

SYLLABUS

Ecological Literacy Immersion Program

EWP 496, Section 03 (3 credits)

4-Week Certificate Program offered at the Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, NY

July 2-28, 2017

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Ecological Literacy explores ecology from a social, economic, and cultural perspective through lectures, discussion, experiential intensives, hands-on projects, field trips, community experience, and personal reflection. Students learn approaches and acquire tools that can be applied to creative problem solving relative to ecological literacy - an understanding of the patterns and principles that underlie all living systems.

The 4-week curriculum for the Ecological Literacy Immersion Program (ELIP) is designed to give participants a deeper understanding of natural systems and how to live, work, and design for regeneration within them. Participants will learn patterns, principles, and practices of regenerative design, and apply them to personal goals, the physical and ecological landscape, and social systems.

On-site instructors include renowned educators, artists, ecologists, permaculture and environmental designers, renewable energy experts, seed savers, naturalists, and others committed to values associated with ecology, sustainability, and environment.

Students who complete this four-work course and present their design projects will earn an internationally recognized Permaculture Design Certificate through the Omega Institute and three-credits at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

MAIN AREAS OF STUDY

- Regenerative Design: Principles, Skills, Frameworks
- Reading the Landscape and Ecological Systems
- Agroforestry and Forest Garden Design
- Soils, Compost, and Land Regeneration
- Nature Awareness and Naturalist Studies
- Water Systems in the Landscape
- Renewable Energy and Zero Waste Living
- Social Systems Design: Personal Development & Leadership; Financial Permaculture & New Economic Paradigms; Engaging Across Difference & Diversity

PROJECTS & PRESENTATIONS

Throughout the program, students will engage with a mix of facilitated classroom sessions, outdoor field experiences, design practice, and hands-on learning opportunities. We will use the Omega campus and OCSL as our living classroom for observation, learning, and design. Course design practicum includes:

WEEK 1 (and implemented throughout the program)

Personal Learning Design Process

Participants will familiarize themselves with the design process while reflecting on their personal learning goals, styles, and strategies for the course.

WEEKS 2 & 3

2-Week Permaculture Design Project

Participants will engage deeply with the land-based process of regenerative design. Working in teams, students will complete landscape site analysis and assessment for a specific area of the Omega campus, and develop design solutions to address the challenges and opportunities of that site. Participants will present their landscape designs at the end of Week 3 for classmates, instructors and members of the wider Omega community.

WEEK 4

Social & Economic Design Process

Moving beyond the physical landscape, participants will apply the design framework to social and economic systems, while exploring possibilities for implementation within their own lives & communities. In Week 4, participants will present their social/economic design projects in a supportive environment with classmates, alumni, and instructors.

RELATIONSHIPS, DIFFERENCE, AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Throughout the program we will explore practices and protocols for engaging with multiple layers of difference (across identities, species, dimensions, cultures, ideologies and more), as we focus on a future that is centered around whole and healthy relationships.

HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS

Compost & Soil Building

Participants will explore differing methods of composting and building healthy soil during this course. Hot composting is a fast, efficient, high temperature, composting technique, which can produce high quality compost in 18 days. It has the benefits of killing weed seeds and pathogens, and breaking down the material into very fine compost. To complement the hot piles, participants will also build a static, aerobic pile based on the biointensive method at a residential scale. Biointensive composting emphasizes the health and diversity of the microbes that break down and become a part of the compost. Thus, relatively cooler composting is practiced, with plant materials being preferred over animal materials. Soil is often combined in this process to inoculate the pile with microbes.

Mushroom Cultivation & Farming the Woods

Participants will learn the benefits of cultivated mushrooms and inoculate substrate with various methods and mushroom varieties. We will also have an opportunity to “shock” and harvest shiitake mushroom logs prepared by previous students.

Weekend Intensive in Micro-Farming

The Grow Food Everywhere workshop on July 15-17, is included in the 4-week ELIP schedule at no extra cost. Through discussion, contemplative practice, and plenty of hands-on experience, we gain skills and techniques to establish beautiful gardens and grow abundant, delicious food as nature intended, with minimal labor and energy. Participants create raised beds, and learn season extension practices that prepare us to take the lessons learned immediately into our lives and communities. Those new to gardening return home with enough knowledge and skill to grow their own food. Experienced gardeners learn new techniques to enrich their current gardens. We all gain ideas, methods, and inspiration to transform our gardening, communities, and lives.

