

# making connections



“People who spent most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles over the rocky roadsteads of this parish get their personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycle as a result of the interchanging of the atoms of each of them and you would be surprised at the number of people in these parts who are nearly half people and half bicycles...when a man lets things go so far that he is more than half a bicycle, you will not see him so much because he spends a lot of his time leaning with one elbow on walls or standing propped by one foot at kerbstones...”

— from *The Third Policeman* (Flann O’ Brien 1939)

## Introduction

Welcome to module two “Making Connections” in which we will examine forms of *making* as primary ways in which humans engage with the world. We will experiment with a variety of practices, performing every step of production from first principles to finished product, so as to explore and reflect upon the many ways in which making entangles us with materials, place, and our human and more than human kin -- *making as an ecology*.

The intention is to empower us to reflect critically upon our direct experience, paying particular attention to how this experience might reveal entanglements which might ordinarily be invisible, hidden or obscured. While our focus will be primarily craft-based and analogue, our conversations will inevitably also reach out toward the digital, and such reflections are welcome and encouraged.

Our learning will largely be practical and workshop based, with external tutors who are specialists in their craft. Alongside this will be spaces for reflection and discussion, inspired by weekly readings.

**Module lead:** Dr Sarah Elisa Kelly [sarahelisa.kelly@dartington.org](mailto:sarahelisa.kelly@dartington.org)

**Office:** Higher Cross House - rear servant bedrooms (left)

## Key dates:

Term dates: w/b 19<sup>th</sup> April – w/b 21<sup>st</sup> June

Assessment date (presentations): Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June and Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June

Assessment feedback: No later than 22<sup>nd</sup> July

Additional full day session Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June

**Module aims:**

- To experiment with a range of making practices.
- To consider critically the myriad ways in which making entangles the human with the world at large.
- To evaluate how theories of aesthetics, craft, materials, and production situate us in our relationships.
- To consider making as a reflective practice that might be in dialogue with both place and the sacred.

SUMMARY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING		
Scheduled Activities	Hours	Additional Information
Lectures	20	
Demonstrations	8	Library induction, engaged ecology practice workshop introductions
Practical classes and workshops	6	Essay writing skills, research methods, documenting skills
Seminars	12	
Peer to peer	8	Reading and other learning
Fieldwork	12	Two field trips
Tutorials	1	Face to face tutorials on assignments
Independent study	233	
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>(NB: 1 credit = 10 hours of learning; 10 credits = 100 hours, etc.)</b>

**Module assessment**

The assessed module assignment is 100% coursework to be submitted in Week 11 in the form of an individual oral presentation to the module leader and module peers. The presentation should consist of a completed artefact and a critical reflection on the making process and its significance in terms of entanglements with the world at large. The artefact may be from one of the workshops or may be something else made in your independent study time.

**The assessment will be made based on:**

Presentation of completed artefact (50%). Presentation of critical reflections on the making process and its significance (50%).

**Assessed module learning outcomes:**

Your assignment should meet the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an ability to engage with materials through various stages of production.
2. In light of theory, reflect **critically** upon and evaluate select making practices as forms of entanglement.
3. Articulate and assess **some** of the relationships between making, materials, place, spirituality, humans and more than humans.
4. Present a completed artefact, and a reflective rationale, in front of an audience.

Penalties for late submission apply, please see below.

### **Late Submission/Extenuating circumstances**

If your participation in 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.

Information regarding the Extenuating Circumstances policy and how and where to submit Extenuating Circumstance Claims below:

- <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 of 50%
- Work submitted 24 hours after the deadline will receive a mark of zero.

It is your responsibility to inform the module leader and programme leader of any extenuating circumstances as soon as possible.

Please also inform the module leader and programme leader of any modified assessment provision that you may require as soon as possible.

### **Further information, guidance and support**

Please familiarise yourself with the following information on plagiarism and what constitutes an “academic offence”:

- <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations/plagiarism>
- <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/exams/exam-rules-and-regulations/examination-offences>

Please also familiarise yourself with the Personal Tutor Information guidance sheets detailing personal tutor roles, and other learning support you are entitled to, both at the Dartington Trust and at Plymouth University.

### **Module Feedback**

We value what our students say: you share your feedback we act upon it. Part of the feedback process includes Module Evaluation. A link to the form and details of where to submit can be found on the VLE.

