

EARTH 101¹

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Abstract

This paper is an account of a course called *Philosophy and the Environment*. The course responds to problems common in environmental education: that is, either leaving the audience unmoved, or, struck by the information and the analyses, but without emotional support or positive experiences, full of even more despair, cynicism and numbness than when they began. Many of us in higher education are seeking a different path, believing that it is possible to connect our bodies and our minds, our intellects and our emotions, our analytical intelligence and our spiritual hopes. *Philosophy and the Environment* attempts to do just this, providing a theoretical account of the crisis with an experience of its meaning.

Keywords: environmental education, environmental crisis, emotional intelligence, environmental philosophy, nature

We continue to educate the young for the most part as if there were no planetary emergency.

David Orr, *Earth in Mind*²

If we can get attached to just one tree from spending 30-45 minutes a week with it, then imagine how attached we could get if we lived in the forest, or visited it every day for work or pleasure. Then we would realize just how important the environment really is and how much magic it holds. If everyone could only see this, then perhaps we wouldn't be in the environmental crisis we are in now.

Ryan D., *Plant Journal*, (Student on *Philosophy and the Environment*)

Introduction

Why are we awash in pesticides, cautious of now dangerous sunlight, frightened for (and of) our breasts and prostates, and lonely for vanished species? Why, that is, do we live in an environmental crisis? Because, say many of us, there is something fundamentally amiss in the depths of our society, our culture, and our civilization. We suffer from a misguided economy, the shortsighted self-interest of governments, our own addiction to consumption, and the deep and destructive flaws that mark how we think about who we are and what it

is to be alive on this earth. We have mistakenly taken humanity to be the only species of value, privileged our minds over our bodies, discounted women as “natural” while exalting men as the source of intelligence and religious truth, and assumed that if we had scientific facts we could dispense with spirit. We have separated reason from emotion and all the fields of knowledge (sociology, biology, history, politics, ethics) from each other. We told ourselves (and everyone else who’d listen) that our technological brilliance would produce a safe and happy life, and that we’d progressed far beyond the accumulated wisdom of “primitive tribes” who (how silly can you get?) found wisdom in hawks and mountains.

For those of us who see the environmental crisis as a crisis of our entire civilization, the goal of environmental education is to raise students’ awareness of the complexity of the problem, the depth of its causes, and the possibility for personal and collective change. Yet it’s one thing to criticize our way of life, and another to figure out how to communicate that criticism in a way that leads anywhere. Sadly, the *manner* in which environmental values are taught may contradict *what* is being taught. Lectures about how mind-body dualism lead us to ignore our physical surroundings are given by an unmoving professor to slumped over, shallowly breathing students. Books are read about the importance of knowing our place in nature while students have no idea what is growing outside the classroom. Ecofeminist messages about empathizing with all of life are taught to students who never spend more than five seconds looking at any particular plant. The factual details of the environmental crisis are learned, while the emotions they arouse are ignored. Deep ecology bemoans our instrumental attitude towards nature and preaches that we cannot be fully human if we do not bond to something outside ourselves. Yet during a course in “Environmental Ethics” students bond only to books, words, papers, and screens.

Consequently, environmental education—not unlike environmental advocacy in the wider society—too often leaves its audiences unmoved. Or they may be struck by the information and the analyses, but without emotional support or positive experiences, they end up with even more despair, cynicism and numbness than when they began.

Many of us in higher education are seeking a different path.³ We believe that it is possible to connect our bodies and our minds, our intellects and our emotions, our analytical intelligence and our spir-

itual hopes, a theoretical account of the crisis with an experience of its meaning. In fact, we don't think students (or anyone else) will learn very much about the environmental challenge until all these dimensions are integrated.

What follows is an account of how I try to do this in a course called "Philosophy and the Environment," taught at an engineering college where virtually none of my students are philosophy majors but most of whom have had at least an "Introduction to Philosophy and Religion" course as background. The course satisfies distribution requirements for engineering and science majors all of whom must do substantial work in some particular area of the Humanities.

