



**LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION AND COUNSELING**

**ECOT 597: Ecotherapy and applied ecopsychology  
Fall 2023**

---

When: Sat Sept 23 - 9 to 5:30; Sat 10/21 - 9 to 5:30; Sat Nov 18 - 9 to 5:30; Sat  
Dec 2 - 9 to 5:30  
Where: York 107  
Instructor: Pilar Hernández-Wolfe, Ph.D.  
Office Hours: By appointment  
E-Mail: pilarhw@lclark.edu

**PREREQUISITES: ECOT 501; ECOT 554**

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This course in Ecotherapy focuses on broadening and deepening the practice of counseling and therapy by extending the psychotherapeutic context to include the natural world in which we live. We will further our survey of research that supports the theoretical foundations of ecotherapy found in environmental and conservation psychology, ecopsychology, evolutionary psychology, and biophilia. Specific practices and methods that incorporate nature into the therapeutic process will be explored and students will have the opportunity to practice these techniques. We will further explore the restorative effects of direct contact with nature, the psychological impact of “a sense of place,” the concepts of a Nature Language and Human Rewilding, and contemporary influences that affect the human-nature relationship. Ethical issues unique to the practice of ecotherapy and incorporating ecotherapy with special populations will be discussed.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

- This two-credit course includes 4 in-person class sessions held over four Saturdays during the fall term.
- The course includes self-directed activities outside of the classroom sessions.
- During the class meetings, didactic presentations will be balanced by group exercises, outdoor activities, and in-class student presentations.
- Course activities include readings from assigned texts and articles, written work, reflection exercises, and in-class presentations.
- Each class meeting will include classroom time and outdoor activities on campus. Students should dress appropriately for the weather.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations of ecotherapy and relate theories to practice methods.
2. Develop a deeper understanding of the influence of the human-nature relationship on our mental health and well-being, and develop strategies to address this ecological context in the therapeutic process.
3. Gain a comprehensive understanding of various ecotherapy methods and practices, and be able to identify ways to integrate this work into students' academic and professional development.

## **READINGS:**

Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the ideas and concepts discussed in the readings. The textbook should be read in its entirety by the end of the course.

## **CPSY DEPARTMENTAL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Class attendance is expected and required. Any missed class time will be made up by completing extra assignments designed by the instructor. Missing more than ten percent of class time may result in failure to complete the class. This would be 4.5 hours for a 45-hour class (3 credits), 3.0 hours for a 30-hour class (2 credits), or 1.5 hours for a 15-hour class (1 credit.) In case of extreme hardship and also at the discretion of the instructor, a grade of incomplete may be given for an assignment or the entire course. In such cases, the work to be submitted in order to remove the incomplete must be documented appropriately and stated deadlines met. Students are expected to be on time to class and tardiness may be seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

## **COVID POLICY**

<https://www.lclark.edu/news/covid-19-response/health-and-safety/>

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

The use of AI software is not permitted for any assignment or activity in this course without the prior approval of the instructor. Violation of this policy will be considered a violation of the Graduate School's Academic Performance standards.

## **SPECIAL ASSISTANCE**

If you have a disability that may affect your academic performance, you may request accommodations by submitting documentation to the Office of *Student Accessibility* in the Albany Quadrangle (503-768-7192). After you have submitted documentation and filled out paperwork there for the current semester requesting accommodations, staff in that office will notify me of the accommodations for which you are eligible. Student Accessibility Services is available via email ([access@lclark.edu](mailto:access@lclark.edu)) or by phone (503-768-7192). While they aren't answering the phone directly, if you call and leave a message, they will call you back. You can also make an appointment online via their website: ([www.lclark.edu/offices/student\\_support\\_services/](http://www.lclark.edu/offices/student_support_services/)).

## **PARTICIPATION IN THE LEARNING COMMUNITY**

Students are required to attend and actively participate in all scheduled class meetings. This includes being on time, being prepared, following through on group projects, and otherwise engaging with colleagues as fellow professionals. Becoming a counselor/therapist involves looking closely at ourselves, our values, beliefs, and biases. This can be a very personal, and sometimes emotional, process. Treating colleagues with respect, listening deeply to their experiences, and being open to diverse world views encourages a collaborative milieu of care in which we can all challenge ourselves and each other to critically examine and develop our skills and perspectives. In order to prepare for each class, students should carefully read and study all assigned materials to be ready to discuss, debate, and apply the content of the readings. Class discussion and interaction with colleagues are fundamental to the process of learning to be a therapist and all sessions include necessary information. Therefore, if you must miss a class, fellow students and the instructor may ask you to contribute to the learning community in another way. According to the Lewis & Clark Counseling Psychology attendance policy, missing 3 or more hours of a 1 credit course may result in a failing grade. For this course, any absence of more than one hour requires a makeup assignment. If you must be absent or late, please email the instructor at least one day prior to class.