**Provisional timetable**

\* some sessions may begin earlier/later in day e.g. workshops

**19.04**

**week 1**

	morning	10.00-13.00 (approx.)	afternoon	14.15-16.30 (approx.)	additional info
mon	Welcome session "Engaging with Ecology"		Seminar: What is the Anthropocene? 4pm Flax planting with Colum		Weather & Climate study ongoing project
tues	Deep Time Walk (Dr. Stephan Harding)		Deep Time Walk continued.		
wed	"Making Connections" What matters?		Materials against materiality. Flax retting with Colum.		Internal weather & body scan project
thurs	Unmaking: carrying stories & practicing relationships.		Orienting practice: becoming-with things.		
fri	Independent study		Independent study		

**26.04**

**week 2**

	morning	10.00-13.00	afternoon	14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	Goethean observation of plants (Stephan)		How to conduct a literature search		
tues	Seminar: Introduction to Phenomenology		Reflection on Goethean Method (Stephan)		
wed	Making gestures: clay workshop (Lou)		Tacit and haptic geographies		
thurs	Outdoor session (Duncan)		Independent study		
fri	Independent study		Independent study		

**03.05**

**week 3**

	morning	10.00-13.00	afternoon	14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	Bank holiday, no classes		Bank holiday, no classes		
tues	What is ecology? + Practical sit spots.		How to do reflective writing.		
wed	Outdoor session: Flax (Simon & Ann)		Outdoor workshop continued.		
thurs	Making threads: practice & reflections		Independent study		
fri	Formative reading response due 11.00am		Independent study		1 <sup>st</sup> reading response

**10.05**

**week 4**

	morning	10.00-13.00	afternoon	14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	Systems theory		Independent study		
tues	Gaia Theory (Stephan)		Gaia Theory continued.		
wed	9am session: Making spoons (Alex)		Outdoor workshop continued.		
thurs	9am **group divides for this week		Tutorials		
fri	Independent study		Independent study		

**17.05**  
**week 5**

	morning 10.00-13.00	afternoon 14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	Fire by friction (Jessie Watson Brown)	Workshop continued.	
tues	Reflection: What have we learned about climate?	Independent study	
wed	Outdoor session: Cordage (Linda)	Outdoor workshop continued.	
thurs	Knot making & reflections	Making tangles: entanglement and meshwork	
fri	Independent study	Independent study	

**24.05**  
**week 6**

	morning 10.00-13.00	afternoon 14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	5.00am dawn chorus walk (Tony Whitehead) 11.00am Birdsong silent disco	Anthropology and birdsong (Dr. Andrew Whitehouse)	Birds & birdsong ongoing project
tues	Science, music and birdsong	1 <sup>st</sup> reading response feedback session	
wed	Outdoor session: Baskets (Linda)	Outdoor workshop continued.	
thurs	Tutorials **group divides for this week	Tutorials	
fri	Independent study	Independent study	

**31.05**  
**week 7**

	morning 10.00-13.00	afternoon 14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	Bank holiday, no classes	Bank holiday, no classes	
tues	Listening Workshop (Tony Whitehead)	Tutorials	
wed	Making space & time	Independent study	
thurs	Independent study	Reflection session	
fri	Tutorials	Tutorials	

**07.06**  
**week 8**

	morning 10.00-13.00	afternoon 14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	The Language of Birds (Robin Bowman)	Workshop continued.	
tues	Seminar: Animism	Birds & Birdsong in Indigenous Southern Africa (Colin Campbell)	
wed	Outdoor session: Smelting (Duncan)	Outdoor workshop continued.	
thurs	Outdoor workshop continued.	Outdoor workshop continued.	
fri	Outdoor workshop continued.	Outdoor workshop continued.	

**14.06  
week 9**

	morning	10.00-13.00	afternoon	14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	TBC		TBC		
tues	What is nature?		Summative reading response due at 15.00		2 <sup>nd</sup> reading response
wed	Reflection session		Independent study		
thurs	Practice: the urgent slow & radical rest		Independent study		
fri	Independent study		Independent study		

**21.06  
week**

<b>10</b>	morning	10.00-13.00	afternoon	14.15-16.30	additional info
mon	What is place?		Reflection session		
tues	Independent study		Reflection session		
wed	Assessment: presentations		Assessment: presentations		Final assessments
thurs	Assessment: presentations		Reflection session		
fri	Independent study		Independent study		Final assessment due Tues 29 <sup>th</sup> at 11.00am

# reading list

\*please complete week one reading prior to the first week of class

\*\* texts beneath "see also" are not required but are additional recommendations

## week one – unmaking

1) Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* \*\*please read only subsections, "What's the alternative?", "Undisciplined" and "Failure as a way of life". No need to read "Low Theory" or "Pirate Cultures". p. 1-25

2) bell hooks, *Critical Thinking* p. 7-11

3) Ursula K Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* p. 149-154

4) A. David Napier 'Things in Themselves' (extract) from *Making Things Better: A Workbook on Ritual, Cultural Values, and Environmental Behavior* p. ix-xiii p. 15-20

see also

1) A. David Napier, Exercise 1 Shaping Behavior from *Making Things Better* \*\*no need to read in advance

2) Tim Ingold, 'Materials Against Materiality' from *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* p. 19-32 \*\*no need to read in advance

## week two – making gestures

1) Mark Paterson, 'Haptic Geographies' from *Progress in Human Geography* Vol 33 p. 766-788

see also

Richard Sennett, 'The Hand' from *The Craftsman* p. 150-178

## week three – making threads

1) Susan Luckman, 'Material Authenticity and the Renaissance of the Handmade' from *Craft and the Creative Economy* p. 68-87

