

AUIDS 286/386
Spirit of the Land: Building a Community Land Ethic

**Nothing so important...
as a land ethic is ever 'written'. It arises in the minds of a thinking community. ~ Aldo Leopold**

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Office Hours: Mondays 1:30 to 3:30pm (in the Forum) – and by arrangement through email.

Purpose and Approach of the Course and Conference

Drawing from many of the relationships developed last year “Spirit of the Land” takes a deeper look at the relationship of our society to the land and its people. At its heart, the course and its Nov 1 and 2 conference hopes to create space to have a deeper conversation about land and community to foster a renewed and life-giving land ethic. In particular, the course and conference seek to draw a connection between the healthy spiritual and relational life of a community and wise land stewardship.

Recognizing that discussion of a land ethic involves the participation of, and learning from the land's First Peoples, this course and conference acknowledges the important work of Idle No More in showing an alternative to viewing the land as something to be exploited for its resources, regardless of the damage that creates to the land, air, and water from which we all live. Indigenous leaders and elders will be a significant resource to us in our course and in the conference, including one of the founders of Idle No More, Sylvia McAdam and an Alberta anchor for the movement, Janice Makokis.

One significant feature of the course is that the participants are introduced to a wide range of contemplative practices that are being used in our communities to awaken us to reality and cultivate an affection for our body, for the earth, and for each other.

And since a “community land ethic” has to be developed in community, the course has participants meet as “reflection partners” outside of class, which will both study together and engage in a variety of activities that strengthen our relationship to the land, to ourselves, and to community.

Since we learn from elders often better than from books, we have invited community members to be present and to be willing to take on mentoring or supporting roles, as the students request it.

Course objectives:

1. Nurture connection to land and place
2. Become aware of the connection between spiritual health and ecological health
3. Begin cultivating a contemplative practice
4. Nurture qualities of being (humility, gratitude, courage, body awareness, listening/attunement, other...)
5. Become aware of Native/Settler heritage and history
6. Begin developing a community-land ethic

Course Requirements/Assignments

- 1. Active Participation: Posting, Reflection Partners: 40%**
Active participation in this group means:

- a. **Weekly posting of reflections on readings** on a variety of platforms
(The idea is that as you read the material for the topic of the coming Thursday, you enter brief reflections online: either globally accessible or only to the class and instructors. Reflections can be as short as a tweet, and gradually expands on some topics to a 250-500 word blog.)
- b. **Weekly meeting with “reflection partners”.**
“Reflection partners” will be small groups of 3 or 4 people who commit to meet weekly before the Thursday class to either read the selection from “Hope Beneath our Feet” aloud together and to discuss the assigned readings (which you read normally before you get together. You individually post reflections on your readings and small group discussion, letting key themes, questions, issues emerge for the Thursday class.

The ‘reflection partners’ are the teams that also do some of the suggested “reflection activities” together (see below), reflecting and analyzing their experiences.

Once or twice during the semester “reflection partners’ will do their discussing while helping prepare the communal Thursday meal with a community member.

- c. **Engaged conversations on the Thursday class meetings.**
- d. **Active involvement in planning, organizing, and facilitating the Spirit of the Land conference.**
- e. **Reading most of *The Nature Principle* (Louv) and *Food and Farming* (Berry) and *Hope Beneath our Feet***
- f. **Connecting to nature activity** (hike, canoe trip to Dried Meat, etc.)

Evaluation of this part will be “self-evaluation(10 %), peer evaluation,(10%) and instructor evaluation (20%) of your “active participation” .

2. **Reflective and Analytic Portfolio... 35%**

The portfolio is your creative way of showing how you have met the major objectives of the course, You state the objective and then show through photography, art, scrap booking and some written reflections how you have achieved a given objective. E.g. you photograph and describe a walk (with Michael Barr), then you reflect on your experience to identify what your learning was.

3. **Final Project..... 25%**

As a final project you take one theme of the course and either write a formal paper on it (about 8 to 10 pages) or do a video-project or find some other creative project that shows your capacity to reflect upon, and analyze at least one key issue related to “the spirit of the land” and the task of building a community land ethic.