Teaching the Course: the Eight Premises

Before the term starts, I email those registered to let them know that "besides the usual reading, lectures and papers, there will be some rather unusual experiential exercises and meditations in the course." Thus when they come in on the first day, they've been warned.

Standing at the front of the class, I arrange on the small table before me a folder with the class syllabus. Then I take out of my backpack items that seem more fitted to geology or zoology than philosophy: some rocks, a crystal or two, a feather, and a fossilized shell. Then I light a large candle and ring an ornamental Tibetan bell.

From the beginning, then, I invoke two forces. By bringing in actual pieces of the world I announce that our course will not be confined to words. Nature, not just "nature," will be part of the action. The candle and the bell—the students think they're strange, and usually several giggle a bit—invoke a kind of ritualized seriousness which is not only particularly appropriate to a course on the environmental crisis but also taps into cultural images of concentration and self-transcendence. After the initial nervous laughter, I find, students pay close attention. And since each class is started this way, before long the sound of the bell produces a hushed attention that I rarely find in the first moments of other courses.

The class has begun. As it unfolds over the next twenty-eight meetings I am guided by eight premises about the environmental mess we're all in. My goal is not only to explain and discuss these premises, but also to help students personally experience them.

Premise 1: The environmental crisis is so universal and threatening that it inevitably provokes very strong emotions.

A well-intentioned colleague once told me: “I try to teach environmental material; I have students read the “World Watch” publications and study a mountain of details. But afterwards they have little or nothing to say. They just seem numb.”

Indeed. What happens to our emotional life when we read, for instance, that of the 65,000 chemicals used in the U.S. only around 10% have been tested for their health effects? Or that toxic PCBs have been found in arctic seals (some so affected that their dead bodies have to be disposed of as ‘hazardous waste’)? Or that by age twenty students stand between a 35% and 45% chance of getting cancer? (Steingraber 1997; Groopman 2001). What happens over the long run when students—who now are commonly exposed to something “about the environment” as early as kindergarten—are rarely if ever asked what they *feel* about the situation?

What happens, I believe, is that people develop some extremely powerful—yet typically unacknowledged—emotional responses. Because they are largely unexpressed, they sap our psychic and intellectual vitality and mark our lives by a joyless numbing out or a frenetic search for stimulation. From the frighteningly high rate of alcohol use to Internet addiction, the consequences of unacknowledged feelings about the environmental crisis are a daily reality on college campuses and in broader society. Without a shred of empirical proof I believe that the prospects of environmental deterioration simply do darken the horizon of young people—as well as lead them to doubt the competence and wisdom of their elders. All this must take an emotional toll.

My response to this dilemma is not to turn the class into group therapy, but to encourage students to integrate the emotional dimensions of their responses to the situations by offering a view of rationality that does not exclude emotions, and thus does not reproduce the alienation of thought from feeling that is part of the crisis in the first place.

On that first day, after the candle is lit and the bell sounded, I sketch in extremely broad terms what the crisis is all about. (The depth of the problem is also brought home in the first reading assignment, which is to go through all of a mass market environmental magazine, such as *E*, *Sierra* or *The Ecologist*). I then make it clear that while I try to be objective about our planet, I am not—and have

no desire to be—detached. I describe my own fear and grief, share my helpless anger over the threats to my daughters' health, acknowledge despair for the wilderness forever lost. I admit to years of avoiding information about just how bad things are, hoping to introduce the concepts of denial and avoidance and model the possibility of facing them. My goal is to demonstrate to students that awareness of my feelings in this setting is as important as my "expertise" about environmental ethics; and that *their* emotions deserve respectful attention rather than pseudo-rational dismissal. I suggest that the impact of the readings they will be doing may be felt in their emotional lives, and that at the least they should be aware of what is going on for them.

The value of their emotions is, among other things, to remind them that they can still love and grieve; and, as we see throughout the course, the emotions themselves convey information about our world. There are signs of connection to their surroundings and indications that something is deeply wrong.⁴ I periodically raise this issue throughout the term, both in the class as a whole and in small discussion groups. Some people report that nothing is happening; others, however, talk about disquieting dreams, increased feelings of grief or anger, alienation from friends or family who think they are making a big deal out of nothing, or serious questions about career choices. The dominant message of the course is that these reactions are perfectly understandable and rational, and that the best response to them is patient, careful attention.