## week four – making spoons

1) Tim Ingold 'Walking the plank: Meditations on a process of skill' from *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* p. 51-62

2) Soetsu Yanagi *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* p. 11 (Plate 1) & p. 190-197

3) Barn the Spoon, *Spon: A Guide to Spoon Carving and the New Wood Culture* p. 172-174

see also

1) Wille Sundqvist, *Swedish Carving Techniques (Fine Woodworking)* p. 94-100

2) Jögge Sundqvist, *Sloyd in Wood* - p. 8-14

## week five – making tangles

1) Tim Ingold, extracts from 'Telling by hand' and 'The Meshwork' p. 117-124

**week six – making baskets**

1) Robin Wall Kimmerer, 'A black ash basket' and 'The makings of grass' from *Braiding Sweetgrass* p. 141-166

see also

1) Vandana Shiva 'Development as a new project of western patriarchy' from *Ecofeminism: Reweaving the world* p. 189-200

2) Robin Wall Kimmerer "The Intelligence of Plants" podcast <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-of-plants/>

**week seven – making meaning**

1) Jane Bennett, 'The Force of Things' *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* p.1-19

2) Jane Bennett, 'The agency of assemblages' *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* p.20-38

see also

1) Jane Bennett, 'Political Ecologies' *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* p. 94-109

2) Jane Bennett, 'Vitality and Self Interest' *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* p. 110-122

**week eight – making residues**

No reading this week.

**week nine – making time and space**

No reading this week.

see also

1) The Nap Ministry <https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/about/>

2) Erdem Gündüz 'Standing Man' - Gezi Park protests

3) Jenny Odell [https://medium.com/@the\\_jennitaur/how-to-do-nothing-57e100f59bbb](https://medium.com/@the_jennitaur/how-to-do-nothing-57e100f59bbb)

**week ten – making connections**

No reading this week (presentations)



## preparation

\*these reading suggestions are encouraged but not compulsory

- 1) Stacey Alaimo, 'Bodily Natures' from *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment & the Material Self* p.1-26
- 2) Stacey Alaimo, 'Sustainable this, sustainable that', *Theories & Methodologies*, PMLA p. 558-563
  - Stacey Alaimo's work introduces some of the ways in which bodies, embodied thinking, matter and ecology intersect. The first chapter of "Bodily Natures" provides an overview with lots of suggestions for further reading/research (there is no need to read the chapter intros). If this is of interest to you, the second article listed then develops some more context.
- 3) David Gauntlett, 'The Meaning of Making II: Craft Today' from *Making is Connecting* p. 30-55
- 4) David Gauntlett, 'The Meaning of Making I: Philosophies of Craft' from *Making is Connecting* p. 30-55
  - David Gauntlett's book "Making is Connecting" provides an in depth overview of contemporary making, craft and digital diy cultures and a good historic overview of European context. These two introductory chapters are fairly lengthy but very accessible, later chapters go on to explore digital making at length so feel free to follow this up if it is of interest.
- 5) Tim Ingold, 'The Materials of Life' from *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* p. 17-31
- 6) Tim Ingold, 'Materials Against Materiality' from *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* p. 19-32 \*\*no need to read in advance
  - Tim Ingold's approach to material thinking will be central to our explorations throughout the module and we will go on to read several more of his texts. These two articles provide an introduction. The second, "Materials Against Materiality" we will read all together but you are also welcome to do the exercise in advance for yourself if you prefer.
- 7) 1) Jane Bennett, 'The Force of Things' *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* p.1-19
- 8) 2) Jane Bennett, 'The agency of assemblages' *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* p.20-38
  - Jane Bennett's book "Vibrant Matter" offers a crucial theoretical underpinning, we will also return to this towards the end of the module. It could be helpful to familiarize yourself in advance, the first two chapters are a good place to begin.

## **video**

- 1) Metal <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6lXoPcCGY0>
- 2) Wood <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lce3crrwtqo>

These silent, short BBC documentaries offer a beautiful insight into heritage craft practice within a European setting

## **research**

You are also encouraged to spend some time familiarizing yourself with some of the terms that will be interwoven into our doing and thinking this module:

- Matter (see also Object, Thing)
- Material (see also Materiality, Materialist)
- Materialism (see also New Materialism etc.)
- Agency (see also Maker, Making)
- Commodity (see also Product, Artefact)
- Tool (see also Production, Industry)
- Tacit (see also Haptic)
- Craft (see also Handicraft, Artisan, Artist)

In addition to introducing you to a broad interplay of ideas, you will find that some of these terms open doorways down many heavily theoretical rabbit holes. Instead of falling in, the idea instead is to begin exploring how these themes and ideas might either compliment or complicate each other, or both.

If English is not your first language then I'd encourage you to personalize these terms and explore their translations – often revealing even more kinds of interesting etymological interconnection.