## **DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Each student should decide for themselves what information to disclose. Students are advised to be prudent when making self-disclosures. The program cannot guarantee the confidentiality of student disclosures given the group environment, although personal comments should be considered private and confidential – and remain only in the classroom – unless an exception to confidentiality applies.

## **LINKS TO LEWIS & CLARK GRADUATE SCHOOL ESSENTIAL POLICIES**

This course adheres to the general policies outlined in the catalog and student handbook of the Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling. This includes full adherence to the following policies:

- Nondiscrimination: [go.lclark.edu/gsec-nondiscrimination](http://go.lclark.edu/gsec-nondiscrimination);
- Standards for professional student conduct and academic integrity: [go.lclark.edu/gsec-conduct](http://go.lclark.edu/gsec-conduct);
- Sexual misconduct: [go.lclark.edu/titleIX](http://go.lclark.edu/titleIX).

### **College-Wide Conduct Policies:**

Please see [https://graduate.lclark.edu/student\\_life/handbook/college\\_policies/](https://graduate.lclark.edu/student_life/handbook/college_policies/)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Attendance, participation, and disposition (30 pts)**

- ❖ Giving attention to the instructor and/or other students when they are making a presentation.

- ❖ Demonstrating ability to recognize and use subtle non-verbal communication cues to assess your impact on your peers and participate in class.
- ❖ Demonstrating the ability to be open about discussing the impact of your comments on your peers.
- ❖ Coming to class prepared (having read the assignment for the day)
- ❖ Contributing to in-class discussion based on the topics of discussion and the readings assigned. Contributions may include how you feel about the material but merely articulating your feelings is not sufficient. You are expected to put those feelings in the context of your thoughts and analysis of the material.
- ❖ Engaging in group discussions with attention and energy.
- ❖ Asking questions of the instructor and/or other students regarding the material examined in that class.
- ❖ Provide examples to support or challenge the issues talked about in class.
- ❖ Making comments or giving observations about topics in the course, especially those that tie in the classroom material to "real world" problems, or trying to integrate the content of the course.
- ❖ Dealing with other students and/or the instructor in a respectful fashion.
- ❖ Active listening. Students will be asked questions related to the course's readings randomly in class by other students and by the instructor. Your participation in small group discussions is also required.

Talking a lot does not necessarily mean a good contribution to the discussion. Carefully listening to your classmates and building upon their contributions will facilitate an intellectually engaging and positive classroom experience. Be sure to listen to others and take turns making the first comment that others build upon. Let me emphasize again, speak up! There will be individual differences in your experience with different topics in the course. Raise your questions as we go! Asking questions is participating in the discussion. You are not expected to have all of the answers—if you did, what would be the point of having the discussion?

In addition, be prepared to experience corrections and feedback on your comments. As your professor, I will provide feedback on the limitations of students' answers, and at times I will correct comments to show you what is the state-of-the-art answer or what is the best ethical answer. It is expected that you tolerate a correction, receive feedback, and understand the difference between opinion, and perspective from issues that require correct or best answers.

## 2. **Contemplative Nature Walk Reports due on 10/21, 11/18 (20 pts each)**

During the time between our class meetings, you are asked to set aside one-half day (minimum of 4 hours) for a contemplative nature walk. This time should be used to explore a series of questions that will be provided by the instructor to help you focus on how you see yourself and your work at this time. Pick a place where you can be as

undisturbed as possible. As preparation for your walk, I would like to you review the questions and notice which ones tug at you for attention. Write down those particular questions or memorize them ahead of time. Be sure you have what you need to be safe and comfortable during your walk: water bottle, sunglasses, hat, good walking shoes, journal, appropriate clothes for the weather, map if necessary, etc. I would like you to go without technology for the duration of your walk so that there are no distractions from your attention to nature and your questions. You will summarize your reflections on the questions you've chosen in a 3–4-page paper to be turned in to the instructor. This paper does NOT need to be prepared in APA format. We will also have time in class to share this experience (see instructions at the end of the syllabus). *Please turn in a **hard copy** of your paper **during class**.*

