SATURDAY ENRICHMENT ONLINE SPRING 2022

Philosophy and Nature

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Course Description

Are you fascinated with the natural world around you? Students will gain skills from a range of philosophical traditions such as forming deep and reflective questions, critical thinking, and engaging in civil dialogue. They will practice identifying and asking philosophical questions, particularly focused on nature, using provocative short stories and mythology, science texts, and videos designed to guide and focus our activities, discussions, and community building. Questions explored might include: What is the difference between “natural” and “manmade”? What does the way we interact with/communicate with nature say about how we understand society/civilization? Student interest will contribute to the weekly syllabus.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explore and articulate questions about our relationship to nature and society.
- Develop and thoughtfully share their perspectives with their peers.
- Make connections between literature, science, and philosophical themes such as environmental ethics.
- Express those connections through writing, discussion, and personal reflection.

Instructional Strategies

We will begin each session with a mindfulness moment that will serve to bring focus to the course as well as to reflect on ourselves. We will read, dissect, and discuss excerpts from novels, short stories, and science texts and discover how these can be used as tools for understanding ourselves, society, and the natural world. Students will be supported in exploring questions that they wonder about and therefore will have an impact on where the discussions go. We will also watch and analyze film and video clips pertaining to these themes. For the final in-class “project,” students will choose a text or film and write about an extension of how they would see themselves in that world. They will employ skills of character development, personal narrative and reflection, and creative writing. They will also have the option to create a visual representation of the exercise through drawing, digital design, or video.

Resources and Materials

Readings and videos will be posted in the Google Drive for students to access. Students should have paper and pen/pencil ready for taking notes.
# Tentative Course Schedule

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics and Activities</th>
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| Week 1 - April 2 | Community Building  
Introduction to the theme of nature and our relationship to the environment  
Introduction to mindfulness moments and self-reflection  
Discuss development of final project |
| Week 2 - April 9 | Mindfulness Moment and Self Reflection  
Nature and Consciousness - introduction to branches of philosophy  
Readings: *How Do Trees Communicate* and *Fungal Intelligence*  
Watch: clip from film *Fantastic Fungi*  
Discussion  
Writing Reflection |
| Week 3 - April 16 | Mindfulness Moment and Self Reflection  
Watch: *Doing Philosophy in Nature*  
Discussion  
Writing Reflection |
| Week 4 - April 23 | Mindfulness Moment and Self Reflection  
Reading: excerpt from *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer  
Discussion  
Writing Reflection |
| Week 5 - April 30 | Mindfulness Moment and Self Reflection  
Reading: excerpt from *Reclaiming the Commons* by Vandana Shiva  
Discussion  
Writing Reflection |
| Week 6 - May 7 | Mindfulness Moment and Self Reflection  
Reading: *Everybody Needs a Rock* by Peter Parnall  
Discussion  
Writing Reflection |
| Week 7 - May 14 | Mindfulness Moment and Self Reflection  
Final Project Workshop |
| Week 8 - May 21 | **Final Class**  
Share Final Projects |