EDF 642: Foundations of Environmental Education
Summer, 3 credits
Online, Asynchronous & Live Sessions with Optional Field Trip

Professor Information
Summer Office Hours: By Appointment
McKee Hall 285 or online
Email: Christine.mcconnell@unco.edu
Phone: 970-351-2438

Course Description
Exploration of historical, political, and sociological foundations of environmental education in the US and internationally. Particular attention paid to curriculum in formal and nonformal schooling.

Course Overview
This course explores the evolution of education in, about, for, and with the environment. Students explore the theories, origins and evolutions of EE curriculum in K-12 schools and evaluate various successes and failures in the US and internationally.

Course Pre-requisites
None

Professional Standards Addressed in this Course

See Appendix A
Required Texts

This is a popular text read by many parents and those outside of education.


This seminal text provides important theoretical background for the purposes of ecological perspectives in education.


This is a curriculum design text that aims to help educators create EE experiences for students.

Individual text(s) to be chosen by students for presentations. See bibliography for ideas.

Course Content and Reading Schedule
The schedule of readings is subject to change based upon student learning and interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Course Schedule*</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class Topic/Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>Introductions and Course Overview; Construct Project Assessment Criteria</td>
<td><em>Last Child in the Woods</em>, Louv Significant Life Experiences Select and begin individual texts for critique</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships between humans and nature. What is “the environment”?</td>
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<td>Week Two</td>
<td>Cultural, social, political, and historical issues related to ecological literacy. In what ways do such issues influence the aims of environmental education?</td>
<td><em>Ecological Literacy</em>, Orr Individual texts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Week Three</td>
<td>Cultural, social, political, and historical issues related to ecological literacy. In what ways do such issues influence the aims of environmental education?</td>
<td><em>Ecological Literacy</em>, Orr Individual texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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|                         | Week Four | Curriculum and pedagogy in Environmental Education; Ecologically minded teaching       | *Childhood and Nature*, Sobel “Complementary Curriculum” (Moroye) and “Ecomindedness Across the...
Foundations of Environmental Education

Curriculum” (Moroye and Ingman)

“Ecopedagogies,” Gruenwald

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Five</th>
<th>Curriculum and pedagogy in environmental education</th>
<th>Significant Life Experiences and Your Ecological Identity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week Six</td>
<td>Effects on Children and Communities</td>
<td>Final Projects Due</td>
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*The course is designed as a summer elective to meet the requests of MAT: Curriculum Studies students. It could, however, be easily adapted for a regular semester.

**Course Requirements:**
- Reliable and consistent internet access
- Access to a Webcam with audio
- Critically and thoughtfully read all assigned articles and texts for the course.
- Participate in asynchronous and live discussions with the intent of learning from peers and critically examining the texts.
- Maintain timely participation and meet all deadlines
- Readings from the required texts and those posted on Blackboard.
- Weekly Activities
- Live Sessions (on Canvas)
- Final projects

**Bases for Course Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Approximate percentage of grade</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Activities</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Weekly: see Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Reading Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Project One</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Project Two</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Method of Evaluation**

The following grading scale will be used to assign a final course grade:

- 94 – 100% = A
- 93 - 90% = A-
- 89 - 87% = B+
- 86 – 84% = B
- 83 – 80% = B-
- 79 - 77% = C+
- 76 – 74% = C
- 73 – 70% = C-
- 69 – 67% = D+
- 66 – 64% = D
- 63 – 60% = D-
- 59 – 0% = F

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Final Project Choices

It is often said that we should be stewards of the environment. For this course, you will become a steward of environmental education.

Stewardship of the planet requires knowledge of systems and interactions, a willingness to learn, a propensity to care, and the ability to share understandings. So, too, will stewardship of environmental education. Therefore, your major projects will be to work toward these aims. In all options, consider the content, the people involved and their socio-cultural backgrounds, and the future students your developing understandings will affect.

Major Projects: Choose two

1. Photo Essay of Place
2. Intensive Outdoor/Place Based Experience understood and analyzed through an EE framework or theory
3. Local resource collection and/or development
4. Open Option (think...political action, song writing, nonfiction essays, etc.)