When I ask the students to speak about what they feel on that first day, they respond slowly and hesitantly, emboldened by my example but still somewhat unsure that a university classroom is the proper place for emotions. As the hour progresses, however, their statements become increasingly more revealing.

"I'm pissed off" one will say, "because the field where I used to hunt for grasshoppers was turned into a parking lot for a mall; and they hardly even use it. What a waste".

"I'm scared," a young woman admits. "Every time I go out in the sun in the summer I think about skin cancer. My aunt died from it".

Others toss off a kind of irritated shrug. "What does that mean?" I say, letting them know pretty quickly that I won't be satisfied with a mumbled "Nothing". Usually what surfaces after a few exchanges is that they are very angry, but that they are sure that their anger won't change anything. I ask them whether a deep anger that cannot

change the world—and which for the most part cannot even be expressed—can lead anywhere but despair.

And then at times we find something lurking underneath the anger. Several young men tell me they don't see much use in thinking about all these problems. I ask one: "What would happen if you did think about it?"

"I don't know", he replies, "I'm not sure I could go on with what I'm supposed to do in this life. If I started to cry, I might never stop".

Premise 2. Meeting the emotional challenge of the environmental crisis requires spiritual resources.

Emotional responses to the environmental crisis are not neurotic feelings that need to be "cured." But we do need direct, intuitive, meditative practices as a source of calm, openness and connection to enable us to hold them. For want of a better word, I call such practices "spiritual."

To invoke spiritual resources in a college classroom—not unlike asking students to take their emotional lives seriously—is to resist the still dominant paradigms of scientism. (A paradigm widely shared at an engineering college!) In order to make this resistance comprehensible, we have to explore how the rise of science disenchanting the world and the cultural countertrends to that disenchantment that have arisen over the last few decades.⁵ In contemporary society many people believe that scientific knowledge is inadequate as a total worldview or a way to respond to crucial personal problems. The seamless integration of scientific research and corporate and military technology have made many of us extremely skeptical about how "objective" or "value free" science is; and technological consequences from nuclear weapons to the hole in the ozone layer have made people suspicious of unmonitored scientific "progress." Further, the boundaries of psychology, biochemistry, and cognitive research have moved towards the notion of a 'body-mind' medicine in which physical and emotional health are connected to psychic practices that have deep affinities to traditional meditation exercises.⁶

These and other developments have made people more open to what I am calling (rather broadly) "spiritual" practices: quieting the mind in meditation; using intuitive resources in visualizations; invoking ritualized forms of compassion, repentance and joy as ways to connect to other people and to the "more than human."⁷

In the first of the course's several lengthy sessions I begin with a

full-body relaxation (some students lie on the floor, others lean back in their chairs). I then ask them to imagine some place of complete safety in nature—from their memory or their imagination—and in their mind's eye to see and feel that place in all its details. They are instructed to notice what other beings are there, the climate, the wind, sounds and smells and the position and appearance of their own body. They will return to this psychic spot a number of times during the course. In the second extended meditation I ask them if this place has a message or gift for them; or if they have something to give or communicate to it.

“Nick” was tall and thin, red-haired and thoughtful. Later I would get to know him well when he did lengthy projects under my direction and became one of “my” students. But this was the first course he took with me, and we were still feeling each other out. After the meditation in which I asked the class to listen to see if their special place had any message or teaching for them there was a long pause. I wasn't surprised, just a little disappointed. My students are smart, but not terribly expressive; a far cry from the “crunchy” types you get at Oberlin or Earlham. And this was the first time I had done this sort of thing in a classroom. Then, slowly and deliberately, Nick stood up and approached the candle in the center of the room. “I got a message”, he said, and paused. I waited; the whole class waited. “Yes”, I asked gently, “what did you hear?” “Stop it. Just stop it”.

