

ENVR 204

Learning in Nearby Nature

Amy E. Ryken, Ph.D.
Office: Howarth 307
aryken@pugetsound.edu
(253) 879-2810
www.pugetsound.edu/faculty-pages/aryken

“Nearby nature includes parks and open spaces, street trees, vacant lots, and backyard gardens, as well as fields and forests. Included are places that range from tiny to quite large, from visible through the window to more distant, from carefully managed to relatively neglected” (p. 1).

Kaplan, R., Kaplan, S., & Ryan, R. L. (1998). *With people in mind: Design and management of everyday nature*. Washington, D. C.: Island Press.

Informal learning environments support life long learning (e.g., over the life span), life wide learning (e.g. in a range of setting), and life-deep learning (e.g., engaging beliefs and values).

National Research Council. (2009) *Learning science in informal environments: People places, and pursuits*. Washington, D. C.: The National Academics Press.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Most of human learning occurs across the life span and takes place outside of school settings. Schools are but one part of a large educational infrastructure that includes informal learning environments such as families and friends, libraries, museums, the outdoors, workplaces, community-based organizations, the media, and the Internet. Informal learning environments are powerful sites for learning because they support rich social interactions and allow people to engage their own learning goals and generate their own highly personalized understandings. Nearby nature sites like parks, green spaces and gardens can support exploration, restoration, and civic action. Students in this course examine learning and teaching in informal learning environments, in particular in nearby nature settings. Students critically examine how their own experiences and beliefs impact their engagement in nearby nature settings and how they view and define “nature.” Questions we will explore in this course include:

- How does the nearby nature setting promote exploration and understanding, a sense of restoration, and/or meaningful action?
- How do I make connections to my life experiences as I engage in a nearby nature setting?
- What is the match or mismatch between a site’s educational and architectural design intentions and visitor perceptions and experiences?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course you will examine learning and teaching in informal learning environments, like nearby nature, and critically examine how your own experiences and beliefs impact how you engage in these settings and how you define “nature.”

- By engaging in nearby nature settings and writing a reflective essay you will consider how the interaction of natural systems, human actions, and narratives about place teach us about our conflicting relationships to nature.
- By critically examining nearby nature sites in a reflective essay you will consider how writing narratives about place is one strategy to develop, and make visible, varied meanings of place.

This .25 unit course serves the *Environmental Policy and Decision Making* minor and major, an interdisciplinary program designed to help students integrate their major area of study with an understanding of how individual and collective decisions interact with the environment. Students who minor in Environmental Policy and Decision Making:

- Develop an understanding of the multiplicity of values, norms, interests, incentives, and scientific information that influence decisions on environmental issues,
- Learn to critically examine the scientific, social, political, and economic contexts for decisions on environmental issues, and
- Engage in interdisciplinary dialogue and apply systems thinking to address current and projected environmental problems.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Required readings will be accessible via Moodle.

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OUTLINE OF CONTENT AND SCHEDULE OF COURSEWORK

Discussion: Learning in Nearby Nature
Friday, September 8
5:00-7:00 p.m.
Howarth 212

Discussion

Landscape Preferences
Continuum of Human Intervention

Readings: Come to class prepared to discuss the readings below

Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. Preference, restoration, and meaningful action in the context of nearby nature. In Peggy Bartlett (Ed.) *Urban place: Reconnecting with the natural world*. (pp. 271-298). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Kaplan, R., Kaplan, S., Ryan, R. L. (1998). *With people in mind: Design and management of everyday nature*. (pp. 11-16, 18-21, 39-48). Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Williams, F. (2016). This is your brain on nature. *National Geographic*, 229 (1), 48-69.

Benepe, A. (2016). Nature of Cities website. *The heart, brain, and soul of city parks*.
<http://www.thenatureofcities.com/2016/01/25/the-heart-brain-and-soul-of-city-parks/>

Video Viewing and Written Reflection
due Wednesday, September 13

Watch these two videos and reflect on the September 8 class discussion. Post a 300-word reflection to Moodle describing the two key insights you have had so far. Post commentary to Moodle forum by Wednesday, September 13.

