

FALL 2018 Art and Ecology

ART 397L CRN 44034 5 credits

TR 11:30-2:20 FI228

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Introduction: In the realm of ecologically-oriented art, there is a growing field of strategies, with artists and artist networks, curators, books and exhibitions, university majors and degree programs. Within this broad effort, eco-artists work across disciplines and within communities to:

- Focus attention on the web of interrelationships in our environment – to the physical, biological, cultural, political and historical aspects of ecological systems;
- Create artworks that employ natural materials, or engage with environmental forces such as wind, water, or sunlight;
- Reclaim, restore, and remediate damaged environments;
- Inform the public about ecological dynamics and the environmental problems we face;
- Re-envision ecological relationships, creatively proposing new possibilities for co-existence, sustainability, and healing.

Eco-artists assert our entanglement in a more-than-human world. They introduce ecologically relevant timeframes, longer than a human life span, longer than generations. Their work exposes empty-world assumptions, that there is "always another forest to cut, a grassland to plow, a fishery to trawl, always an upstream, an upwind, a place that is away" (Thomas Princen). Ultimately, they extend the creative problem-solving of contemporary art practice to the larger societal concern of sustainability.

Course Description: Art 397L Art and Ecology is a Studio course, to be distinguished from Art History 348 Art and Ecology. The objective of the course is to develop knowledge, skills and critical thinking for eco-art practice. Students conduct interdisciplinary research, field work, and community engagement in order to facilitate eco-art projects. As the range of eco-art practices are diverse, from the production of physical objects to performance, environmental intervention and social practice, the course provides hands-on experience in an array of creative strategies.

In Fall 2018, Art 397L Art and Ecology has a biodiversity theme, to coordinate with exhibitions at the Whatcom Museum, "Endangered Species: Artists on the Front Line of Biodiversity," and at Western Gallery, "Modest Forms of Biocultural Hope". Responding to that theme, you will be selecting one living non-human organism indigenous to the Salish Sea region for your work and research, an organism that will sustain your interest and attention throughout the quarter.

I will highlight three exciting features of the course in Fall 2018:

- "Salish Wonder Room" is a collaborative installation by the class within the Western Gallery exhibition. Opening later than the main exhibition, on Thursday, October 18, the changing installation will track your research and discoveries this quarter, as you learn about organisms of the Salish Sea region and respond to natural history display, scientific research, field studies, indigenous practices, and contemporary art.
- Visiting Artist and Biologist Brandon Ballengée, October 8-13. Ballengée, whose work is part of the Whatcom Museum exhibition, is coming to Western for a week of programs in early October. Ballengée's transdisciplinary work is inspired by his ecological field and laboratory research into amphibians, birds, fish and insects. He posits art practice as a means of realizing research science, and vice-versa, and sees both as the impetus for "ecosystem activism" that stresses public involvement. The week-long visit was made

possible by fundraising that started last Spring by myself and your extraordinary TA, Mouse Bird. You will have multiple interactions with Brandon, including a field trip and a specimen preservation workshop.

- A salmon habitat restoration work party on Whatcom Creek, in collaboration with Professors James Helfield and John Tuxill, their class on habitat restoration, and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association. This is an important day to learn about ecosystems and community engagement. Please mark your calendar for Saturday, November 3.

Student Learning Outcomes: Through this course you will

- widen your imaginative and aesthetic capacities to respond to field study, scientific research, and indigenous practices in your contemporary art practice;
- acquire wide-ranging interdisciplinary knowledge about a nonhuman organism of the Salish Sea region and its habitat through self-directed research;
- develop skills with multidisciplinary practices of installation, collaboration, field work, and social practice through hands-on projects.
- gain familiarity with a wide range of international artists addressing ecology, especially issues of biodiversity, threats to biodiversity, and climate change, learning about the strategies and critical concepts they employ.

Projects:

- *Commonplace Book*. In a blank book dedicated for this purpose that is no smaller than 5" x 9" x ½", you will make transcriptions of passages from readings, record observations, think out loud, and make drawings.
- *Blackboard*. There will be a large blackboard wall in our project space, *Salish Wonder Room*, in Western Gallery. For six weeks there will be a prompt every week on the Blackboard and you will respond by transcribing entries from your Commonplace Book into chalk. Each week the full Blackboard will be photographed then erased. The Blackboard will be a public interface with your Commonplace Book, a place to share what you are discovering.
- *Drawerful*: Later in the quarter we will be installing 3d projects in *Salish Wonder Room*. You will be given a kitchen drawer from an old kitchen. Alternatively, you can select and purchase your own kitchen drawer from the large array available at the ReStore. You can also add more drawers if your concept requires it. This drawer will be a repository for objects that you collect and create that are related to your organism and its habitat. You can think of it as your drawer as your own cabinet of curiosities, and organize it as a system of display in a horizontal or vertical format. Alternatively, the drawer can be the base or component of a 3d assemblage that you build – that is also a container for your collection.
- *Eco-Action*: Your final project will creatively apply what you have learned while collecting, observing, reading, writing, photographing, making drawings etc. about your organism. Your Eco-Action could be a hands-on science or art activity, a performance, an event of public activism, etc. The class is the community with which you will test or practice the interaction.

