

WELLNESS 128

WILD WONDER: Deep Nature Connection Practices for Cultivating Wellbeing

Summer 2024



"I learned that I could be both wild and holy." Ana Forrest

"And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul." - John Muir

Instructor Information

Instructor: Katia Sol
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Information

Day(s): Two daylong sessions - Saturdays July 13 and July 27, 2024
Time: 10 am – 6 pm
Location: The O'Donahue Family Stanford Educational Farm will be our home base. We will also explore other outdoor areas around campus, e.g. the Cactus Garden, Papua New Guinea Sculpture Garden, Windhover and Frenchman's Park.
Units: 1-2 (Note - undergraduates must enroll for 2 units. Graduate students may enroll for 1 unit if needed but the workload will be 2 units for all students)
Grading: S/NC
Note: This course meets for two mandatory daylong sessions, Saturday July 13th and Saturday July 27th, from 10 am – 6 pm. Students must be able to attend both days of the course and to stay for the entire duration of the class on both days in order to enroll in the class. There will also be a number of assignments and practices to engage with and a class community blog site that students are required to post to regularly outside of the two daylong classes.

Course Description

Discover a deeper relationship with yourself and the Earth through nature-based contemplative practices that cultivate wonder for this beautiful, diverse world. This experiential course explores how nature connection practices can support wellbeing and flourishing. Develop a more meaningful relationship with the Stanford campus by visiting different locations each week, including the O'Donahue Family Stanford Educational Farm, the Cactus Garden, the Papua New Guinea Sculpture Garden, the Cantor Arts gardens, Windhover, and Frenchman's Park. Drawing on perspectives from Transformative Learning, Indigenous Knowledge, and Contemplative Science, course activities will include place-based mindfulness exercises, walking meditation, Council sharing, journaling, and creative expression.

Course Purpose

In this era of nearly constant digital interaction, the prospect of experiencing a “wild,” unplugged form of connection with the natural world is almost novel, especially for the current generation that has grown up as “digital natives.” Spending time cultivating a deep and direct relationship with the natural world without the presence and interference of technology is rare. Yet deep nature connection has been proven to provide the same benefits as other mindfulness practices such as meditation - leading to a greater sense of peace, focus, calm and presence as well as numerous physical and spiritual benefits.

In this context, this course’s primary intention is to support students in developing contemplative practices that support deep nature connection, thereby increasing their current as well as long-term wellbeing and flourishing. It also intends to help students discover and build their own relationships with the natural world, and to increase their experiences of awe, reverence and wonder.

Second, the course intends to support students in cultivating a more meaningful relationship with the land upon which they study and live. This in turn provides students with an opportunity for increased connection, an experience of belonging, and increased care and commitment to responsible stewardship.

Finally, in this time of climate crisis, this course proposes that developing an intimate relationship with land is an essential component for both cultivating personal resilience as well as committing to finding regenerative pathways forward.

Experiential practices to be included in the course include nature-based meditation and movement practices, group and individual wanders through campus, storytelling and council sharing, ritual, journaling, creative arts, and other practices that support students’ wild, authentic expression.

Learning Goals

1. Explore and develop nature-based contemplative practices
2. Discover and build an intimate relationship with the natural world, and increase your experiences of awe, reverence and wonder.
3. Discover a new and more meaningful relationship with the Stanford campus
4. Understand the benefit of nature connection for human well-being and flourishing through examining diverse academic and culturally-based knowledge sources

Required Text(s)

The primary text required for this class is *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Students are expected to obtain a copy of the text early on in the quarter and to complete at least half of the text by our first session on July 13th. Students may use a paper copy of the text or listen to the audiobook, or both. The audiobook is an excellent choice as it is narrated by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Additional course materials will be posted on Canvas.

Students are expected to have completed reading materials before the class section for which it is assigned, as listed in the Course Calendar and/or on Canvas.

Course Expectations/Requirements

This course has been organized around class readings and discussions, participation in experiential activities, and participation in our collective blog site. Course meetings will emphasize interactive engagement.

All of the class assignments have a specific due date, as listed in syllabus/Canvas, so pay attention, set notifications appropriately, and log in to Canvas to keep up/reminded of course content (read it and refer to it often). The student will be responsible for completing each assignment and will be given a grade based upon a point value for each assignment.

Attendance and Participation

Students' full participation is the most important aspect of this class and is required in order to pass. This includes attendance at both of our daylong classes, Saturday July 13th and Saturday July 27th, from 10 am – 6 pm. Students must be able to attend both days of the course and to stay for the entire duration of the class on both days in order to enroll in the class. **Please plan to set aside that whole time on the two course dates as attendance at both full days is required.**

Stanford Living Education courses are hands-on, inclusive, and class meetings are an important part of a progression. Attendance and participation is crucial, as is doing all reading and assignments in order to be able to participate in discussion and the experiential nature of this course. A huge amount of learning in this course happens in real time, during class. If you **MUST** be absent, please let the instructor know *in advance*. You may not be able to make up the work.

Full participation includes creating (and being part of) an environment conducive to learning, which includes but is not limited to: being on time, turning off cell phones, listening and contributing. Listening and contributing involves hearing other opinions, crafting respectful responses, referencing readings/course experiences, actively participating in high quality discussion, and corresponding in a respectful and timely fashion.

Core Course Activities and Major Assignments

All assignments are listed with more detailed instructions on the Canvas course site, and will also be explained in class.