In another exercise students are each given two slices of apple. After going into a relaxation state they munch on the first one. Since this is towards the end of the class, they have already been exposed to the multiple roots of the crisis, from philosophical attitudes to economic structures; as well as the multiple types of beings whom the crisis affects, from plants, to indigenous tribes, to all of us. I then ask them to visualize the multitude of beings that make the apple possible: sun and water and earth and tree and microorganisms in the soil, and also farm laborers, truckers, supermarket workers, and, yes, pesticide manufacturers. They then eat the second piece of apple—which, some have said, tastes better than the first.

Another exercise focuses on the contrasting of the natural and the commercial environment. I can (and I do) lecture until I'm blue in the face about the effects of consumerism and our loneliness for nature. However, it is one thing to say it, and another to try to provide a context in which the ideas are directly experienced; to provide what Kierkegaard called a “subjective communication” aimed

at conveying not a propositional claim but a felt experience. In this exercise I instruct students to spend fifteen minutes in a natural setting doing “nothing”—simply being aware of the sights and smells, sounds and feel of their surroundings. They are then to get themselves as quickly as possible to a mall, a supermarket, a large drugstore—and, once again, to do nothing for fifteen minutes while taking in their surroundings. If they do not learn the lesson by that immediate contrast, they probably will not learn it from my lectures. If they do learn it, then the intellectual critique of consumerism and the urban built environment begins to take on an importance it could never have for them without the experience. In this and in all the other exercises, the experiential does not replace or duplicate the intellectual content of the course, but (when it works) focuses their attention and deepens their understanding.

Premise 3. Students in classrooms have bodies.

It seems odd almost to the point of absurdity that the extended critique of Cartesian mind-body dualism, along with extended post-modern discussions of “the body” in feminism and Foucault, are communicated in classrooms that replicate exactly educational settings in which Descartes’ premises were accepted. Therefore in *Philosophy and the Environment* certain simple yoga and chi kung postures and breathing exercises are used to promote relaxed and focused attention. Each class begins and ends with one minute of silent attention on the breath. If the energy lags in the middle of a class, I have students do a brief yoga posture to clear their minds. As our bodies are part of nature, and any destruction of nature will harm us, so we learn and think and feel with our bodies. If our bodies are ignored, our ability to learn and think and feel—even about the environment—will be diminished.

Premise 4. Intuitive experience of the world is essential in helping us understand it.

How do you teach students that all of nature is connected? That the world is deeply, meaningfully, alive? That not only human beings have value? Or that, at least, these ideas have some basis in intuitive experience as well as formal argument? These basic concepts involved in these questions are the bread and butter of a good deal of a good deal of environmental philosophy (especially “Deep Ecology”) and non-academic naturalism, and are repeatedly stressed in the

course reading. And they are essential to the construction of a world-view that opposes our culture's dominant anthropocentrism. Is there any way to encourage students to experience these ideas directly?

An essential—and probably my looniest—course requirement is the “plant journal.” Each student must pick some particular “plant”—from a blade of grass to a tree—and to sit with that plant three or four times a week, recording their experiences. I tell them to study the plant, talk to it, listen to it, touch it, and smell it. If the plant were to become extinct, they should be able to tell the world what has been lost. Any (legible!) record of this experience is acceptable—including writing over and over that they think the assignment is a waste of time and that their professor is an idiot. After years of this assignment, I have seen, time and again, a kind of magic unfold.

I remember one fellow in particular: tall and muscular, a football player-fraternity member-beer drinker type who usually dozed or fidgeted during meditations and clearly wasn't buying much of my deep-ecology-ecomarxist-ecofeminist-tree-hugger message. At the end of our seven week term I read his journal. For the first two weeks he did nothing but record his disdain for the plant, the plant journal, and his dopey professor. Then he began to notice the details of the small tree he had chosen. By the fifth week he had named the tree “George” and looked forward to visiting it. His final entry read: “All the other trees have their leaves and George doesn't. I'm really worried about him.”

Other students have written:

“I wish to thank nature for giving me peace and perspective in the middle of the city.”

“I don't think I am contributing to the environmental crisis. No, actually I am. I always drive my car everywhere when I am home in Boston. Sorry nature . . .”