Video: Earthworks (5:13 minutes)

Lacayo, R. (not dated). *Waves of grass: Maya Lin's "Wave Field."* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://content.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,409531123001_2009739,00.html

Video: Re-imagining Urban Infrastructure (11:26 minutes)

Gravel, R. (2016, October). *Ryan Gravel: How an old loop of railroads is changing the face of the city*. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/ryan_gravel_how_an_old_loop_of_railroads_is_changing_the_face_of_a_city

Experiential Learning: Intentional Study of Nearby Nature

Earthworks
Saturday, September 16
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Bring your lunch. Wear clothes to keep you dry and warm, we will be outside all day.

We will travel as a group to locations in Kent in University vans.

Experiential Learning Sites

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks, Kent, WA

Robert Morris Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), Kent, WA

Readings: Come prepared to discuss the readings below

Spirm, A. W. (1995). Constructing nature: The legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted. In William Cronon (Ed). *Uncommon ground: Toward reinventing nature*. (pp. 91-113). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Baird, C. T. (March 2013). After 20-plus years how is Herbert Bayer's renowned Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks holding up? *Landscape Architecture*, 93, 68-75.

Ryken, A. E. (2009). Interpreting nature: Connecting to visitor understandings. *Roots: Botanic Gardens Conservation International Education Review*, 6 (1), 9-13.

Waterfront Walkway
Sunday, September 17
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Bring your lunch. Wear clothes to keep you dry and warm, we will be outside all day.

We will carpool to locations in Tacoma.

Experiential Learning Sites

Ruston Way Waterfront, Tacoma, WA

Thea's Park, Dickman Mill Park, Point Ruston

Readings: Come prepared to discuss the readings below

Ryken, A. E. (2015). Environment and Learning blog. Read at least two of the blog posts noted below.

Contamination and cleanup continues: <http://www.environment-learning.com/2015/02/22/contamination-and-cleanup-continues/>

Legacy of lumber mills:

<http://www.environment-learning.com/2015/03/15/legacy-of-lumber-mills/>

Contamination and eternal time:

<http://www.environment-learning.com/2015/03/01/contamination-and-eternal-time/>

Land Rights and landmarks:

<http://www.environment-learning.com/2015/02/15/land-rights-landmarks/>

Papritz, M., Tudor, M., Baker, E., & Ferguson, L. (2011). *Landscape investigation guidelines: Challenging K-12 students to engage in social science inquiry by applying spatial thinking to real world situations*. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies & Pacific Education Institute. (pages: 2, 4, 24-25)

Fleming, R. L. (2007). Placemaking interpreted: Revisiting the past, revealing future choice. In *The art of placemaking: Interpreting community through public art and urban design*. (pp. 210-214). New York: Merrell.

Discussion: Reflections on Learning in Nearby Nature
Friday, September 22
5:00-7:00 p.m.
Howarth 212

Bring a 4-5 page draft of your reflective essay to class.

Discussion

Key Themes

Share drafts of reflective essays for collegial feedback.

Sharing Reflections

Friday, September 29

Post 6-page reflective essay

Friday, October 6

Post 1-page commentary to assigned partner's reflective essay

Recommended Resources for Continued Learning

Reading: 90 Books on the Nature of Cities: <https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2016/12/14/read-this-from-your-world-view-and-perspective-what-is-the-one-book-about-or-relevant-to-cities-that-everyone-should-read-why/>

Nearby Nature Sites

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Olympia, WA

Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, WA

Gas Works Park, Seattle, WA

STUDENT REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

This course is a unique opportunity for us to engage with each other in the classroom and in local informal learning environments. You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your understandings in class, in experiential learning settings, and in written reflections.