General Criteria (to be further developed as needed)

Sincerity of Purpose: Did the student authentically explore and approach the project with the aim of a meaningful experience?

Creativity of Approach: In what ways did the student innovatively think about the issues/problems/opportunities?

Quality of Work: Do the materials, products, artworks, etc. demonstrate a high level of editing and care, and do they rise to a graduate level standard?

Referential and Supported: Did the student utilize and acknowledge research and ideas of those in the field?

Communication: Did the student articulate the purpose, qualities, and findings from the project? This will likely require an explication paper that is well-edited and cited.
Project Sketches to Generate Ideas

Photo Essay of Place: Place is an integral part of any environmental curriculum. One way to explore and deepen our understanding and knowledge of place is to examine various parts from various perspectives. For example, if our “place” is our neighborhood, we might explore the types of homes that are there for humans and nonhumans. We might count the distances (in steps or seconds or hops or songs) from a home to a restaurant. We might view the trees from beneath and above, or the buildings from the inside and out. Part of the exploration is to come to know something new about a particular place, and also to then be able to anticipate ideas about other places.

If you choose this project, your goal is to tell a visual story of place through photographs (or sketches if desired). Consider the perspectives of residents, human and nonhuman, and the multiple ways in which a particular place can be inhabited. What makes this a place? What can be learned from such a study?

Intensive Outdoor/Place Based Experience: Environmental Education would not be EE without at least some outdoor experience. This project is your chance to explore your connections with the natural world in a setting of your choice—the wilderness, a park, a nature center, etc. I invite you to select something that is slightly out of your comfort zone so that you can have a NEW experience. Of course, be safe and keep it legal.

The goal of this project is to spend an extended period of time in a natural setting and to record/journal about your experience. Part of your journaling (or recording via voice data, photographs, drawings, or a combination) should include reference to some of the ideas and theorists we have studied.

Local Resource Collection and Development: After taking this course, you will have much to share and offer to your peers in education. And, as you are likely aware, sometimes knowing how to “do” EE is a challenge—are you allowed to take students outside? Is the playground outside enough? How do I organize a field trip? The questions abound even before the experiences starts. This project is for those interested in creating a guidebook of local resources that you could share with other practitioners about how to infuse EE in the classroom setting and beyond. You could create lesson plans, assemble local resources on parks, create local scavenger hunts, etc. The goal is to be helpful and inspiring to others and for your own work.

Open Option: I invite you to allow yourself to be inspired by the ideas and your own interests. What project would be meaningful for you? How could you represent your exploration and knowledge in a way that you could share with others? If you choose this option, I ask that you write up your own “assignment” so that I may in the future offer it as an option to others.
Critical and Creative Reading Presentations

Each of you will select a nature-focused text to read on your own. You will then share your critical and creative analysis of the ideas and how they relate to who you are as an educator.

The guiding questions are below:

1. What are the major concepts, themes, events and/or ideas? Be mindful not to “give away” the plot if applicable.
2. Analysis of the text. What do the major concepts, themes, and events mean in the context of the entire course?
3. Whose voices are represented? Missing? What other events, ideas, or perspectives would add to the text?
4. How did the text help you reflect upon your own experiences as an individual and as an educator?

To share your ideas, you will create a short handout or sharable electronic source that addresses the above questions. You will complement your linguistic interpretation with a non-linguistic representation of your experience of the text. Options include a painting, a drawing, a cartoon, a song, poetry, a photo montage, musical compilation, video, sculpture, dance, a play, etc. You do not have to be artistic to be successful, but you do need to tap into different ways of knowing and representing knowledge. For more on multiple forms of representation, see Elliot Eisner’s *Cognition and Curriculum Reconsidered*. 
Bibliography for Environmental and Ecological Education

Why consider nature and sustainability?
*Ecological Literacy*, David Orr
*Earth In Mind*, David Orr
*Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv

Why is the environment important for education?
*Growing Up Green: Education for Ecological Renewal*, David Hutchison
*Educating for Eco-justice and Community*, Chet Bowers

