

THE ECOTONE

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

THE ECOTONE

The Journal of Environmental Studies

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ON THE COVER



PORTRAIT OF A NATURE-SOCIETY HYBRID. Native lichen (*Usnea* spp.) jams a chainsaw being used to try to save the Willamette Valley's oak savanna from conifer invasion. Historically maintained through burning by Native Americans, this ecosystem is disappearing not just to development, but also to fire exclusion and invasive exotic species. Government agencies and conservation organizations are encouraging landowners to maintain it, such as by simulating low-intensity fire with mechanical means. This ecosystem illustrates how, for the foreseeable future, whether by act or omission, the confluence of human and biophysical forces will shape many landscapes once thought of as "natural". Geographer Karl Zimmerer has called such landscapes "nature-society hybrids" (Zimmerer, K.S. 2000. The reworking of conservation geographies: nonequilibrium landscapes and nature-society hybrids. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90(2): 356-369.) Given that this ecosystem depends on humans actively maintaining it, this image might represent it as accurately as a photo of an acorn woodpecker (*M. formicivorus*) or any other species it helps sustain. Photo and caption by Adam Novick.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Visions and Experiences in ENVS

THE THEME FOR THE 2009 *ECOTONE* is perspectives on environmental studies: the vision and experiences of the people in the Environmental Studies Program. This topic was inspired by the numerous conversations in classrooms, hallways, and social gatherings regarding our perceptions of environmental studies as a discipline and our vision for the direction of the program. Faced with increasingly challenging environmental issues, particularly the threat of climate change, environmental studies continues to garner awareness as a relevant field. Often, environmental studies connotes “sustainability,” but this term is increasingly inadequate, and a more comprehensive meaning encompasses an effort to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue and a consideration of the relationship between humans and the rest of nature.

The Environmental Studies Program enjoys people from myriad backgrounds, experiences, and motivations. *The Ecotone's* goal focused on exploring these perspectives, and we asked people to consider how they define environmental studies and to elaborate on their motivations for participating in the program. We addressed these questions by holding “salon”-style conversations with ENVS faculty and graduate students. We asked ENVS faculty to speak about the influence of their respective backgrounds on their perspective of environmental studies, discuss the rewards and challenges of an interdisciplinary program, and reflect on their vision for the future of environmental studies at the University of Oregon. The six faculty members we spoke with represent an assorted snapshot of perspectives from biology, English, theater arts, architecture, philosophy, and history. The graduate student salon addressed many of the same ideas, as well as experiences of individual students in the program and thoughts on how environmental studies will help them with their future endeavors.

This issue of *Ecotone* attempts to present these thoughts in a meaningful and thematically organized conversation. In addition to the salon conversations, we have included several graduate student essays regarding their personal perspective on environmental studies. Lastly, the “Our Community” section highlights the achievements and current projects of ENVS students and faculty.

Rob Hoshaw
Editor-in-Chief

I Call Shotgun!: Vying for the Front Seat in the Proverbial Environmental Studies Car

SARAH JAQUETTE RAY

PH.D. STUDENT

A FEW YEARS AGO, when I was a TA for ENV 202: Introduction to Environmental Studies: The Natural Sciences, the professor asked the students, “What is the difference between the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities?” A student answered with a metaphor: “The natural sciences are in the driver’s seat, the social sciences are in the passenger seat, and,” (you guessed it), “the humanities are in the back seat.”

Let’s put aside for a moment the oblivious un-environmental-ness of the car metaphor. And let’s also put aside for a moment the highly un-interdisciplinary hierarchy he created between the approaches; if he doesn’t grasp that interdisciplinarity grants each approach equal status, then our program has failed to convey what interdisciplinary means. Putting all these problems aside, I confess the student pushed a button. Let’s call this a “teaching moment” for us all.

Wherefore this environmental studies car?

Although environmental studies programs are increasingly recognizing the value of interdisciplinarity in studying the environment, this usually has meant the integration of the social sciences and the natural sciences. After all, don’t we want environmental policy-makers and scientists to speak the same language in order to craft real-world solutions and problem-solve? Yes. We’re all on the same side—we all want to protect the environment—and so these seem like good things.

Enter the humanities. That’s me. I am a doctoral candidate in Environmental Sciences, Studies, and Policy, with a focal department of English. Translated, this means that I am an environmental humanities scholar. From the back seat of our proverbial environmental studies car, here’s what I can offer: I can give you a few good Thoreau quotes to help make your ideas meaningful to the public, maybe give you some tips about how to translate your esoteric science-y stuff to Joe the Plumber in rhetoric he can dig. I can outline some ethical implications and historical contexts of your proposals. Humanities people deal in values, language, and ethics, right? So you do the driving, and I’ll do the translating and interpreting and explain the implications.

