

WGSS 184A Queering Nature with Feminist Ecologies
May Term 2022 (.5 credit)

Instructors: Dr. Christy Holmes (she/her) and Dr. Jess River Vooris (they/them)

Meeting time: MTWThF 9-12 with some exceptions for field trips and other activities

Meeting place: 111 Asbury Hall most days (meeting sessions at Ullem campus farm and other locations will be announced)

Offices: Asbury 205C (Vooris) and 205B (Holmes), Office Hours by Appointment

Course Description

This course invites students to interrogate their relationships to nature, and to explore queer and feminist theoretical understandings of land and ecology. Historically, those who have been minoritized along gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual lines have been at the forefront of environmental justice, land reclamation, food justice, and related movements that focus on social and environmental domination. For oppressed communities, maintaining or rebuilding relationships with self, community members, and the natural world offers stress relief and recreation, healthier food cultivation, spiritual connection and other paths toward healing.

While queering nature, the course will examine the intersections of gender, race, ability, nationality, and class in regards to knowledge production about human-nature relationships, access to outdoor spaces and recreation in nature, and focus on cultivating a better understanding of our local relationships to land through paying close attention to our surroundings. In addition to readings, and other course texts that introduce these topics, guest speakers and field trips will offer experiential learning opportunities and skills training related to mindfulness, bird-watching, small-scale farming, cooking, and community organizing.

Learning Goals:

- Understand key ideas in WGSS (e.g., gender, sexuality, intersectionality, decolonization, feminism) and learn how they apply to the study of the environment
- Critically examine knowledge production about human social systems and the “natural” world
- Learn about the places you inhabit and gain skills that allow you to inhabit them more mindfully
- Imagine ways to foster just and flourishing relationships among humans and other species that work toward inclusive eco-futures

Course Materials

All course materials are available on Moodle. Please let us know right away if you encounter any broken links or difficulty accessing materials. Although there are no books to buy, you will need to have a paper notebook for your nature journal and to take with you for field notes during trips.

Additional materials for trips: comfortable shoes for hikes (hiking boots not necessary, but helpful for some trails. Sneakers are also fine); hat and/or sunglasses, bug spray, sunblock, water bottle.

DePauw approved masks required for indoor instruction spaces (e.g., the classroom, Ullem farm building).

Course Assignments:

Participation (25%): This is a discussion-based course, and your participation is important, whether in the classroom or during field trips. You are expected to come to class having read and taken notes on the material, and to be ready to discuss the material. The success of the class will depend on everyone sharing their ideas and perspectives. If you are someone who has a hard time speaking up in class, note that you can show that you are actively participating through your listening, your reactions to what your classmates are saying, and mindfully paying attention rather than spending time on your phone or laptop. We do not plan to institute a technology policy as long as everyone is actively engaged in class discussion; there will be breaks and other activity change-ups, though. We don't expect you to sit and talk about readings for three hours straight!

Active Engagement Points (25%): These are gained through a variety of ways—the first one is filling out the access survey sent at the start of the semester. Other ways include meeting with a professor outside of class, going on a walk in the Nature Park with classmates, volunteering at the farm, writing a short review of a book, blog, or youtube video that is related to class topics that you have found, or having a conversation with a friend outside of class about class topics. You will see that there are AEPs included on the syllabus—these are recommended readings/podcasts that are related to specific syllabus topics, and at the top of the moodle page. Please see Moodle assignment for more details.

Nature Journal (25%): A key component of the class is learning how to pay attention to the natural landscapes around us, and observing the daily rhythms of the world, and the plants, animals, birds, and other living beings around us. Over the course of the semester, you should take down quick observation notes at least 15 days (1 thing you saw, 1 thing you heard, 1 thing you felt, and 1 thing you smelled or tasted). You can do this in words and/or drawings/sketches. The purpose is to get into the habit of observing what is happening around you in the spaces that you move through, and learning about the other beings that you share the world with. We will model some examples on the first day of class.

Final Research Project (25%): For your final project you will conduct research on a topic related to queer nature, eco-feminism and place/land. You will then either create an “educational object” to educate others about this topic or create an “intervention plan” to solve a problem. The format of this can vary: posters, zines, conference plans, invention sketches, a podcast, a painting, poetry, lesson plan, etc.

Class Schedule

WEEK ONE:

Wednesday, May 25, 2022: Introductions, syllabus, Nature Park walk

- Meet in Asbury 111
- Learn about each other, the syllabus, and Nature Journal

- Wear comfy shoes—we will be walking to Nature Park if weather allows, visit Farm and meet the farm manager Catherine

AEP: [Register for “Hacking Darwin: Rebooting Disappearing Species” webinar](#) and log on to view the conversation with evolutionary molecular biologist Dr. Beth Shapiro from 8:30-9:30pm.