Evaluation:

- *Commonplace Book*: Writing, Research, Transcription, Drawing, Collage (20%)
- *Blackboard*: #1-6 Responses through Writing and Drawing (12%)
- *Drawerful*: 3D Assemblage with Found Objects (25%)
- *Eco-Action*: Proposal (4%), Bibliography (4%), Interactive Event (25%)
- Participation in class activities and collaborative installation (10%)
- (Optional) Reviews of selected community lectures and exhibitions for extra credit (up to 5 pts.)

Grading of studio projects is based on a number of factors, including conceptual development, formal and technical experimentation and problem-solving, craftsmanship, strong and consistent work ethic, receptiveness to critique and openness to new knowledge. I will be glad to discuss your progress in the class at any time. My office hours (TBA) are an opportunity for additional individual meetings that are not possible during busy class times.

Attendance: Success in Art 397L will require a high degree of personal motivation on the part of the student. It will not be possible to meet the requirements of the class without significant out-of-class time to do research and work on projects. Attendance at ALL class meetings, trips, and events is expected. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences; each additional absence causes one's final grade to drop by one letter. Three early departures or late arrivals equal one absence. Attendance for critiques and presentations is mandatory.

Participation: A number of collaborative activities and projects require an unusual commitment to working together in a positive way. I am committed to establishing and maintaining a climate that is inclusive, respectful, and fair for all students, that encourages open communication, a diversity of perspectives, and an ethic of teamwork. If you feel the classroom climate does not respect this commitment, I encourage you to discuss this with me. Likewise, I expect that you will listen and engage respectfully with one another especially in group activities and projects, such as the programs with Brandon Ballengée, installations in Western Gallery, and the final project Eco-Actions.

The space of the classroom FI228 will be used only by Art & Ecology and Department meetings this quarter. You will have 24-hour access to the studio, and it is crucial that clean up and store your projects and materials after each work session. Only nontoxic art materials may be used in this space; no solvents, aerosols, or oil-based supplies. I encourage you to use a locker to store any tools and supplies. We will have a Sculpture Woodshop safety workshop in advance of the *Drawerful* project so that you can use that facility. You will be expected to participate in the installation and de-installation of *Salish Wonder Room*, and in a final cleanup of FI228 at the end of the quarter.

Academic Integrity: Western is committed to integrity in all aspects of academic and campus life. No student shall claim as their own the achievements, work, or arguments of others, nor shall they be a party to such claims. Plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the assignment and possibly an F for the course. For more information on Integrity and Academic Honesty, visit the following websites:

Academic Integrity Web Site: www.wwu.edu/integrity/

Academic Honesty Policy and Procedure:

<http://catalog.wwu.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=1521>

Disability Accommodations: Reasonable accommodation for persons with documented disabilities should be established before the end of the first week of class and must be arranged through Disability Resources for Students: telephone 650-3083; email drs@wwu.edu; and on the web at <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/>

Primary Readings:

Darwin, Charles, "Galapagos Archipelago" and "Tahiti and New Zealand," in *Voyage of the Beagle*, London and New York: JM Dent & Sons, Ltd. and EP Dutton & Co, Inc., 1906. (Electronic reserves on Canvas).
Hamilton, Ann, *The Common Sense*, Seattle, WA: Henry Art Gallery, 2014-15 (pdf on Canvas)
Kimmerer, Robin Wall, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013 (WWU Bookstore).
Matilsky, Barbara, *Endangered Species: Artists on the Front Line of Biodiversity*, Bellingham, WA: Whatcom Museum, 2018 (pdf on Canvas).

Secondary Readings (in order of due date):

- Haraway, Donna, "Symbiogenesis," in Bubant, N., Gan, E., Swanson, H., Tsing, A., ed., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017 (pdf on Canvas), pp.
- "Farther, Faster, Together," ArtPlace America LLC and Hellicon Collaborative, 2018 (pdf on Canvas).
- Carruthers, Beth, "Praxis: Acting as if Everything Matters," 2006 (pdf on Canvas).
- Pearson, K.R., Backman, M. Grenni, S., Moriggi, A., Pisters, S. Vrieze de, A., "Arts-Based Methods for Transformative Engagement: A Toolkit," Wageningen: SUSPLACE, 2018 (pdf on Canvas).
- Andreotti, Vanessa de Oliveira, "Torpor and Awakening," lecture, Indigenous Scholars Conference: Indigenous Epistemologies: Re-Visioning Reconciliation, 2015, University of Alberta
<http://artseverywhere.ca/2016/06/21/torpor-and-awakening/>.