These are all good activities. They’re important, and on the whole, I am happy to see myself in this role. Telling you this at least keeps me in the car because I am not calling shotgun. Forgive me, but I’m about to become a back-seat driver. I’m that noise you hear from the back, whining “the humanities can offer a lot more than passive reactions, translations and inter-

pretations! Where’s the “oh-shit” handle?!”

Let me explain by way of example. My own research involves studying the impact of immigration on the environment in the U.S.-Mexico borderland. Eighty-five percent of the Arizona border is protected. There are wilderness areas, refuges, parks, and monuments, not to mention the Tohono O’odham nation and the Barry Goldwater Military Range. As you can imagine, the Arizona border landscape is charged with military, tribal, environmental, and humanitarian issues. Undocumented smuggling and immigration in these areas has been on the rise since 1990s immigration policies funneled activity away from urban areas. Thus, immigration and the environment have collided; smugglers and immigrants—and the Border Patrol that chases them—are ruining the wilderness areas of the border. Who’s to blame? What’s to be done? What is the root cause of this problem? Most relevant to my argument here, who is in the best position to research these questions?

A strictly natural sciences approach to this situation might ask the question: what are the ecological impacts of immigration and smuggling? Environmental scientists are measuring this as we speak. This is important information, but this research could lead to a problem: the results might get used by politicians and patriots to justify putting up more walls, spending more on defense and national security, and demonizing immigrants as “invasives.” But because this effect of the research is outside the purview of science, it becomes someone else’s research project.

A strictly social science approach might ask: what are the causes of increased immigration and smuggling? A social scientist might tell us about the policies that have led to this problem, push and pull factors of immigration, NAFTA, etc. The problem with these answers is that they ignore the on-the-ground experiences of these factors, and the particular forms that these cause-effect stories take. Why, for example, is the U.S.’s role in undocumented immigration not part of public discourse?

A humanities approach might ask: how are these problems being articulated? What is their rhetorical significance? The humanities scholar would help us understand that contestations over this landscape are entrenched in questions of ethnic identity, colonialism, and competing values of nature. Media’s alarmist rhetoric translates the problem to the public through biological metaphors of “native” versus “invasive” species

“endangering” the nation. A humanities scholar would trace these rhetorical strategies and tease out what is “environmental” about the problem from other concerns—national security and identity, terrorism, etc. This approach is problematic, too. If a humanities scholar is to successfully critique the misuse of science in public discourse, then she should have some working grasp on “good” science. And she should contextualize the real experiences of immigrants in light of the policies that created these conditions.

My point is this: none of these research agendas alone is sufficient to understand the problem of the environment and immigration along the border. None of these approaches should be “driving” the research; they each bear on the direction of the others. The humanities approach is neither in the “back seat” nor in the “driver’s seat”; knowing the ecological impact of immigration and smuggling and the political-economic context is essential to answering the humanities scholars’ questions. And vice versa: scrutinizing the ways in which the problem is articulated, whose interests are served by articulating them those ways, and the broader trajectory of these representations is essential to the natural and social sciences. For instance, species migrate and ecosystems do not obey national boundaries, making the social politics and cultural meanings of the border central to scientists’ efforts to quantify impact.

In sum, the “environment” that we are all trying to study is not divided up along our disciplinary lines; it is not just “social,” “natural,” or “human,” as our disciplines might have it. And solutions to environmental problems should not be only technological, political, or ethical. Such thinking merely perpetuates the very dualism between “nature” and “human” that natural scientists, social scientists, and humanities scholars agree is a primary cause of environmental problems in the first place.

I commend our program at UO for including the humanities as a valued approach in the study of the environment. I have benefited immensely from this, and I revel in these debates. But I’m discouraged when I hear students reflect back what they see modeled—disciplinary infighting covering as “interdisciplinarity.” The problem is that we’re all still fighting for the front seat, which, if you haven’t figured out by now, is the seat of “objective truth” and, by extension, funding. Just renaming the humanities “humanistic sciences” won’t address this problem, even if it might get us more grants.

I hope it’s been clear that my intention throughout this piece has not been to defend the humanities. I’m tired of that (although you can bet I’ll be doing it my whole career). But in the end, I don’t think the humanities needs to earn its seat. It’s already there. We can’t avoid dealing in human values, history,

rhetoric, and constructs in any of our attempts to “problem-solve” “real-world” crises. (By putting those words in quotes, I want to draw attention to how these buzz-words reinforce the science-humanities division by implying that humanities approaches are not useful to real-world problems. No wonder that student thought the humanities sit in the back seat.) I am trying to suggest the wacky possibility that acknowledging the humanities is not a matter of allowing it in; it’s a matter of paying attention to what already exists. Why not use all the tools available?

