engaging with ecology

“Traditional Koyukon people live in a world that watches, in a forest of eyes. A person moving through nature – however wild, remote, even desolate the place may be – is never truly alone. The surroundings are aware, sentient, personified. They feel. They can be offended. And they must, at every moment, be treated with proper respect. All things in nature have a special kind of life, something unknown to contemporary Euro-Americans, something powerful.” — from Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest (Richard K. Nelson 1983)

Introduction
Welcome to module one “Engaging with Ecology”. This module introduces the severity and urgency of the ecological crisis and its concomitant social, cultural and spiritual problems and entanglements. It balances practical and theoretical knowledge to create a solid foundation for study within Engaged Ecology.

We will experiment with a range of practices or methods – Western and non-Western, orthodox and unorthodox – for engaging with the other-than-human so as to be able to reflect critically upon their ecological, social, cultural and spiritual implications. At the same time, we will consider some of the key terms, discourses, worldviews and debates that determine the field of study of ecological engagement so as to gain precision of thought and to explore the explicit and implicit tensions that arise between them. We will also conduct a search of relevant primary and secondary literature and provide critical commentary.

The module encourages us to reflect upon the sympathies and antipathies between practical and theoretical ways of knowing the world, and to examine how the one informs, fortifies, clarifies, annuls, distils, dispenses with, or disrespects the other. In doing so, we will gain a firm and foundational knowledge that will inform all further modules.

Our learning will consist in a mixture of practical workshops and textual readings, with visits from several external tutors who are specialists in their area of expertise. There will be spaces for reflection and discussion, inspired by weekly readings.

Module leader: Dr Andy Letcher andy.letcher@schumachercollege.org.uk Office in High Cross House, Rear Servant Bedroom Right

Unless otherwise stated: classes will be held in the Ecological Design Thinking studio (EDT studio) in the Craft Ed building, at the Old Postern site.

Key dates:
• Term dates Monday April 19th – Friday June 25th 2021
• Formative reading response (i.e. marks don’t count) due 11.00 Friday 7th May
• Summative reading response (i.e. marks count) due 15.00 Tuesday 15th June
• Essay and academic reflection both due 11.00 Tuesday 29th June
• Bank holidays: no classes on Monday 3rd May and Monday 31st May
Module aims:
- To develop a critical understanding of key terms, concepts, theories and ideas to do with human engagement with the more-than-human and the world at large
- To give direct experience of contrasting practical methods of engaging with the more-than-human
- To provide an opportunity to reflect upon the ontological and epistemological implications of contrasting methods of engaging with the more-than-human
- To place the ecological crisis, and surrounding thought, in intellectual and historical context

Module assessment
The module assessment is 100% coursework and consists in three components.

- 2 x 1000 word reading responses to academic articles. The first response is due **11.00 Friday 7th May**. It will be marked and commented upon by the module leader, and also by peer to peer marking, but the marks will not contribute to the final award: they are for formative learning only. The second reading response is due **15.00 Tuesday 15th June**, and the marks for this will contribute to the final award. Component weighting 20%.
- 1 x 2500 word academic reflection, or video or audio (diary, podcast, or radio programme) of 10-15 minutes, comparing differing ways of ecological engagement, due **11.00 Tuesday 29th June**. Component weighting 40%.
- 1 x 2500 word academic essay on a subject to be determined with the module leader, due **11.00 Tuesday 29th June**. Component weighting 40%.

Assessments should be uploaded via the Schumacher VLE. Marks and feedback will be available within 20 working days.

Assessed module learning outcomes:
In sum your coursework should meet the following learning outcomes:

1. Name, explain and critique key terms, concepts and debates concerning human engagement with the more-than-human and the world at large, placing them in their historical context.
2. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the current ecological crisis and some of its concomitant social, cultural and spiritual problems and entanglements.
3. Critically assess and evaluate a range of quantitative and qualitative, theoretical and experiential methods of engaging with the more-than-human, including at least one drawn from field trips.
4. Perform an appropriate literature review using material derived from online databases

Teaching and learning strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Activities</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Comments/Additional Information (briefly explain activities, including formative assessment opportunities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Library induction, engaged ecology practice workshop introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical classes and workshops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Essay writing skills, research methods, documenting skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Peer to peer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reading and other learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Two field trips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Face to face tutorials on assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent study</td>
<td>233</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>(NB: 1 credit = 10 hours of learning; 10 credits = 100 hours, etc.)</td>
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</table>

Students are expected to take full responsibility for their learning, attend all scheduled sessions, read appropriate indicated readings, and work on set exercises (formative and summative assessment).
Based on previous experience; students who failed to attend sessions are likely to be unsuccessful or show poor performance. Please ensure that you are engaging with the content and learning activities relating to this module.