**3. Final Paper due Dec 9, 2023 (20 pts) 6 to 8 pages max. Submit your paper to Moodle.**

Students will submit a 6-8 page (excluding cover page and references) final paper with 3 sections:

1. Theoretical foundations of ecotherapy – Discuss the relationship between one theoretical construct of ecotherapy (e.g. biophilia/evolutionary perspectives, ecological unconscious, phenomenology, interconnectedness of all beings, human rewilding, etc.) and your understanding of therapeutic change. Explain the construct and your understanding of therapeutic change in detail.
2. Review the American Counseling Association Ethics Code or the AAMFT Ethics Code and identify at least one potential ethical goal or standard relevant to the practice of ecotherapy.
3. Discuss how ecotherapy or an ecological perspective informs your current or future professional practice as a counselor/therapist (e.g. through techniques you use, problems you address, or populations or groups you work with).

The paper should be prepared in APA format, and include references from class readings and from other outside sources. Grammar, spelling, and typos matter. Papers turned in late will lose credit.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Brazier, C. (2018). *Ecotherapy in practice*. London: Routledge.

Barnwell, G., Makaulule, M., Stroud, L., Watson, M. & Mashudu Rubson, D. (2021). “Mupo is life”: Intergenerational Community Identity and Safeguarding Sacred Natural Sites in Limpopo Province, South Africa, *Ecopsychology*, 13(4), 227-239.

Cooley, S., Robertson, N., Jones, C.J. & Scordellis. (2021). “Walk to Wellbeing” in community mental health: Urban and green space walks provide Transferable biopsychosocial benefits. *Ecopsychology*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2020.0050>

Coope, J. (2019). How might Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) Inform Ecopsychology? *Ecopsychology*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0005>

Deal, P. & Bukowski. (2021). Bridging Spirituality/Religiousness and Ecotherapy: Four Psychospiritual Themes to Guide Conceptualization and Practice, *Ecopsychology*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2020.0048.db>

Gonzales, P. (2020). Water-womb-land cosmologic: Protocols for traditional ecological knowledge. *Ecopsychology*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0030>

McGinnis, A., Tesarek, A., Barrett, M.J., Ham, C. & Community Elders Research Advisory Group. (2021). Strengthening animal-human Relationships as a doorway to Indigenous holistic wellness. *Ecopsychology*, 11 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0001>

Perez, M. & Longboat, S. (2019). Our Shared Relationship with Land and Water: Perspectives from the Mayangna and the Anishinaabe, *Ecopsychology*, 11, (3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0001>

**Additional readings may be added during the term.**

### **Tentative Course Schedule of Readings**

The following schedule will help you organize your reading assignments for this course. Please come to class meetings prepared to discuss the readings assigned. Additional readings may be added by the instructor during the course.

**Class 1-** Sept 23/2023

Brazier, Ecotherapy in Practice sections 1  
Polyvagal theory handouts

Perez, M. & Longboat, S. (2019). Our Shared Relationship with Land and Water: Perspectives from the Mayangna and the Anishinaabe, *Ecopsychology*, 11, (3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0001>

McGinnis, A., Tesarek, A., Barrett, M.J., Ham, C. & Community Elders Research Advisory Group. (2021). Strengthening animal-human Relationships as a doorway to Indigenous holistic wellness. *Ecopsychology*, 11 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0001>

<https://www.petermichaelbauer.com/towards-an-understanding-of-cultural-appropriation-in-rewilding/>

**Class 2-** October 21/2023

Brazier, Ecotherapy in Practice section 2

Continuation of polyvagal theory

Cooley, S., Robertson, N., Jones, C.J. & Scordellis. (2021). “Walk to Wellbeing” in community mental health: Urban and green space walks provide Ttransferable biopsychosocial benefits. *Ecopsychology*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2020.0050>

[https://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/archive2/ecological\\_collapse.html](https://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezine/archive2/ecological_collapse.html)

**Class 3-** Nov 18/2023

Brazier, Ecotherapy in Practice section 3

Deal, P. & Bukowski. (2021). Bridging Spirituality/Religiousness and Ecotherapy: Four Psychospiritual Themes to Guide Conceptualization and Practice, *Ecopsychology*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2020.0048.db>