“Thank you for listening to my thinking and thoughts, grief and happiness.”

“My tree is actually blooming! And not just one or two buds. Many. It's like giving birth. I don't know why but it seemed the most dead tree around. But it has woken up!! It is saved.”

“The tulip is straightening back up. A proud survivor. Her immediate neighbor has an undignified floppiness. More moss has grown up around the base of the rhododendron where my tulip resides. Soon there will be the most fragrant ferns that grow there every summer.”

“Honestly, I thought this was a dumb, immature assignment. But I'm glad I stuck with it. Having seen the slow process of nature in all its beauty, I will never look at trees the same.”

What do students learn from these journals?

- That you can become emotionally attached to a plant. That love, in other words, doesn't stop with humans or even animals. One student began with "I feel kind of silly sitting out here writing about a tree; I don't think I can write much about it other than it's pretty dead looking." But then a week later she reflected: "Maybe I chose it because it looked lonely."
- How to be aware of the plant in the details of its existence—roots, bark, leaves, branches. Changes of budding and flowering. To notice the insects at its base, the birds that nest in its crown, the squirrels that jump from branch to branch. To see that plants are alive, changing, dynamic—and that their growth and change are astonishingly exciting. (Luckily, I've arranged always to teach this course in the spring.)
- To be aware of pollution in a visceral way. Students see the nails in their tree's bark, garbage or broken glass on the roots. They begin to care about how the plant faces acid rain, drought from global warming, threats from construction of new buildings.
- To remember encounters with plants when they were children and to recover a sense of magic pervading the natural world—a sense too easily paved over by "maturity". "I remember picking flowers for the church altar. I won't do that any more. They look better out here." "I think about all the things that concern and worry me. Then I look at the tree and it is just so peaceful. Nothing bothers it. I'm jealous!"
- To become aware of the guilt and shame they feel about their personal contribution to the environmental crisis. To realize that it is not some abstraction called "nature" that is threatened by our society and our culture, but particular entities: including this one with whom they've made friends. "I stop and think about how we as a society have afflicted nature with so many 'diseases'. And I wonder about the world my children will live in." "How will my future actions—where I work, what I eat, how I live—affect my tree?"
- That simply being with a plant can sooth them and make them happy; and therefore that nature has something to offer them that is deeper and more personal than use-values or purely aesthetic pleasure. That, surprisingly, in a communion with nature they can feel their most human. "I have all these deadlines that are to be

met and here I am “wasting” my time just sitting by a tree. But it makes me feel so much calmer.” “My tree symbolizes my life, my growth, my wounds. It’s grown as I have and it has been damaged as I have. It has a large broken branch. I have a broken heart.”

- That in a world of scientific, technical and numerical “expertise” and “certainty” that there remains special joy in simply asking questions. “Are members of the natural world conscious? Do roaming deer watch their steps so as not to step on ants?”

Premise 5. No single discipline is adequate to the complexity of the environmental crisis.

Readings for the course come from philosophy, ecotheology, economics, natural history, and politics. If we are to understand the “causes” of the crisis, we must understand the role of religion and the rise of capitalism, the effects of modern science and the global market. We must learn to see the consequences of the current environmental practices for non-human nature (as in Bill McKibben’s *The End of Nature*) and for people (as in our readings on environmental racism.). If we are not to be left in despair, we must acquaint ourselves (as we do in the last week of the course) with resistance movements and success stories. This last is critical because even with the rise of campus activism in recent years the vast majority of my students do not relate to political action. When they hear about alliances between native and white activists to prevent destructive mining in northern Wisconsin, or about the sustainable growth of the city of Ciutuba in Brazil, they realize that there are victories to celebrate and work to be done—work in which they, if they choose, can find a place.

Premise 6. Critical thought—including criticism of environmentalism—is essential to our response to the crisis.

The point of the course is not to privilege expressing feelings, intuition, or spiritual exercises over intellectual activity, but to integrate all of these together. As both the reading and my lectures are often deeply critical of contemporary society, so it is also necessary to encourage students to voice their own disagreements both to my position and to any particular environmentalist we are reading.