**Late work/extenuating circumstances:**
If your participation in an examination or assessment has been affected by an extenuating circumstance, then you can ask the University to take this into consideration. You can submit a claim for extenuating circumstances to cover late submission of work, non-submission of work or non-attendance at a time specific assessment, such as an examination, test presentation or performance, or field class.

Information regarding the Extenuating Circumstances policy and how and where to submit Extenuating Circumstance Claims are available here: [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/exams/exam-rules-and-regulations/extenuating-circumstances](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/exams/exam-rules-and-regulations/extenuating-circumstances)

Where there are no valid extenuating circumstances, the following regulations will automatically apply:

- Work submitted after the deadline date/time but within 24 hours of it, will be capped at the pass mark 50%
- Work submitted 24 hours after the deadline will receive a mark of zero.

Please notify Dr Andy Letcher of any extenuating circumstances as soon as possible.

**Referencing protocols and academic offences:**
When writing a report or an essay you are expected to fully reference the materials you have used. The report or essay should be your own work, in your own words. For details on referencing please read the University of Plymouth referencing library guide:
[https://plymouth.libguides.com/referencing](https://plymouth.libguides.com/referencing)

Please use the Harvard system of references.

**Plagiarism** is an offence under the University regulations on examination and assessment offences. It is important that you familiarise yourself with what constitutes plagiarism, and academic offences. Further information can be found:
[https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations/plagiarism](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations/plagiarism)


**Module feedback**
At the end of the module we ask that you complete and submit a module feedback form, available on the VLE. This enables us to monitor quality, listen to your feedback and to make improvements.

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**Provisional timetable TERMONE**
* some sessions may begin earlier/later in day e.g. workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>week 1</th>
<th>19:04</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>morning</td>
<td>10.00-13.00 (approx.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Welcome session “Engaging with Ecology”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Deep Time Walk (Dr. Stephan Harding)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Independent study</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>26.04</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Goethean observation of plants (Stephan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Seminar: Introduction to Phenomenology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Making gestures: clay workshop (Lou)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Outdoor session collecting wood (Duncan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Independent study</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>03.05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Bank holiday, no classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>What is ecology? + Practical sit spots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Outdoor session: Flax (Simon &amp; Ann)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Making threads: practice &amp; reflections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Formative reading response due at 11.00am</td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>10.05</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Systems theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Gaia theory (Stephan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>9am session: Making spoons (Alex)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>**group divides for this week</td>
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<td>Fri</td>
<td>Independent study</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>17.05</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Fire by friction (Jessie Watson Brown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Reflection: What have we learned about climate?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Outdoor session: Cordage (Linda)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Knot making &amp; reflections</td>
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<td>Fri</td>
<td>Independent study</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<td>21.06</td>
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reading list

Week 1
Monday 1st February What is the Anthropocene?
Required reading

Week 2
Monday 26th April Goethean observation of plants
Additional reading

Tuesday 27th April Introduction to Phenomenology
Required reading
Additional reading
Dr Matt Segall explaining Goethe's participatory method: https://youtu.be/NL7Sz6KNZKk

Week 3
Tuesday 4th May What is ecology?
Required reading
Additional reading
Deborah Bird Rose; Thom van Dooren; Matthew Chrulew; Stuart Cooke; Matthew Kearnes; Emily O’Gorman. 2012. 'Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities.' Environmental Humanities 1(1): pp.1-5.

Week 4
Monday 10th May Introduction to Systems Theory
Required reading

Curtis Adam. 2011. ‘How the 'ecosystem' myth has been used for sinister means. The Observer 29th May 2011. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/may/29/adam-curtis-ecosystems-tansley-smuts

Additional reading

Tuesday 11th May Gaia Theory
Required reading

Additional reading

Week 5  No required reading

Week 6
Monday 24th May Anthropology and Birdsong
Required reading

Additional reading

Tuesday 25th May Science, music and birdsong
Required reading

Additional reading

Anyone wanting to play with sonagrams, download the free generator here: www.sonicvisualiser.org
I’ve put a recording of a Nightingale that I made in Oxford 2011 up one my Google Drive folder for you to download. It starts quietly but gets louder as I approach the tree from which the bird was singing.

Week 7
No required reading

Additional reading

Week 8
Tuesday 8th June Animism
Required reading
Watch ‘Make Prayers to the Raven’ episode 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzYQX90Uvrg&t=112s

Additional reading

Week 9
Monday 14th June
Please watch
Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCVZqXstdgY
Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Fsu1hdCZmY

Tuesday 15th June What is nature?
Required reading

Additional reading

Week 10
Monday 21st June What is place?
Required reading

Additional reading

Some suggested background reading