What are some models for ecological education?
*Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education*, David Sobel
*Place Based Education*, David Sobel
*Ecological Education in Action: On Weaving Education, Culture, and the Environment*, Gregory Smith and Delafruz Williams
*Sustainable Education: Revisioning Learning and Change*, Stephen Sterling

What are some practical ways to infuse the environment into my educational work?
*Sharing Nature with Children*, Joseph Cornell
*Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning: Using the Outdoors as an Instructional Tool, K-8*, Herbert W. Broda
*Taking Inquiry Outdoors: Reading Writing, and Science Beyond the Classroom Walls*, Barbara Bourne
*Teaching Green: The Middle Years, Hands-on Learning in Grades 6-8*, Tim Grant and Gail Littlejohn

Other References
*Experience and Education*, John Dewey
*Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*, Nel Noddings

Important Contextual Readings
“Introduction: Global Citizenship” in *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*, Nel Noddings (Ed)
“A World that Takes Its Environment Seriously”, Chapter Twenty-One in *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect* by David Orr
“Ecological Literacy,” Chapter V in *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* by David Orr
“Guiding Principles and Emerging Practices for Environmentally Sustainable Education” by Nancy Van Kannel-Ray

Individual Selections—Each person will choose a different text
Part of this course is to identify the most meaningful and useful readings for you. Therefore, I have listed several nonfiction works that are not directly related to environmental education, but may have significance for those interested in EE.

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*

Kathleen Dean Moore, *Riverwalking or Holdfast*

Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*

Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams*

John Muir, *Wilderness Essays or My First Summer in the Sierra*

Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge*

Gretel Ehrlich, *The Solace of Open Spaces*

Rick Bass, *Winter: Notes from Montana*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature and Selected Essays*

Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walking*

Poetry by Mary Oliver – Various collections

Stanley Kunitz

*The Best American Science and Nature Writing*

**Recommended Works for Further Reading**


*Place-based Curriculum Design.* Amy Demarest


*The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics & Pedagogy,* Adamson, Evans & Stein, editors

*Growing Up Green: Education for Ecological Renewal* by David Hutchison

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Overarching Questions to Consider:

What are the most significant aims of Environmental Education? What are the best/most convincing reasons for including environmental education in schools? How should EE be implemented to reach important aims? What is the significance of the teacher’s ecological mindedness and

Policy Statements

Course Policies

- All work is due on the date specified. Late work will not be accepted unless agreed upon in advance by the professor.
- All written work must be proofread for grammar and mechanics. Discussion board posts must adhere to the elements of standard language (no abbreviations/informal texting language).
- All students and the professor will respect the opinions of others and engage in respectful, professional discourse. All class participants will model democratic practices of encouraging others to speak/participate; holding ourselves accountable to being open minded; and allowing all perspectives and voices to be heard.
- Regular online presence is required for your success in the course. Plan to log in to the course site several times per week.

University Policies

Disability Support Services

Any student requesting disability accommodation for this class must inform the instructor giving appropriate notice. Students are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 to certify documentation of disability and to ensure appropriate accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Statement

The University of Northern Colorado prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct or gender-based discrimination of any kind. UNC is legally obligated to investigate sexual misconduct (including, but not limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and...
intimate partner violence). If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a faculty member, they have an obligation to report it to UNC’s Title IX Coordinator. “Disclosure” may include communication in-person, via email/phone/text message, or through in/out of class assignments.

If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact the UNC Counseling Center (970-351-2496) or the Assault Survivors Advocacy Program (970-351-4040).

If you would like to learn more about sexual misconduct or report an incident, please visit www.unco.edu/sexualmisconduct

**Equity and Inclusion Statement**

The University of Northern Colorado embraces the diversity of students, faculty, and staff, honors the inherent dignity of each individual, and welcomes their unique perspectives, behaviors, and worldviews. In this course, people of all races, religions, national origins, sexual orientations, ethnicities, genders and gender identities, cognitive, physical, and behavioral abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, immigrant statuses, military or veteran statuses, size and/or shapes are strongly encouraged to share their rich array of perspectives and experiences. Course content and campus discussions will heighten your awareness to each other’s individual and intersecting identities.

