



Environmental Studies: Exploring different perspectives of nature

A course entitled "View of Nature" by Dr. Ralph Lutts, Hampshire College (1989)

Course Design:

Dr. Lutts' course explores the ways in which different perspectives on nature influence experiences and understandings of the environment. The premise of the course is that students are better able to reflect upon and participate in environmental debates if they are aware of the different values associated with nature and are in tune with their own beliefs and preconceptions. The course relies on readings, more than on lectures, to examine the relationship between people and their environments. Students also use natural literature as a vehicle for their own reflections, and evaluate the responsibilities of literary naturalists.

Throughout the course, students keep a journal of their personal reactions to the readings and responses to specific questions posed by the instructor. Class discussions of different authors are accompanied by student presentations of biographies on those authors. Students write three formal papers in the course: an essay on childhood experiences of nature, an essay on a contemporary personal experience of nature, and a research paper related to a topic in natural literature. The class also takes several nature walks around campus in order to connect the readings with reality.

Higher Level Learning:

By studying the works of literary naturalists for both their content and style, students gain a deeper understanding of the environment and appreciation of environmental debates (**Thinking**). The course encourages students to critically engage their own concepts of nature by examining closely their own associations and experiences and the ways in which these ideas are complemented or contrasted by the texts (**Connecting, Self**). A better understanding of their own beliefs allows students to reevaluate their positions on environmental policy questions (**Connecting**).

Active Learning:

The course prompts students to evaluate different values attributed to nature (**Doing**) by exposing students to discussions of a variety of authors (**Dialogue with Others**), by encouraging students to record their own attitudes in journals (**Dialogue with Self**), and by modeling different literary approaches to nature (**Observing**).

Lutts, R. (1989). Views of Nature: The Environment, Values, and Literature. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 38 (pp.55-63). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.