

Sustainability & Self-Care

Experiential Practices for Embodying the Planet

Course Syllabus

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.
- William Blake

Sara Ivanhoe

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<https://yoga.usc.edu>

Semester:

Units: 3

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Section:

Room:

Course Description

If we begin with the fundamental belief that we cannot be separate from our planet, our thoughts, actions, and praxes can reflect unity. Almost all cultures and traditions are examples of this, whether it is a baptism through water, adorning oneself with flowers, lighting a candle or sharing in sacred food. These simple acts of connecting to the elements are ways that we experience nature within ourselves, and ourselves within nature.

Balancing traditional learning pedagogy in conjunction with experiential techniques, we can collectively bridge the gap between ourselves and our planet. Throughout the course students will be asked to complete readings, submit brief papers, give short presentations, but mostly they will be asked to immerse themselves in nature through a variety of modalities and submit reflections on these experiences. The course is designed for students who are interested in exploring multicultural self-care modalities as a means of sustaining one's own energy. This energy can then focus on connecting to our planet while protecting it and promote the discovery of alternative ways to integrate sustainability practices into an everyday routine.

Learning Objectives

- Develop the intrinsic connection between oneself and the planet and be able to exemplify and reflect on personal experiences.
- Integrate multicultural self-care modalities as a means of sustaining one's own energy and mitigating climate anxiety.

- Assimilate principles and application of planetary elements, yoga, breathing and meditation practices, eventually leading others through a *sustainable* practice..
- Develop both listening and sharing skills by participating in an ongoing cohort.
- Construct a comprehensive personal self-care routine.

Required Readings:

- “Regeneration,” by Paul Hawken
- “Religion and Sustainability: Interreligious Resources, Interdisciplinary Responses,” by Sherma and Billimoria
- “A Guide to Eco-Anxiety, How to Protect the Planet and Your Mental Health,” Anouchka Grose
- “Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants (Audio)

Suggested Readings:

- “Living Landscapes: Meditation on the Five Elements in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Yoga” by Chapple
- “Green Yoga” by George Feuerstein and Brenda Feuerstein
- “The Blue Sapphire of the Mind” by Douglas E. Christie
- Selected articles by Gary Snyder
- “Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as a Sacred Community” by Thomas Berry
- “Tree of Yoga” by Iyengar

Course Notes:

Students will be asked to participate in physically active yoga sequences, breathing exercises and meditation techniques, but will not be graded based on their ability to execute these exercises, rather their understanding of the techniques. Proficiency will be assessed through exams, projects, assignments, and student-lead practice.

Assignments:

Students will participate in weekly discussions, engage in self-care related practices, write reviews on guest lecturers, complete a short midterm quiz and final exam, as well as midterm and final projects. All students will exit the course with a personalized and comprehensive self-care routine. Specific assignments TBD.

Grades

Sustainability & Self-Care is a complex topic and grades will be a combination of several components. Students will be graded on their written reflections on the experiential learning assignments, speaker reviews, how they perform on exams, final projects, teaching assignments and group discussions.

Students are responsible for the quality of your engagement with the course material and the activities related to it. All work is to be typed and submitted to Blackboard. Format: Double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font. Due dates can be found under the course outline.

Grading Scale

There are 100 total points possible. The overall grading scale is as follows

A 95 / A- 90 / B+ 87 / B 83 / B- 80 / C+ 77 / C 73 / C- 70 / D+ 67 / D 63 / D- 60 / F 59 and below

Grading Criteria

Participation/Discussion 15%

Journal/Reflections 20%

Midterm Project 20%

Final Project 20%

Final Exam 25%

Zoom Guidelines

Students should feel free to raise their hand, or submit questions in the chat. Additionally, cameras must remain on for the entirety of the class session. While on Zoom, students' full focus is required.

Participation Expectations

Students are expected to be present for all lectures in real time.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are to be submitted to blackboard before the deadline. See course outline for deadlines.

Communication

Students are encouraged to reach out by email and expect a response within 48 hours.

Outline: Sustainability + Self-Care Course Curriculum (Weeks 1-8)

Date	Topic
Week 1:	<p>Lecture: The Climate Crisis: Challenge and Opportunity Interreligious responses to the climate crisis Introduction to seeing the Macrocosm in the Microcosm, seeing ourselves as interconnected to the planet, that how we treat ourselves connects with how we treat the planet and vice versa.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we see ourselves as intrinsically linked with the planet? Why do we compartmentalize self-care and care for our environment? <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice your normal self-care routine <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a journal that will hold your reflections for this course.• Write down your current self-care routine and how it affects your well being. You will be noting how the different routines affect you in different ways, ultimately leading towards you crafting a new routine by the end of this course.
Week 2	<p>Lecture: Interdisciplinary responses to the Climate Crisis, Introduction to Navigating Climate Anxiety Introduction to the Journey Through the Elements, What is “our Nature?” Journey Through the Elements (Where do they live in the body): Earth. Element in transition (seed to flower, sand to glass)</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do we interact with the earth element in all aspects of our lives?