Brandon Ballengée Schedule:

Tuesday OCT 9, 5pm	<i>Praeter Naturam: Ecology Beyond Nature</i> , Keynote Talk, Frasier 101
Thursday OCT 11	Wetland Eco-Action during Art & Ecology class time
Friday OCT 12, 9am-12pm	Specimen Preservation Workshop with Art & Ecology and Vertebrate Zoology classes
Saturday OCT 13 2-3pm	<i>Monstres Sacrés: Bearing Witness to the Anthropocene</i> , Whatcom Museum, Old City Hall

Assigned Readings in Green.

Graded Assignments in Orange.

Optional related community events are in small type gray.

This schedule is subject to change.

Course Dates	Class Time	Events Outside of Class Time
Thurs Sept 27	Course introduction, Commonplacing, Walk	
Tues Oct 2	Using the Library Onesearch Center for Pacific NW Studies visit 12:30 <i>Voyage of the Beagle pp357-414</i>	
Wed Oct 3		Opening, "Modest Forms of Biocultural Hope," Western Gallery, 5-7pm
Thurs Oct 4	Whatcom Museum class trip <i>Endangered Species pp13-51</i>	"Use Citizen Science to Protect Biodiversity" Lecture, Old City Hall 7pm
Sat Oct 6		"Return to the Forest" Film & Discussion, Old City Hall, 1pm "Surge" Opening, Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner, 3pm
Tues Oct 9	Brandon Ballengée class visit <i>Ballengée essay</i> <i>Endangered Species pp53-127</i>	Brandon Ballengée Campus Lecture 5pm 101 Frasier
Thurs Oct 11	Brandon Ballengée Wetland Eco-Action	
Fri Oct 12		Brandon Ballengée Specimen Preservation Workshop, 9am-12pm
Sat Oct 13		Brandon Ballengée Presentation, Old City Hall, 2pm
Tues Oct 16	"Modest Forms of Biocultural Hope," Western Gallery <i>Haraway, Symbiogenesis</i> <i>Blackboard Response #1</i>	<i>Selection of Organism</i> Due (Canvas) Western Gallery Installation by signup
Thurs Oct 18	Western Gallery Installation Work session <i>Braiding Sweetgrass pp3-59</i>	"Salish Wonder Room" Opening, Western Gallery, 5pm "Wild Nooksack River" Lecture, Old City Hall, 7pm
Tues Oct 23	Barbara Matilsky guest lecture + work session	<i>Blackboard Response #2</i> "Climate Change Impacts" Lecture, Old City Hall, 7pm
Thurs Oct 25	<i>Braiding Sweetgrass pp63-117</i> <i>Commonplace Book Check-In 1</i> + Woodshop session	

Tues Oct 30	John Tuxill guest lecture/work session <i>Braiding Sweetgrass pp122-201</i>	Blackboard Response #3
Thurs Nov 1	No class/work session	Organism Bibliography Due (Canvas)
Saturday Nov 3		NSEA Work Party 9am-12pm. Parking/shuttle to site from NSEA Campus (3057 E Bakerview Rd.)
Tues Nov 6	Marco Hatch visit?/work session <i>Braiding Sweetgrass pp206-300</i> Individual meetings by signup	Blackboard Response #4
Thurs Nov 8	<i>Farther, Faster, Together</i> + work session Individual meetings by signup	"Estuaries & Ecosystems of the Salish Sea" Lecture, Old City Hall, 7:30pm
Tues Nov 13	Beth Carruthers guest lecture, proposals pitch and critique <i>Carruthers, Praxis</i>	Blackboard Response #5 Workshop Proposal Due (Canvas)
Wed Nov 14		"A Plastic Ocean" Film, Old City Hall, 12-2pm
Thurs Nov 15	Critique of Drawerful Projects, Western Gallery, Commonplace Book Check-In 2	Individual meetings available by apptmt 8:30-11:30
Tues Nov 20	"Surge," MoNA class trip <i>Braiding Sweetgrass pp303-386</i> <i>Arts-Based Methods for Transformative Engagement</i>	
Thurs Nov 22	Thanksgiving – No class	
Tues Nov 27	Vanessa Andreotti guest lecture <i>Andreotti, Torpor and Awakening</i> Eco-Action pitch and critique	Blackboard Response #6 "Threatened & Endangered Wildlife in WA" Lecture, Old City Hall, 7-9pm
Thurs Nov 29	Eco-Action 1 Omni	

Tues Dec 4	Eco-Action 2 Omni	Western Gallery De-Installation by signup
Thurs Dec 6	Eco-Action 3 Omni Commonplace Book Due	Western Gallery De-Installation by signup
Mon Dec 10 Finals week	Eco-Action 4, Omni 5:30-8:30pm Commonplace Books returned	