Class Engagement—You will take multiple roles by regularly and punctually attending all class sessions and experiential learning settings (100% attendance is expected), engaging in activities such as discussing readings, completing in-class, online, and in-field writing assignments, sharing insights from your past and current experiences of learning in nearby nature, and participating as a productive and positive community member. These varied activities will allow us to communicate meaningfully about contested definitions of nature and learning. You will self assess your engagement and the professor will assess your engagement. (40% of final grade)

Reflective Essay—You will write a 6-page double-spaced reflective essay in which you critically engage your definition of nature in relation to at least one nearby nature site. (50% of final grade)

Due: Friday, September 29 (post to Moodle reflection forum)

Select at least one nearby nature site; it can be a site we visited as a part of class or another local site of your choosing. In your essay, make connections between your own observations and reflections, at least one course reading, and one additional reading (from course readings or another source) that has deepened your understanding of the site. You are encouraged to include at least one digital image of the site to support your reflective statements.

The following writing prompts may be helpful to guide your reflection and writing.

- How does the nearby nature setting promote exploration and understanding, a sense of restoration, and/or meaningful action?
- How does the nearby nature setting support you to re-think and critically examine your definitions of “nature,” “wilderness,” “culture,” and/or “learning”?
- Offer feedback to the stewards of the nearby nature site. What are the key strengths of the site? What key improvements could be made?

For examples of reflective essays see the following web sites.

Environment and Learning: <http://www.environment-learning.com>

Blog with reflections about Ruston Way, Tacoma, WA

The Nature of Cities: <http://www.thenatureofcities.com>

Virtual magazine and discussion site on cities as ecosystems

Reflective Essay Commentary—You will write a 1-page double-spaced commentary to an assigned partner’s reflective essay. (10% of final grade)

Due: Friday, October 6 (post to Moodle reflection forum)

UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND STATEMENTS AND POLICIES

University Mission Statement

The mission of the university is to develop in its students capacities for critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, sound judgment, and apt expression that will sustain a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, active inquiry, and reasoned independence. A Puget Sound education, both academic and co-curricular, encourages a rich knowledge of self and others; an appreciation of commonality and difference; the full, open, and civil discussion of ideas; thoughtful moral discourse; and the integration of learning, preparing the university's graduates to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship. Such an education seeks to liberate each person's fullest intellectual and human potential to assist in the unfolding of creative and useful lives.

Academic Integrity

The University of Puget Sound is a community of faculty, students, and staff engaged in the exchange of ideas contributing to intellectual growth and development. Essential to the mission of the academic community is a shared commitment to scholarly values, intellectual integrity, and respect for the ideas and work of others. At Puget Sound, we share an assumption of academic integrity at all levels. Please review the University's Academic Integrity Policy at <http://www.pugetsound.edu/student-life/student-resources/student-handbook/academic-handbook/academic-integrity/>.

University Diversity Statement

The university is committed to building a learning community based on a respect and appreciation for all persons.

We Acknowledge

- the richness of commonalities and differences we share as a university community.
- the intrinsic worth of all who work and study here.
- that education is enhanced by investigation of and reflection upon multiple perspectives.

We Aspire

- to create respect for and appreciation of all persons as a key characteristic of our campus community.
- to increase the diversity of all parts of our University community through commitment to diversity in our recruitment and retention efforts.
- to foster a spirit of openness to active engagement among all members of our campus community.

We Act

- to achieve an environment that welcomes and supports diversity.
- to ensure full educational opportunity for all who teach and learn here.
- to prepare effectively citizen-leaders for a pluralistic world.

Campus Emergency Response Guidance

Please review university emergency preparedness and response procedures posted at www.pugetsound.edu/emergency. Familiarize yourself with hall exit doors and the designated gathering area for your class buildings. When meeting on campus our designated gathering area is the fountain in front of Jones Hall. This class also involves field experiences off campus. In the event of an emergency remain calm, be prepared to act quickly, and listen for instructions.

Accessibility and Accommodations

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Peggy Perno, Director of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, 105 Howarth, 253.879.3395. She will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Student Bereavement Policy

Upon approval from the Dean of Students' Office, students who experience a death in the family, including parent, grandparent, sibling, or persons living in the same household, are allowed three consecutive weekdays of excused absences, as negotiated with the Dean of Students'. For more information, please see the Academic Handbook.