Thursday, May 26, 2022: Gender/Sex and Queer Nature

- Excerpts from *The Gender Book* by Hunter Rook and Jay Mays (40 pages comics)
- Joan Roughgarden’s “Evolution’s Rainbow” from *The Trans Studies Reader* (9 pages)
- Myra J Hird “Animal Trans” in *The Trans Studies Reader* (12 pages)

AEP/recommended: Queer Nature’s post “[Mystery](#)”

AEP: Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, "Introduction: A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies" in *Queer Ecologies*

Friday, May 27, 2022 Eco-Knowledges

- Ch. 1 “Intersectional Theory, Feminism, and Intersectional Environmentalism” in *The Intersectional Environmentalist* by Leah Thomas (15-36)
- Sky Woman Falling, Robin Wall Kimmerer (5 pages)

AEPs: Joni Seager, “Rachel Carson Died of Breast Cancer”

WEEK TWO:

Monday, May 30, 2022: Challenging Settler Knowledges

- Lauret Savoy “What’s in a Name” from *Trace: Memory, History, and the American Landscape* (pg 69-76)
- Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie and Kate McCoy. “Land Education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research.” *Environmental Education Research* 20 (1) (2014): 1-23.

AEP: Not Your Eco-Indian Princess

Tuesday, May 31, 2022: Exploring Indigenous Knowledges

- Field trip, Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis <https://eiteljorg.org/visit/map-hours-parking/>
- Anna Tsing “This Earth, this island Borneo” (Biodiversity Assessment as a multicultural exercise)” from *Friction*

AEP: Anna Tsing “Mushrooms as Companion Species.”

Wednesday, June 1, 2022: Outdoor Access and Accessibility

- Syren Nagakyrie “Disability is Natural,” from *Nature is a Human Right* (10 pages)
- Eli Clare’s “The Mountain” from *Exile and Pride* (13 pages)
- Celine Isimbi, “After Apartheid, Green Spaces are Still White Spaces” from *Nature is a Human Right* (4 pages)

AEP: [The Melanin Base Camp Guide to Outdoor Allyship](#)

Thursday, June 2, 2022: Ecological Explorations

- Shades State Park Field-Trip (longer day)
- Sophia “So” Sinopoulos-Lloyd “Restor(y)ing Place: Tracking and the Necessity of Ecological Intimacy” from *Nature is a Human Right* (8 pages)
- Treuer, [“Return National Parks to the Tribes”](#) (Atlantic article)

AEP: “When Seeing the World as Alive is Madness” by Pinar Ates Sinopoulos Lloyd
language access essay

Friday, June 3, 2022: Decolonizing Food Systems

- [“Decolonizing Our Food System”](#) (Video)
- **Pop-Up Dinners That Share a Culture, Course by Course - The New York Times (Article)**
- Lunch and guest talk with Gesenia Viviescas

AEP: [Outside/In: Gingko Love podcast](#)

AEP: A. Breeze Harper, “Social Justice Beliefs and Addiction to Uncompassionate Consumption: Food for Thought” in *Sistah Vegan*

WEEK THREE:

Monday, June 6, 2022: Farm Collectives and Farming

- Farm Day! 10-12pm (short day, sleep in!)
- “Feminist Food Justice: Crafting a New Vision” by Carolyn Sachs and Anouk Patel-Campillo
- Smith II, Bobby J. 2019. “Food Justice, Intersectional Agriculture, and the Triple Food Movement.” *Agriculture and Human Values* 36 (4): 825–35.

AEP: [Queer Farmers Convergence zine.](#)

AEP: [Annie Muskat, “What Does it Mean to be Both a Farmer and a Feminist?”](#)

Tuesday, June 7, 2022: Mindfulness in Nature

- Labyrinth Walk
- Qing Li, “The Secret Power of the Forest: From a Feeling to a Science” from *Nature is a Human Right* (12 pages)
- Podcast on nature sounds (see Moodle)

AEP: *How to Survive the End of the World Podcast*, “Tactical Hope: Interview with Queer Nature” and “The OODA Loop” Interview with Queer Nature

Wednesday, June 8, 2022: Plant Stories

- Nature Park with Dr. Dana Dudle
- Robin Wall Kimmer, “Asters and Goldenrod” (9 pages)
- Do some online research about the Nature Park and find out what you can about its history and use (spend maybe 10-15 minutes on this)

Thursday, June 9, 2022: Birds, Birders and Racism

- McCormick State Park
- [“Black Lives, Black Birds, and the Unfinished Work of Queer Ecologies”](#)
- Research a bird local to Indiana, and one from your home-town, and be ready to share with the class (including photos!)

AEP: Tara Santora, "[Black Women Who Bird' Take the Spotlight](#)" on Audubon website!

Friday, June 10, 2022

- TBD

WEEK FOUR: Making Kin and Imagining Eco-Futures

AEP: Shooglet's *Photo Essay on Autostraddle*

Monday, June 13, 2022

- Adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy*, Introduction (39 pages) and Interdependence chapter (20 pages)

AEP: Ellen Miles and Clover Hogan, “The Power of Love: Why Nature Connection is at the Root of Solving the Climate Crisis” from *Nature is a Human Right*

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

- Trip to Hobbitt Gardens in Fillmore, Indiana (about 10 miles away)
- Tuesday morning—short reading discussion on Daniel Raven-Ellison, “What if your City was a Natural Park” from *Nature is a Human Right*
- S’mores and campfire in the evening

AEP: Nicole Seymour’s “‘Good Animals’: The Past, Present, and Futures of Trans Ecology” in *Transecology*

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

- Work on projects