Perennial Crop Horticulture & Food Forest Design

During the design process, [Dave Jacke](#), author of *Edible Forest Gardens*, will join us as we learn the properties and propagation methods of many useful plant varieties. We will spend time looking at plant guilds and perennial garden design as we work in Omega's growing food forest demonstration area.

NATURE AWARENESS & NATURALIST STUDIES

To practice ecological design, we must also practice ecological awareness and build deep relationships with the places where we live, work, and design. The Ecological Literacy Immersion Program’s holistic learning approach includes a consistent process of observing and studying the natural world.

Through practicing routines of nature awareness, naturalist studies, and inquiry into the history and stories of a place, our landscape analysis and design work is grounded in an understanding of natural systems and in comfort and familiarity with wild nature. Students leave with tools and practices to deepen lasting relationships with the natural world and their local environment wherever they may go.

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

- Reflect on what you’re learning with your classmates during free time
- Join a pickup game of basketball, tennis, volleyball, or Ultimate Frisbee
- Network with and get to know classmates and other Omega participants during meals in the Dining Hall or snacks in the Omega Café
- Take a yoga, tai chi, meditation, or movement class with other staff and participants
- Enjoy evening talks, films, performances, or other activities on the schedule of daily events at Omega
- Share your talents with your classmates during the course and at the final talent share on the last evening

- Bring a small gift that is meaningful to you such as a book, a card or something from nature for the gifting circle at the end of the program

REFLECTION & CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE

An important part of ELIP is time spent in contemplation. Contemplative practices are practical and transformative and help develop concentration, empathy, creativity, communication, attention, and compassion. The calm centeredness generated by time in reflection is helpful when exploring larger concepts like meaning, purpose, and values—ideas we look at deeply in this program. You have the opportunity to take daily classes in yoga, tai chi, meditation, and movement. Journaling is encouraged throughout the course. There are also hiking trails and boats to take out on the lake if time in nature is how you get centered. Whichever practice you choose, it will help balance your full days of study and enhance your learning process.

FIELD TRIPS

Hawthorne Valley Farm

Hawthorne Valley Farm is part of the nonprofit Hawthorne Valley Association. Since 1972, it has produced high quality, Biodynamic and organic foods and provided farm-based learning experiences for children and adults. The 400-acre Biodynamic farm includes dairy cows, steer, pigs, chicken, sheep, horses, vegetables, a creamery, organic bakery, and sauerkraut cellar. On this visit we will explore a new form of agriculture that requires a radically enlarged context of sound farming principles, new economic forms and parameters, and renewed recognition of the role of agriculture and agriculturalists in our culture and society.

Farmscape Ecology Program

The Farmscape Ecology Program was founded in 2003 as a small research and outreach program dedicated to encouraging an informed compassion for place, by exploring the relationship between human culture and the rural, semi-agricultural landscape of Columbia County. The core staff is comprised of a botanist, social social scientist, and wildlife ecologist. Along with technicians, interns, and volunteers, the Farmscape Ecology Program staff completes participatory research on Columbia County's ecology, history, and culture to stimulate exploration and build love for the area. They share their knowledge and findings widely through public ecology walks, presentations, local publications, electronic media, and a variety of facilitated discussions and gatherings. The program aims to facilitate cultural and ecological relationships that support a healthy, productive future for the County.

Walkway Over the Hudson & Scenic Hudson Office Visit

Scenic Hudson is the region's powerhouse land trust, bringing to bear expertise and capabilities in preservation, land use planning, advocacy and park management to connect people with the region's most important natural asset—the Hudson River. Having celebrated its 50th anniversary, Scenic Hudson is credited with launching the modern environmental movement. It has stood up to major utilities and industrial giants—and won great victories on behalf of the environment. The organization has created almost 60 parks and preserves along the mighty Hudson, preserving nature and numerous working farms, cleaning up contaminated industrial

waterfronts, and partnering with other organizations to create magnificent parks including Walkway over the Hudson.

FINAL PORTFOLIO

Students receiving three credits through SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry will create a final portfolio representing the breadth and depth of their experience in the four-week Ecological Literacy Immersion Program at the Omega Institute. The portfolio will include daily journal entries where students reflect on and extend upon experiences over the four weeks. Entries may take the form of narrative, poetry, photography, illustration, or other creative ways of expression. The portfolio will also include representations of projects created for each of the four weeks. A final reflection will tie together the portfolio by providing participants with the opportunity to synthesize their experiences by relating them to other educational and life experiences, as well as imagining how this course will affect their lives and perspectives moving forward.

By August 6, 2017, the final portfolio should be submitted to:

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