The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities (located in Decker Hall) serves as resource to anyone seeking support or with questions about equity and inclusion at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). If you are a witness to or experience acts of bias at UNC and would like to learn more about bias response or report a bias incident, please visit Bias Response at http://www.unco.edu/biasresponse/

**Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to practice academic honesty in every aspect of this course. Make sure you know and understand the pillars of the UNC Honor Code: Honesty, Trust, Responsibility, Respect, and Fairness. Become familiar the Student Code of Conduct, especially the section on acts of dishonesty. Students who engage in academic misconduct are subject to grading consequences with regard to this course and/or university disciplinary procedures through the office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

If faculty would like to provide more information about Academic Integrity, please visit: http://www.unco.edu/dos/assets/pdf/Syllabus_Statements-2015-02.pdf

**Appendix A**

**Professional Standards Addressed in this Course**

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The American Educational Studies Association (AESA) Standards:

Standard I: Social Foundations of Education refers to a field of educational study that derives its
character and methods from a number of academic disciplines, combinations of disciplines, and
area studies, including: history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, religion, political science,
economics, cultural studies, gender studies, LGBTQ studies, comparative and international
education, educational studies, educational policy studies, as well as transdisciplinary and
interdisciplinary approaches. The purpose of Social Foundations of Education study is to bring
these disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary resources to bear in developing
interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives on education both inside and outside of
schools. (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5, I.6, 1.7)

Specifically, through the study of Social Foundations of Education educators are prepared to:
1. Understand and apply disciplinary knowledge from the humanities and social sciences to
interpreting the meanings of education and schooling in diverse cultural contexts.
2. Understand and apply normative perspectives on education and schooling.
3. Understand and apply critical perspectives on education and schooling.
4. Understand how moral principles related to democratic institutions can inform and
direct schooling practice, leadership, and governance.
5. Understand the full significance of diversity in a democratic society and how that bears
on instruction, school leadership, and governance.
6. Understand how philosophical and moral commitments affect the process of evaluation
at all levels of schooling practice, leadership, and governance.
7. Critically analyze current educational policies and practices at national, state, and local
levels and their impacts on teaching, learning, and the assessment of P-16 students.

STANDARD II: INTERPRETIVE, NORMATIVE, AND CRITICAL STUDIES FOR THE PREPARATION OF
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS
This standard seeks to ensure quality preparation at undergraduate, Masters, spe- cialist, and
Doctoral levels in the Social Foundations of Education for teachers and other school personnel,
as well as those educators pursuing degrees or joint degrees in Foundations of Education,
Educational Studies, and Educational Policy Studies.

4. Joint masters or doctoral programs involving Foundations of Education, Ed- ucational
Studies, and Educational Policy Studies shall include instruction in at least three of the
following disciplines or areas of study: history of educa- tion, philosophy of education,
sociology of education, religion and education, anthropology and education, politics of
education, economics of education, comparative and international education, cultural
studies in education, gender studies in education, educational studies, and educational
policy studies.

STANDARD IV: THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE
Social Foundations faculty understand education as a human value essential for helping
individuals create autonomous and meaningful lives in communities with others. As facilitators
of this process, educators commit themselves to this value, modeling the habits of life-long
learning and critical reflection through their in- dividual and collective (with colleagues and

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students) deliberations and decisions regarding their practice. Based on an interdisciplinary approach, Social Foundations of Education engages professional educators in examining theories and practices of democratic education at all levels. In recognition of cultural pluralism and common humanity, Social Foundations of Education aim to reclaim professional educators as ethical agents envisioning and acting on needed educational and social reforms for pursuing and implementing educational equity and excellence in a culturally diverse society. The following commitments are aimed at both higher education faculty’s work with pre- and in-service candidates, as well as educators’ work with P–12 students as they engage in professional practice. The use of the inclusive “we” and “students” throughout indicates our common responsibilities to those we teach.

Educators are committed to:

1. Maintaining allegiance to education as a human value and a public good, and resisting its institutional diminishment by:
   1. rejecting the myth that institutions are external to and constrain us as educators, as if they possessed powers that render us helpless;
   2. honoring the emotions generated when we feel the value of education which animates our work despite institutional pressures to ignore and comply;
   3. realizing that we are partly responsible for creating and sustaining institutional dynamics, and that we also possess the power to alter them.