In the context of the environmental crisis, this is a somewhat complicated matter. As a moral being, I cannot (nor do I think I *should*) pretend to neutrality about these matters. Since I really do believe

that we are on the civilizational equivalent of the Titanic, it would be unethical of me to pretend that I don't think the situation is dire in the extreme. As a person, a citizen, an educator, I have a responsibility to try to awaken other people to this belief. In doing so I cannot pretend that I believe the voices that deny the reality of the crisis have much to support their position. An absence of neutrality on basic questions, we should remember, is often present even in much more conventional courses: few classes on the Holocaust spend much time asking if the Nazis had good reasons to try to kill all the Jews; or on American history if black Africans were better off as slaves; or on physiology whether or not (as medical school textbooks of the late nineteenth century taught) higher education damages women's reproductive capacity. I do not take the environmental crisis as something about which we can cavalierly and cheerfully examine "competing narratives," since I view it as a practical problem of the greatest significance. This may strike some readers as uncritical and simple-minded. I would only respond that they ask themselves how much they would engage in the search for "competing narratives" after an initial cancer diagnosis were confirmed by a second and third opinion. One could at that point engage in a fascinating study of the history of science, the politics of medicine, and the cultural biases of the western technology. Yet I doubt if such efforts would really be high on the list of someone, even the most sophisticated intellectual, after they received the Bad News. Of course it is a matter of some debate whether the environmental crisis is as bad as all that. Support for that belief is offered throughout the course, both in lectures and reading.

At the same time, however, it is necessary for me to make a protected space for students who don't see things my way. Dissenting voices must be encouraged, praised for their willingness to disagree, and dealt with directly and respectfully. This is not always easy, especially when—to my irritation—I hear a student repeating some of the more vicious forms of conservative anti-environmentalist propaganda. Yet human respect can transcend ideological difference, especially since I believe that what is most important is that students come to grips with these issues, not parrot my own views. In my experience most people who seriously engage with the material—intellectually and emotionally—end up heading in (what I think is) the right direction. Serious criticism is itself a kind of engagement, and meets my purposes quite well.

We also spend some time examining tensions within environmentalism itself: notably, over the degree to which the concept of nature is historically constituted and in the relation between deep ecology's stress on the inherent value of nature and social ecology's concern with relations between social structures and ecology. Beyond their intellectual value, these debates have a moral and political value as well, for they reveal that environmentalism—no less than the environmental crisis itself—is a product of human thought and action, not a transcendently-given reality. As a human product the environmental movement is something which these students can take part in shaping. To feel free to do so, they must be able to see that controversies, doubts, and difficulties are part of it.

Premise 7. The environmental crisis is a desecration of the holy and not only an economic or health problem.

This premise certainly does not imply that students must believe in God. Rather, I encourage those who wish it to articulate the profound feelings they have for at least some parts of nature; and to express their growing realization that the violation of nature is simultaneously a violation of themselves and of something that is sacred. That sense of the "sacred" can be theistic, pantheistic, or pagan. Or it may simply represent, as in Paul Tillich's phrase, a locus of "ultimate concern." The point is not to impose a view on them, but to allow those who indeed have this experience a place to express it. The key goal is provide a vocabulary for a sensibility—not to try to convince them that the sensibility exists where it does not. Typically a sizable number of these hard-headed, no-nonsense young engineers dismiss the notion of finding the sacred in nature altogether. Typically, however, a sizable number of just as hard-headed and no-nonsense types talk about experiences they had when hiking in the mountains, or of swamps they used to visit as kids, or—as happened just this past spring—of an encounter with squirrel in the park across the street. In describing these experiences, words like mystery, awe, and reverence, once legitimated by me, spring easily to their lips.

Premise 8. Students exist as moral beings in a morally complex world.

The environmental crisis makes our daily lives morally suspect. I raise the issue of our collective complicity in a crisis we want to alleviate: that all of us, including the tree-hugging professor who does a long commute to work by car, bear some responsibility. Again I do not, and

I cannot, pretend to moral neutrality in this issue. In fact, it would be the height of irrationality to do so. And I make moral reflection on their own future choices—all the more significant because most of them will be engineers—an essential part of course discussion. They are confronted—directly but respectfully—with questions about what they would do in concrete situations: for whom will they work, what will they do, what risks and sacrifices will they make? Since morality is not separate from intelligence, I believe it is essential that they rehearse, if only for a few moments, possible responses to future moral dilemmas.

