

Human Ecology

Rationale

My intention in offering this curriculum is to allow any student attending Brockwood the opportunity to develop an informed understanding of the larger ecological and social relationships within which we live. And also, to see if it may be possible to nurture a genuine care for the wider Earth community and its inhabitants that make up our home.

One of the fundamental contexts that we educate within is the current state of the wider biosphere, the system that allows us to continue living on this planet. It has been argued that education has failed us to a significant extent in recognizing this wider context, and that our educational practices have conditioned patterns of thinking and understanding that actually contribute to our current ecological crisis. As the educator David Orr commented:

“There is a failure to educate individuals to think broadly, to perceive and understand systems and patterns, and to live as whole yet interdependent people, intimately linked to the wider web of life.” (Orr, 2004: Earth in Mind)

What is called for at this time is an approach to education that challenges the cultural values and assumptions of who we hold ourselves to be, and examines to what extent our sense of ourselves is inclusive or exclusive of a wider ecological context. This exploration of our relationship with the wider Earth community is directed toward the possibility that someday, we may indeed live in a mutually enhancing manner on this planet.

Indicative content

Worldview

- Perspectives from Deep ecology and ecopsychology
- From anthropocentrism to ecocentrism
- Finding the balance: Individualism and community centred value systems
- Cosmology: Our larger evolutionary story

Life on Earth

- A systems view of life on earth. Gaia theory.
- Ecosystems and their services. Human influence on current state and trends. Our response toward sustainability.
- The 6th major extinction event. Human drivers and future projections. Our response toward sustainability.
- Global climate change: causes, consequences and a range of future scenarios. Our response toward sustainability.

Globalization

- The industrial growth society: what drives our culture?
- Global inequality: it's social and ecological consequences
- Monoculture and diversity / Globalization and localization
- The power of community: our way into the future as a global village

Listening to the land, speaking for the land, belonging to the land

- Exploration of a range of nature sensitivity exercises and regular solo time in nature.
- A sense of place: The ecological neighbourhood around Brockwood
- Eco-literature: giving voice to the land
- The role of creative expression
- The loss of ceremony and the concept of sacred.

Anticipated Learning Outcomes

- Responsibility for the learning process through participative learning.
- An understanding, through environmental science, of the wider social and ecological context that we live within, including: climate change, the loss of biodiversity, degradation of eco-systems along with the services they provide, the increase in population along with the challenge of globalised 'growth and development', the causes and consequences of global inequality and a range of tools and indices for assessing the health of the biosphere (including human well being).
- An ability to understand and apply a systems perspective to the material studied, supporting an interdependent understanding of our world and the challenges we face.
- An understanding of differing worldviews and cultural narratives that underlie our behaviours. The capacity to inquire into what cultural narrative may currently serve us?
- Steps to empowerment: understanding the range of initiatives toward social and ecological reciprocity that are currently being explored on both local and global scales. The importance of individual, community, industrial and political participation in the transition to a sustainable culture.
- Exploring the biodiversity around Brockwood, and the cultivation of a meaningful, experiential relationship with the more-than-human world.
- The development of personal significance in living well on this earth, with all our relations – the widening of our circle of care.