4. Knowing that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique, but flows from the identity and integrity of professional educators by:
   - knowing our students and our subject depends heavily on self-knowledge;
   - deepening our understanding of and our relationship to the content that we teach, accepting that knowledge is dynamic and ever changing;
   - striving to see our students clearly and to see them as whole—individual persons with unique subjectivities, and also as members of particular groups whose lives are shaped by their race, class, gender, culture, and sexual orientation.

5. Critically analyzing educators’ own values and beliefs in relation to their pedagogical actions by:
   - investigating and considering our own values, beliefs, and teaching practices;
   - examining factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class and how they affect teaching and learning in classrooms as well as in informal and nonformal educational settings.

6. Critically analyzing social, cultural, and community dynamics in classrooms and schools to create environments for effective teaching and learning by:
   - acquiring knowledge of diverse cultures, particularly of the underrepresented and underserved communities;
   - responding to cultural diversity and learning needs of all students;
   - demonstrating knowledge of diverse cultures, particularly of those communities represented in their classrooms and schools;
   - encouraging an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible.
7. Incorporating students’ experiences and cultures into building a mutually supportive learning community that aims to examine, develop, and sustain democratic values by:
   - designing and implementing educational activities relevant to students’ families, cultures, and local and global communities;
   - developing curricula grounded in the interconnections between subject matter and community issues.

8. Developing and undertaking pedagogical actions for fostering civic engagement, cultivating democratic citizenship, and promoting ecologically sustainable economic development by designing and implementing critical curricular and instructional activities that raise students’ awareness of and foster their commitment to the pursuit of social equity and ecological sustainability.

9. Collaborating and leading within schools, communities, and in the educational profession by:
   - working collaboratively with all school personnel to create a professional learning community;
   - striving to improve the profession of teaching, leadership, and related service professionals working in schools;
   - participating in decision-making structures within educational settings;
   - promoting the professional growth of educators.

STANDARD V: RESEARCH, POLICY, AND ADVOCACY

Educators and students have historically been inundated with mandates from internal and external forces, many of which have not always been supportive of teaching or learning. Educators are subjected to demands they feel must be followed, even when they conflict with their personal or professional judgment. Whether out of lack of knowledge or an absence of agency, educators in turn subject their students to policies and practices they do not support. As a result, a climate of powerlessness is perpetuated as the two principal actors in educational environments (i.e., educators and students) remain as bystanders in policy and practices that influence them. The possibility of disrupting this trend is enhanced when educators have a deeper understanding of the basis for policies and their potential influence on the educational enterprise.

Educators are committed to:

1. Examining. Analyzing, understanding, and explaining the multiple interconnections between schools and society by:
   - examining how external influences (e.g. media, special interest groups, stakeholder groups, etc.) work to shape society’s perceptions and expectations of schools and the processes of schooling that influence educational policy, school/classroom practice, and student learning;
   - understanding how the media, popular culture, and other entities are able to craft an image of education and teachers that sway public opinion.

2. Identifying how external forces control the power differential between educators and those who seek to prescribe how to educate by:
   - identifying and critically examining how external forces gain their influences on policy, practices, and student learning;
analyzing the basis for criticisms of educators and the educational process from historical, philosophical, and social/cultural perspectives.

3. Explaining the multiple and sometimes conflicting aims of education by:

- identifying and critiquing different educational environments’ policies and practices, and the perspectives and interest from which they evolve;
- identifying the social, philosophical and political bases that serve as a foundation for different aims of education.

4. Advocating for positive change by:

- critically analyzing educational policies within their historical and political contexts;
- demonstrating an understanding of how policies and practices influence teaching and learning.

5. Understanding, evaluating, and critiquing how research may or may not inform and improve educational practices by:

- applying critical and interdisciplinary inquiry into current research methods used in education; analyzing proposed educational policies and practices based on existing and evolving research;
- using sound professional judgment in adapting policies and practices within their classrooms and schools.