Conclusions

All these aspects of the course form (when they work) a synergistic whole. At times, a movement occurs: from the most personal and unspoken (the meditations and visualizations), through an intellectual understanding of the crisis (the readings, lectures and class discussions), through an “outer” experience of a particular plant, to our concluding studies of environmental resistance movements. The students begin to experience themselves and the entire world as related: by industry and commerce and science and spirituality and governments and political movements; by the way we pollute and the way we conserve; by what we see and what we ignore; by fear and greed, by love and care.

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.
2. See David Orr (1994: 2).
3. As I've learned from conversations with colleagues, many environmental faculty are expanding the sense of what is possible in a college course.
4. Our emotions, as a number of philosophers and psychologists are (finally) teaching, are in many cases rational responses of the human organism. In philosophy, see Nussbaum (2001); in psychology, Greenspan (2003).
5. This is a society-wide phenomenon. See, e.g., Ingelhart (1990) and Ray and Anderson (2000).

6. See Pert (1999) and Eisenberg (1985).
7. In David Abram's (1997) felicitous phrase.

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Appendix: Syllabus PY 2717 Philosophy and the Environment

This course is an introduction to the philosophical, spiritual, historical, and political dimensions of the environmental crisis. We will begin by trying to get some sense of the scope of the crisis and then focus on a variety of explanations for it. Throughout we will try to be aware of our own emotional reactions to the crisis and we will develop some psychological/spiritual resources to help us live with it. We will also explore some models of a social order that is destructive to neither the human nor the non-human world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Lectures and discussions are essential.

Reading: You must do a 300-400 word summary of the assigned reading once a week.

Papers: there will be a take-home mid-term and a final.

Group work: preparing a presentation on a particular book.

Plant journal:

Books: *The End of Nature* (Bill McKibben) and *Ecology* (ed. Carolyn Merchant). There will be group presentations on: *Hope Human and Wild*, *Monkey Wrench Gang*, *Confronting Environmental Racism*, *The New Resource Wars*, *Sustainable Planet*.

COURSE TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS AND READING

I. *What is going on?*

Read any *one* of the environmental magazines on reserve. Read: Bill McKibben: *The End of Nature*.

II. *Worldviews: Ethics, Philosophy, Religion, Science*

David Abram, "Ecology and Magic" (*Finding Home, Spell of the Sensuous and Invitation to Environmental Philosophy* on reserve).

Joanna Macy, "Toward a Healing of Self and World" (Merchant).

Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement" (Merchant)

Fritjof Capra, "Systems Theory and the New Paradigm" (Merchant)

David Bohm, "Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World" (Merchant)

Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" (*This Sacred Earth*, on reserve)

Terry Williams, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" (*This Sacred Earth*, on reserve)

III. *Tensions in Environmental Thought and the Transition to Social Ecology*
(@1 week)

Chapter 4 of Roger S. Gottlieb *A Spirituality of Resistance* (on reserve)
Roger S. Gottlieb “Spiritual Deep Ecology and the Left” (*This Sacred Earth*, and *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, on reserve)

IV. *Class, Race, Gender*

Mike Jacobs, Chapters 3 and 4 of *The Green Economy* (on reserve)
James O'Connor, “Socialism and Ecology” (Merchant)
Carol Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess” (Merchant)
Ynestra King, “Feminism and the Revolt of Nature” (Merchant)
Robert Bullard, “Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement” (Merchant)
“Principles of Environmental Justice” (Merchant)
Winona Laduke, “From Resistance to Regeneration” (Merchant)
Vandana Shiva, “Development, Ecology, and Women” (Merchant)

V. *Group Presentations*

Hope Human and Wild
Monkey Wrench Gang
Confronting Environmental Racism
The New Resource Wars
Sustainable Planet