

## **An Ecology of Art**

Fall 2012\*

Course Levels 200, 300, 400, 500, 600

3 Credit Hours

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\*This course is best suited for the fall semester in order to maximize the availability of plant life and fair weather days for outdoor activities.

## **Course Description: An Ecology of Art**

In this studio course, students will make metaphorical and practical use of basic ecological principles to question and test productive, meaningful, and sustainable artistic practices. Emphasis will be placed on biodiversity, community relationships, patterns, and hierarchies. The course will consist of field work, readings, and lectures, the content of which will be examined through individual and collaborative projects. We will visit local gardens, parks, farms, and neighborhoods while seeking to understand the complexity of our own role in nature and culture. Traditional, reclaimed, and renewable materials will be explored. At mid-term students will identify opportunities for focused research and production, and the course will culminate with the public display of this work.

This course approaches ecology both metaphorically and literally. Ecology is community-focused, and involves the study of relationships within a given community. We will test this premise as it might apply to the questions of what gives rise to art, how it might be made, and what its effect could or should be upon its larger community. The diverse range of ecological information and the multiple points of view to be presented in the course will allow for a broad array of applications in the studio arts, design, and architecture. The class format will challenge students with new ways of thinking while allowing them to select materials, specific topics of study, and methods of engagement appropriate to their own developing interests.

## **Course Schedule: An Ecology of Art**

- 1 Introduction: Ecology, Principles of Ecology, and The Persistence of Metaphor. Readings, Set 1.
- 2 Outdoor Classroom: Meet at Elizabeth Gray Danforth Butterfly Garden.
- 3 Traditions in Eco-Art, Green Design, and the role of the artist/designer in their community. Project 1: Food webs and the edges of community.
- 4 Introduce Field Projects: Defining native and invasive species. Readings, Set 2.
- 5 Outdoor Classroom: Walk through Forest Park. Begin Field Research.
- 6 Field Projects/Field Research.
- 7 Individual Meetings: Project 1/Expansion to Project 2. Readings, Set 3.
- 8 Guest Lecture: Earth Dance Organic Farm. Continue Projects 1,2.
- 9 Progress Critique, Group 1. Readings, Set 4.
- 10 Progress Critique, Group 2.
- 11 Layers of Time: Annular Rings, Sedimentation, Seasons, and Succession. Start Project 3.
- 12 Genetic modification and American food culture. Readings, Set 5.
- 13 Field Trip: Monsanto Research Center, MO Botanical Garden.
- 14 Individual Meetings: Project 3/Expansion to Project 4.
- 15 Disturbance: Roads, Pruning, and the Reductive Process. Readings, Set 6.
- 16 Project 4 work day
- 17 Midterm Review: Projects 3-4
- 18 Introduce Final Projects: Research and Clarification
- 19 Library and Field Research
- 20 Small Group Meetings: Final Projects
- 21 Small Group Meetings: Final Projects. Readings, Set 7.
- 22 Guest Lecture: Forest Park Forever

**Course Schedule: An Ecology of Art (*continued*)**

- 23 Difficult Decisions: Should Modern Man Hunt? Readings, Set 8.
- 24 Guest Lecture: MO Department of Conservation
- 25 Field Trip: Dogtown Community Garden
- 26 Wind and water. Readings, Set 9.
- 27 Work day, Final Projects
- 28 Work day, Final Projects
- 29 Final Reviews: Final Projects
- 30 Final Reviews: Final Projects

## **Sample Assignment/Project: An Ecology of Art**

Lecture: *Disturbance: Roads, Pruning, and the Reductive Process*.

Readings, Set 6: *Roads and Their Major Ecological Effects*, Richard T. T. Forman and Lauren E. Alexander

Ecological Principles: disturbance, succession, ecological flows.

Project Assignment: Define the community/material with which you intend to engage. How might the principles listed above already exist in this context, and what are their effects? Identify the niches of opportunity, and make use of that space to create your work of art. Be prepared to discuss the nature of your engagement with the existing system and your intentions/observations regarding the project outcomes.