	<p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grounding practice; Walking Meditation, Yin yoga, Tree pose, etc. ● Immersion and Inquiry in Earth Element <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Note how you interact with your environment. When are you consuming? When are you generating waste? Notice this in others as well. ● Reflections on Earth Immersion
<p>Week 3</p>	<p>Lecture: Tools for navigating climate anxiety Journey Through The Elements: Water, element in transition (water to ice), Different types of water, salt water, fresh water, mineral water (sulfur).</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do we interact with the Water element in all aspects of our lives <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flowing practice; Vinyasa Flow Yoga, Qi Gong, Neti ● Water Immersion (swimming, water sports, bathing, showering) <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflections on Water Immersion
<p>Week 4</p>	<p>Lecture: Grassroots responses to climate change Journey Through the Elements: Fire</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do we interact with Fire element in all aspects of our lives (electricity) <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fire Practice: Cardio (sweat), Hot Yoga, Breath of Fire, Sun Salutations etc. <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflections on Fire Immersion
<p>Week 5</p>	<p>Lecture: Sustainability and our inner circle: How do we talk to our community members, families and friends about climate change? Journey Through the Elements: Air</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do we interact with the air element in all aspects of our lives? <p>Practice:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Practice: Cardio, In depth breath work practice, etc. <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on Air Immersion
Week 6	<p>Lecture: Climate change and legislation Journey Through the Elements; Space</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we interact with the element of space in all aspects of our lives? <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space Practice: Sound immersion, 6th sense, multi -cultural liturgy <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections on Space/ Sound Immersion
Week 7	<p>Lecture: Laudato Si: Pope Francis and Stewardship Climate change: cycles and seasons Rhythm and Cycles in Nature; Seasons, heartbeat, etc. Green burial</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we experience rhythms and cycles in every aspect of our lives? <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm and cycles practices in yoga, tai chi, breathwork, etc. <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on rhythm and cycles
Week 8	<p>Midterm Projects Due</p> <p>Midterm project and presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select one topic highlighted in the first quarter of class • Do additional research on the topic using both primary and secondary sources • Present your “deeper findings” on this topic to the class in a 3 minute presentation • Submit a 1-2 page paper on the topic.
Week 9	<p>Lecture: Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and other modalities that treat the body through a system of elements</p>

	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are these systems different from traditional western medicine? What are the benefits and the challenges? <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take an individual dosha test (ayurveda) <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a reflection on your dosha
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Week 10	<p>Lecture: Yoga Praxes of Nature (Sun Salutation, Breath of Fire, Mountain Pose, etc.)</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do our favorite poses reflect our own nature? <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embodied nature of yoga practice <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice and reflect on the postures and breathwork that bring equanimity
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Week 11	<p>Lecture: Nature as symbol, nature as teacher: Lotus, Waves, Forrest communication, etc. Japanese Tea Ceremony (Guest Lecture, Field Trip)</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of ceremony through the 5 senses <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea Ceremony <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on Nature as Inspirational symbol
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Week 12	<p>Lecture: Native Practices (Guest Speaker, Field Trip): Honoring the Traditions of Our Land</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q and A with speaker <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Four Directions <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on “Who’s land?”
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Week 13	<p>Lecture: The Importance of Play: Beings are born with an inherent survival instinct, but many also have an instinct to play.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Importance of Play, how is it lost, how can we recreate it as a resilience tool? <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group practice of play <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Select a Play practice. Write a reflection
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Week 14	<p>Lecture: Sleep, hibernation, and cocooning. How does the natural world restore itself?</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual challenges with sleep, finding restorative time. <p>Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restorative Yoga, Yoga Nidra <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create and reflect upon individual restorative practice
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Week 15	<p>Lecture: Labyrinth Walk (Field Trip) Serra Retreat Malibu, or TBD. Mindful walking, Thich Nhat Hanh</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How walking meditation/ contemplation is different from seated <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Walking meditation <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflection
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Week 16	<p>Final Exam, Final Projects Presented, submitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using the materials and resources from the semester, put together a comprehensive self care strategy. Include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Which tools resonate with you and why ○ Daily, weekly, monthly, year-long plan ○ Troubleshooting: How will you course correct when you fall off your plan?
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| | ○ 3-5 page paper, 3 minute oral presentation |
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Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.