1. Participation

Students' full participation is the most important aspect of this class and is required in order to pass. To enroll, you must attend both of our daylong classes, Saturday July 13th and Saturday July 27th, from 10 am – 6 pm. **Please plan to set aside that whole time on the two course dates as attendance at both full days is required.**

2. Engagement with Course Materials

The primary text required for this class is *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Students are expected to obtain a copy of the text early on in the quarter and to complete at least half of the text by our first session on July 13th. Students may use a paper copy of the text or listen to the audiobook, or both. The audiobook is an excellent choice as it is narrated by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Additional course materials can be found on Canvas. Please ensure you review them ahead of class.

3. **Shared Community Blog Site**

To supplement our in-class discussion and reflection we will have a shared class community website / blog that we engage with asynchronously. This site is where your class work will be posted and also commented on by me as your instructor. Your grade for the course will be determined through these posts, which vary between 10-20 points each, so please be sure to keep up with the posts and comments.

4. **Self-Guided Nature Connection Retreat**

Students will set aside 2-4 hours to take yourself on an uninterrupted self-guided nature connection retreat (no tech, no socializing, no multitasking) in a very intentional space (inner and outer space, so to speak) and spend time in contemplation.

5. **Sit Spot and Contemplative Nature Connection Practices**

Students will learn about a variety of contemplative nature connection practices during our in-person classes, which you will be asked to practice daily between our two daylong classes.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assignments help instructors monitor student learning during the course. Feedback gathered from your assignments is used to identify where you might be struggling so that instructors can adjust teaching, and students can adjust studying. Course grades will be assigned according to the total number of points a student earns.

Homework assignments are to be submitted by the deadline assigned. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor if they are unable to meet this requirement. **If an assignment is more than one week late it will be counted as a zero.**

Wild Wonder is a multi-modal learning class that will engage a variety of pedagogical approaches. When we are in class in person together, we will unplug from digital technology in order to connect with ourselves, one another, and our environment with full presence.

Rather than having assignments be submitted to Canvas, we will have a shared class community website / blog that we engage with between classes. This will support a community environment of mutual learning and reflection.

You'll be asked to post on the blog in response to that week's course materials and activities, and to read and comment on at least two of your classmates' posts. The blog post assignments will have specific prompts, so be sure to follow the assignment each week for your blog post.

This site is where your class work will be commented on by me as your instructor.

Your grade for the course will be determined through these posts, which vary between 10-20 points each, so please be sure to keep up with the posts and comments each week.

In order to receive full credit, you must make your post according to the assignment guidelines AND comment in a meaningful way on two of your classmates' posts.

As this class is S/NC, students need to achieve over 70% to pass the course.

Assignment Due Dates:

ASSIGNMENT #	ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	PTS
1	Reflective Blog Post # 1	July 3	5
2	Comments on Classmates' Blog Posts	July 5	5
3	Reflective Blog Post # 2	July 10	5
4	Comments on Classmates' Blog Posts	July 12	5
5	Reflective Blog Post # 3	July 17	5
6	Comments on Classmates' Blog Posts	July 19	5
7	SELF-RETREAT & Reflective Blog Post # 4	July 21	25
8	Comments on Classmates' Blog Posts	July 23	5
9	Reflective Blog Post #5	July 24	5
10	Comments on Classmates' Blog Posts	July 26	5
11	FINAL REFLECTION Blog Post # 6	July 31	25
12	Comments on Classmates' final reflections	Aug 2	5
			100

Office Hours, Email/Communication & Canvas

Please reach out to make an appointment if you have questions or concerns about the course.

Students are expected to have access to email and to check it frequently. Instructors will use Canvas to send announcements as needed. The syllabus, some of the readings and other pertinent information will be stored on the Canvas website. Please notify the instructor if there are technical problems with the materials on the website/Canvas. Otherwise, it is assumed that all students have access to readings and other course materials.

Honor Code (Revised, effective Sep 1, 2023).

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the Stanford academic community, individually and collectively. Its purpose is to uphold a culture of academic honesty. The code articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work. Examples of conduct that have been regarded as being in violation of the Honor Code (and are most relevant for this course) include copying from another's examination paper or allowing another to copy from one's own paper; unpermitted collaboration; plagiarism; revising and resubmitting a quiz or exam for regarding, without the instructor's knowledge and consent; representing as one's own work the work of another; and giving or receiving aid on an academic assignment under circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that such aid was not permitted. You can find the Honor Code here:

<https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/honor-code>

Access and Accommodations

Students with disabilities are a valuable and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class, and invite you to share your accommodation letters with us. It is best if you do so as early as possible, so we may partner with you to identify barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.

If you experience disability but do not yet have an accommodation letter: please register with the [Office of Accessible Education \(OAE\)](#). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oae.stanford.edu. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 650-723-1066)

Student Mental Health

College can be stressful. Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work. If so, please speak with your instructor. Relationships, family worries, loss or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance and well-being.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, expect that I will express my concerns (and the reasons for them) to you and remind you of the resources that might be helpful. My intention is to let you know that I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available.

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Stanford University provides counseling resources to support students, faculty and staff. Some of your options include approaching [Residence Deans](#), [Confidential Support Team](#) (sexual and relationship violence), [Wellbeing Coaches](#), [Bridge Peer Counseling Center](#), the [Office of Religious Life](#), and [CAPS \(Counseling and Psychological Services\)](#) to speak with an on-call clinician at 650-723-3785 for both urgent and emergent matters.

Affordability of Course Materials

Stanford University and its instructors are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, please note that you can work with the Financial Aid Office or the FLI office, confidentially. <https://advising.stanford.edu/current-students/advising-student-handbook/fli-students#financial>