

In Winter 2007 I taught a section of First-Year Preceptorial, which has a focus on Literature and the Environment. I taught this course for the first time Fall 2006; I revised the Winter 2007 course by including more materials both on the ethics of human interactions with non-human nature and on the ethics that govern our environmental actions (or inactions) as they are determined by issues of race and class. Examples of the readings included: “Apologia” by Barry Lopez, “Touching the Earth” by bell hooks, “Of Man and the Stream of Time” by Rachel Carson, “The Environmental Mindset” by Rush Limbaugh, “Living Lightly and Inconsistently on the Land” by Donella Meadows, and “The Clan of One-Breasted Women” by Terry Tempest Williams.

Although these readings all address the ethical situations we find ourselves in as we interact with the environment and with one another, I wanted to strengthen the course for Winter 2008 by having students read texts that specifically addressed environmental ethics.

To facilitate course development, I purchased books for curricular development and course materials for the FYP: *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, & Pedagogy*; *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*; *Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World*; and *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*.

With the help of the Rapaport Ethics Grant, I attended the Biennial Conference of The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment at Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina. (<http://www.woffordcollege.org/asle/>), June 2007. There I worked with other ecocritics on ethical considerations of the environment. In the seminar, “Exploring Environmental Identity from Environmental Justice,” we discussed ways we can approach environmental ethics in the classroom, especially with first-year students who may or may not come into the classroom with awareness of or interest in their responsibility toward non-human nature. The consensus of the group was that I should try scaling back my approach, and have the students try to imagine how they fit into the world as members of the environment; the second step, which I proposed to the seminar group, is to ask students to take on the everyday responsibility of making one small step toward changing their actions (please see attached assignment sheet).

Therefore, this term (Winter 2008), each student (and I) have come up with a list of about 5 actions we could take, or actions we can change, to reduce, reuse, or recycle. Each person will choose one action to take (or an action to stop taking) as a project for seven weeks. The students and I will write three journal entries about our chosen project. The final paper assignment I gave last year will remain the same (please see attached assignment sheet); this time, the students may choose to factor in their everyday attempts to be ethical citizens of the planet. I hope that they will come to see that our individual responsibilities to the environment are also associated with our individual responsibilities to other people, and that the issues they are thinking and learning about are *real* and *everyday*, not simply in a textbook.

Katherine R. Lynes
English Department