Thys, T., Trevino, J. & Nadkarni, N. (2021). Perceptual–Acoustic Comparisons of Natural Sonic Environments: Applications for Nature-Deprived Populations, *Ecopsychology*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2021.0007>

Bratman, G. & Olvera-Alvarez, H. (2022). Nature and health: Perspectives and pathways. *Ecopsychology*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2022.29007.editorial>

Rewilding

*Rewilding Psyche: Re-constructing our natural habitats:*

<https://www.astrosynthesis.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Rewilding-Psyche-Brian-Clark.pdf>. (Jungian Approach)

**Class 4-** Dec 2/2023

Brazier, Ecotherapy in Practice section 4, 5

Barnwell, G., Makaulule, M., Stroud, L., Watson, M. & Mashudu Rubson, D. (2021). “Mupo is life”: Intergenerational Community Identity and Safeguarding Sacred Natural Sites in Limpopo Province, South Africa, *Ecopsychology*, 13(4), 227-239.

Gonzales, P. (2020). Water-womb-land cosmologic: Protocols for traditional ecological knowledge. *Ecopsychology*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0030>

Coope, J. (2019). How might Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) Inform Ecopsychology? *Ecopsychology*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2019.0005>

<https://www.petermichaelbauer.com/towards-an-understanding-of-cultural-appropriation-in-rewilding/>

## ASSIGNMENTS

### CONTEMPLATIVE NATURE WALK #1

It is walking to immerse ourselves in an encounter with whatever is calling us in the moment.

As you begin a contemplative walk, allow a few moments simply to breathe and connect to your heart. Set an intention for this time to be as present as you can to what is happening both within and without. Begin walking but see if you can release any expectations or destination. As you walk, imagine that with each step your feet are both blessing the ground and being blessed by it. Let your breath be long and slow. Bring your awareness to the earth monastery all around you.

Notice what draws your attention. Look for what shimmers or what the Japanese poet Basho called “a glimpse of the under glimmer.” Listen for the sounds of life around you. pay attention to the rustle of the breeze, the caw of crows, or any subtle elements of creation singing their song.

Pause regularly simply to receive this gift. Breathe it in. Let it have some space in your heart. Then continue on until something else causes you to stop.

This is the whole of the practice: simply [moving], listening, and pausing. We practice presence so that we might cultivate our ability to really hear the voice of nature speaking to us.

Reflection questions:

- 1) What was it like to practice being present to what was happening within and without?
- 2) Identify what you experienced with your senses with the exception of your visual experiences.
- 3) Describe what it was like and what happened when you walked at a slow pace.

### CONTEMPLATIVE NATURE WALK #2

This activity should be completed in pairs. Each of you will take a turn to facilitate a contemplative nature walk and the release of fear or anxiety. Please read the instructions first and converse to develop consent on what each of you wants and can do. Start the exercise based on the agreement you developed. First, the facilitator gently instructs the consultant using the guidelines from “Contemplative nature walk #1.” Once you both feel that you are in a present enough state to invite to the walk something that brings out anxiety or fear, ask the consultant to invite this feeling. Assist the consultant with breathing and walking slowly, feeling the emotion rise and come down. Invite the



consultant to accept the anxiety being experienced, to touch to ground, and to bring their attention to the present. Observe how the consultant responds and track.

- In Hakomi Therapy, tracking is defined as the close observation by the therapist of both spoken and non-verbal aspects of the client's experience.
- According to Kurtz (1990), tracking is "looking for signs of the other person's experience, like moist eyes, all kinds of facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures (small or large, but especially small), changes in posture, movements, even the style of a movement or a voice" (p. 83).
- Other things that can be tracked include: positioning, emotional expression, energy, skin tone, states of consciousness, and congruence or incongruence among these different avenues of expression. These signs can be subtle and are often missed or ignored in ordinary interaction.
- Skillful tracking requires mindfulness and receptivity on the part of the therapist: a state of mind that is "open and sensitive and not so much task-oriented".
- Tracking is not limited to the client's experience: both therapists and clients are encouraged to track their own experience in a similar manner.

Ask the consultant what they can accept in the moment, and what they can let go in the moment. Then ask what is it like to do so.

Reflection questions:

- 1) How did you attune to your consultant? How did you track your own experience as the facilitator?
- 2) How did you track the consultant's experience? Describe what stood out to you.
- 3) Describe your own emotional tolerance to the increase and decrease of the experience of an intense emotion.