

## SYLLABUS

### Ecological Literacy Immersion Program

EWP 496, Section 03 (3 credits)

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

July 1-27, 2018

[www.esf.edu/openacademy/summer](http://www.esf.edu/openacademy/summer)

Dr. Benette Whitmore

bwhitmor@esf.edu

315-470-6695

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.

The program is led by experienced teachers in the fields of permaculture, regenerative agriculture, ecological engineering, botany, water and soil science, wilderness awareness, and whole systems design, among others.

Participants 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. The Omega campus and OCSL will be a 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 for 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**
- **Mushroom Cultivation & Farming the Woods**
- **Weekend Intensive in Micro-Farming**
- **Perennial Crop Horticulture & Food Forest Design**
- **Seed Stewardship**

## **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**
- **WILDSEED Community Farm & Healing Village**
- **Hudson Valley Seed Library**
- **Visit to Dina Falconi's Homestead**
- **Walkway Over the Hudson & Scenic Hudson Office Visit**

## **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 Monday, August 6, 2018, the final portfolio should be submitted to:

Dr. Benette Whitmore  
Chair, Environmental Studies  
106 Marshall Hall  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, NY 13210

[bwhitmor@esf.edu](mailto:bwhitmor@esf.edu)