependence, and sustainability*, in turn to become *ecopedagogues*.
- to model effective EE/OE education teaching strategies;
- to familiarize students with some of the history of environmental education within the province of Ontario;
- to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to explore our relationship with *place* and *being* and thereby, begin to develop other ways of being a teacher;
- to acquaint teacher candidates with the wealth of teaching and curriculum materials available to support EE/OE;
- to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to teach elementary/secondary students to become *ecologically literate*;
- to acquaint and familiarize students with the major provincial and federal environmental education organizations;
- to orient students toward the breadth and depth of currents comprising a topography of EE/OE.
- to expose teacher candidates to alternative teaching experiences and contexts, and where possible to provide a two-week EE/OE Practicum Placement experience toward the end of May (please consult the *Department of Teacher Education's Teacher Candidate Handbook*, p. 36 and ask your Faculty Advisors for further information.

## ***Course Outline***

### **Session 1: Wed. September 8: *Introduction***

- Welcome and introductions; course outline
- What is environmental education?
- The status of Environmental Education in Ontario: *Shaping our Schools, Shaping our Future*
- Calculating our *ecological footprint*

### **Session 2: Wed. September 15: *Ecological Literacy: Developing a Sense of Place and Being***

- Field trip to Spencer Gorge/Webster's Falls
- Assignment B: *Developing a Sense of Place and Being*.

### **Session 3: Wed. September 22: *Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup***

- demonstration of a service learning project through participation in the *TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup*.
- Christie Lake/Conservation Authority.

**Session 4: Wed. September 29: *Ecoschools Program***

- modeling an environmental school audit;
- Richard Christie of the TDSB *Ecoschools* program will provide an overview of the program and explain how your school could become an ecoschool

**Session 5: October 6: *Sharing our Developing Senses of Place and Being***

- Student presentations of developing work introduced during Session 2.

**Session 6: Wed. October 13: *Conducting a Simple Nature Walk***

- Field trip to Hamilton's Arboretum at the Royal Botanical Gardens;
- Conducting a Simple Nature Walk at Cootes Paradise and a tour of the Hamilton Arboretum Interpretive Centre with Ian Hendry: issues of safety, content, and class management.

**Session 7: Wed. October 20: *Environmental Education's Greatest Challenge—Climate Change***

- how do we educate about Climate Change?
- *The Climate Project (TCP)*: Experiences over a weekend with Al Gore

**Session 8: Wed. October 27: *Conservation Education—Bluebird Houses/Bat Boxes***

- former instructor, Bert Murphy, will demonstrate how to construct bluebird boxes/bat houses;
- students will take home a sample of one of these habitat conservation projects.

**Session 9: Nov. 3: *Presentation of Assignment—Developing a Sense of Place and Being***

- Students present/share assignments.

**Session 10: Nov. 10: *Presentation of Assignment—Developing a Sense of Place and Being***

- Student presentations continued.

**[Note: Final Assignments due--Monday, December 13 @ 3:00pm Rm. 16]**

- please submit either in person or electronically.

### ***Course Evaluation:***

#### **A. Participation in class and field excursions: 25%**

As this is an EE/OE course, participation in all its aspects is critical.

#### **B. *Developing a Sense of Place and Being*: 25%**

This assignment will be introduced during our excursion to Spencer Gorge/Webster's Falls next week and will be developed during the course of the term. The assignment will involve developing an intimate sense of *place* ("natural" location) to explore other ways of *being*. On Wednesday, October 6 preliminary understandings of this *Sense of Place* will be explored with your colleagues in a seminar. A final presentation of your *Sense of Place and Being* will be made to the group during the weeks of November 3 and 10. Details of this assignment will be given during our second session.

#### **C. *Environmental Education/Outdoor Education Action Plan*: 50%**

*The Environmental/Outdoor Education Action Plan* is an activity you select and perform involving a learning experience with students in the outdoors, or where you bring the "outdoors" into the classroom. Again, an environmental or ecological theme should permeate the action plan. This experience can take place within a school during your first practicum, or in a completely different context. For example, volunteering at an outdoor center, nature park, museum, or hobby farm. It can be with an organized group such as cubs or scouts, a church youth group or a nature club. The nature of the activity is broadly conceived. It may be something that we've explored in our group, or something entirely original. The activity must take six (6) hours to complete in total. A written report must be submitted. Details of this assignment will be provided just prior to your November practicum.

### ***Required Reading***

In most cases, required readings will be completed during class meeting times.

- Bowers, J. & McEwan, S. (1989). Where is the Environment in Ontario's New Curriculum? *Interactions: The Ontario Journal of Environmental Education*, 11(1), 1-3.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *Shaping our schools, shaping our future: Environmental education in Ontario's schools*. (Report of the Working Group on Environmental Education). Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer.
- Sauve, L., (2005). *Currents in environmental education: Mapping the complex and evolving pedagogical field*. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 10(Spring), 11-37.

### ***Optional Reading***

- Bowers, C. (1993). *Critical essays on education, modernity, and the recovery of the ecological imperative*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Bowers, C. (1993). *Education, cultural myths, and the ecological crisis: Toward deep changes*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bowers, C. (1997). *The culture of denial: Why the environmental movement needs a strategy for reforming universities and public schools*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McRae, K. (1990). *Outdoor and environmental education diverse purposes and practices*. Australia: MacMillan.
- Orr, D. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.
- Orr, D. (1993). The dangers of education. In R. Miller (Ed.). *The renewal of meaning in education*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Orr, D. (1994). *Earth in mind: On education, environment, and the human prospect*. Washington D.C: Island Press.
- O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

#### **Note:**

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University community will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the University community with disabilities. If you require accommodations related to a permanent disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact the Student Development Centre Services for Students with Disabilities (4<sup>th</sup> Floor Schmon Tower ext. 3240) and also discuss these accommodation(s) with the professor/instructor.