Suggested Possible Reflective Activities for Spirit of the Land Course:

1. Have one part of the “reflective partner/small group” do a 45 minutes nature walk while the other half of the partners/group walks in a shopping mall. Then compare experiences.
2. Have reflective partners jog or walk or do exercise outdoors and at a different time exercise indoors or at Edgeworth, and compare experiences.
3. Keep a journal/log of how much time each person spends outdoors for any reason: anything outside of house and university or other buildings... Then discuss after one or two weeks of logging this info.
4. Reflection partners visit with an elder (e.g. in Hobbema), a farmer (e.g. Don Ruzicka or Brian Rozmahel or Debbie Schielke). Reflect on this in portfolio.
5. Do some of the meditations of “Thinking Like a mountain” book or on Biblical Readings, or... Write down some of your experiences with meditations or contemplations in your portfolio... and/or share with reflective partners.
6. Take 15 minutes of “quiet time” a day (using any discipline from “breathing meditations” to prayer to...?): Key objectives: self-reflection; developing silence so one can listen to self and others and nature...
7. Take a regular “electronic Sabbath”.
8. **voluntary larger group reflective activity:** organized by students for as many as can attend
 - a. canoe trip : Battle River down to Dried Meat Lake (Hans, Kolby)
 - b. hike with Mike: longer hike (2hrs plus) e.g. on Waskahegan Trail
 - c. visit to Hobbema (and meet with Lorne Green; view “Gently Whispering Back the Circle” with Beth MacKenzie)
 - d. prepare food for Thursday classes in small reflective groups possibly connecting with community members (Treva, Linda, Margaret, Kyla, Tif, Leah)

	The Spirit of the Land and Spirit of the Course and Conference <i>Video in class: The magic canoe</i>	(usually at 7pm) Dittmar	w/ Linda Gervais <i>"Contemplation as a basis for ecological transformation"</i>	Munju Ravindra, "Wonder: A Practice for Everyday Life", 177-182
Sept 12	The foundation of a land ethic is gratitude and finitude, i.e., humility: Reading: <i>The Nature Principle, pp.1-40.</i> Video Resource: <i>Sacred Economics</i> http://sacred-economics.com/	Craig Wentland's place Community BBQ; then at Craig's at 6:15 pm	w/ Craig Wentland <i>"Gratitude & finitude"</i>	Kelly Coyne & Erik Knutzen, "Become an Urban Homesteader", 102-105
Sept 19	What are the outer and inner threats facing us and our land? Reading: <i>Berry, Bringing it to the Table, 1- 48.</i> Video Resource: <i>Dirt. The Movie!</i>	Colin Milang	w/ Barry Vall <i>"Discernment"</i>	Michael Ablemann, "Thinking like an Island", 115- 121
Sept 26	Idle No More and the struggle for transformation Video Resource: "Gently Whispering Back the Circle"	Janice Makokis	w/ Janice? <i>"Courage"</i>	Kaylynn Sullivan Twotrees, "Indigenous Mind", 170- 174
Oct 3	Transforming Farming Reading: <i>Berry Bringing it to the Table, 67-80; 105-128</i>	Don Ruzicka	w/ Dawn Kilarski <i>"Change / Courage"</i>	Barry Lopez, "Eden is a Conversation", 209-212
Oct 10	Merton, Potlatches and Technology (different ways of being in the world) Reading: <i>Berry, Bringing it to the Table, 85-194</i>	Dan Bogert O'Brien, Epp Centre 7pm	w/ Dan Bogert O'Brien	Vivienne Simon, "Fostering Light in Dark Times", 213- 216
Oct 17	The Nature Principle Reading: <i>Nature Principle: 43-88</i>		w/ Treva Olson <i>"Nature & body"</i>	Nala Walla, "Body as Place: A Somatic Guide to Re-indigenization", 150 -157
Oct 24	NO CLASSES: READING BREAK			

Oct 31	Spirit of the land: reflections from Peru... Reading: D. Mündel, "Hope in the Midst of the Babylonian Captivity of the Rural"	Carmelle Mohr	w/ Carmelle ? OR Peter LeBlanc "Healing"	Dr. Vandana Shiva, " Earth Rights", 166-169
Nov 1 nd 2	CONFERENCE : SPIRIT OF THE LAND (central part of course)			
Nov 7	An elder's reflection on land: Reading: Nature Principle, 89-119	Elder Roy Louis	Roy Louis "TBA"	Ann Rosencranz and Jyoti, " The Grandmothers speak", 260-264
Nov 14	NO CLASS (as replacement for conference time)			
Nov 21	How Communities are making the transition to more local, connecting to food and land. Reading: Nature Principle, 120- 153 Video in class: In Transition		w/ Nola Sharp "Listening"	Tzeborah Berman, "In the Climate Era the Personal is Political", 197-200
Nov 28	Spiritual Disciplines: learning to listen to the land, self and others and cultivating empathy.. Reading: Berry, <i>Bringing it to the Table</i> , 213-234		w/ Dittmar Mundel "Daily disciplines"	Linda Buzzell, "Coping with Realities", 201-206
Dec 5	Sharing Portfolios and Special Projects		Celebration!	