My hope is that, in a truly interdisciplinary program, the interdisciplinary nature of the environment itself will make us all realize how important interdisciplinarity is. Not the kind of interdisciplinarity that means putting a scientist and a philosopher in the same room together to see who’s more right,* but the kind of interdisciplinarity that genuinely seeks the tools that multiple disciplines offer because environmental problems and solutions can use as much help as they can get.

In other words, we should get out of this car. It’s not good for the environment.

**All characters are fictitious. Any likeness to real-world characters is coincidental.*



Photo by Wen Lee

Active Listening & Environmental Inclusiveness

ROB HOSHAW

SECOND-YEAR MASTER'S STUDENT

A FEW SUMMERS BACK, I worked for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Essentially, as the job description stated in bold, I was paid to fish. As a hotshot college student, I couldn't pass up an opportunity to gain experience while enjoying my favorite pastime. Piece of cake, right? Of course, riding on chartered fishing launches on the 130,000-plus-acre Lake Mille Lacs to tag walleye proved more challenging than originally anticipated. Field experience, like most jobs, is supposed to work out that way. As I discovered, the most demanding part of the job involved communicating with the public—many of whom perceived the DNR with mistrust or outright hostility (I'm thinking of the person who cynically referred to the agency as the "Department of Natural Destruction"). The DNR often holds the tenuous role of mediator between lawmakers, conservationists, and anglers, and the khaki clothes and state logo turned me into a marked man. With varying degrees of tact, anglers would express their frustrations or ask for an honest assessment of the health of a controversial fishery.

I received the best advice on how to handle these situations during my first day on the job from the guy who trained me, Robin—a carefree, thickly muscled man with a tight bun of a ponytail. I recall Robin saying that the best thing to do was simply listen. He told me not to debate people, to swallow my higher-education lingo, and even to ignore infractions (let the conservation officers handle the legal issues). Fisheries interns were the "PR" people, or the face of the DNR. We wanted to create a good impression.

I'm a pretty non-confrontational fellow, anyway, but I found really just taking the time to listen to people made them feel much more comfortable. Listening—I mean, actually paying attention to what they say, nodding, and asking follow-up questions—erases the "I'm better than you" persona a state-issued uniform emanates. I rarely had the answers to all of their

questions and only marginally appeased their frustrations, but I could see the softening in their faces. I was no longer a college know-it-all punk who thought he could come into their backyard and tell them they were wrong. Suddenly, I was just another person. Sure, I would often disagree, but showing the respect necessary for people to voice their side of the story first made people more receptive to what I had to say. Who knows, maybe establishing a respectful relationship with certain individuals would temper their assumptions of other DNR employees.

As an environmental studies student, I believe the practice of active listening is an important tool in bridging the boundaries between differing perspectives. Lending one your full attention is an important first step in establishing an effective cross-disciplinary dialogue. There is much talk about creating a meaningful exchange of ideas among the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences—largely with an academic emphasis. Certainly, establishing a network of communication throughout collegiate institutions is important. Yet, why do we often associate the term interdisciplinarity only with higher education? It seems, tragically, that we often disregard the magnitude of establishing a "dialogue" between environmentalists and the public. Can't we also have an "interdisciplinary" discussion between people of different careers, backgrounds, experiences, or general beliefs? Aren't these discussions with the larger populace equally as important?

Many in the public do not have the same training and access to scientific information that many of us in higher education possess. One of the first steps in bridging the gap between the environmental movement and a larger public audience is overcoming the "language" barrier. It's difficult to create an awareness about environmental issues when you don't have a comprehensive understanding of your audience. Listen to them. Real listening involves opening your mind to what people are

saying and trying to understand their worldview. It means that you refrain from formulating your next “rebuttal” in your head as someone relays important information about their perspective.

Like the anglers in Minnesota, the last thing most people want is a smug environmentalist to preach at them, to say they’re wrong without giving them a fair chance to express their views. This can prove challenging. Consider, for instance, the perspective that climate change is not real. Not only that, but it’s a hoax perpetuated by radical hippies; or, scientific evidence actually supports the falsehood of climate change but it’s suppressed by the liberal media (we all know these beliefs remain pervasive). For those of us who have been educated about the gravity of the climate situation, the temptation may be to talk down to those people. We might have snappy, irrefutable bullet points already prepared for these situations, as a politician prepares for a debate. Maybe we shake our head in disgust and walk away or simply ignore them. None of those approaches will help foster a deeper awareness of the reali-

ty of climate change. Most likely, it will further polarize the person(s) in question. Telling someone outright that they are hopelessly wrong tends to damage efforts to change environmental attitudes and behavior.

Now, more than ever, it’s important that those of us concerned about the environment try to understand the perspectives of everyone with whom we share this planet. At first, it may seem like a slow process, as though we’re not getting anywhere. However, I believe that when we listen to the perspectives of those who may not necessarily share our same views, we’re far more likely to garner their respect. When we truly listen to people, they will eventually begin listening to us. ■



PHOTO BY WEN LEE

Small is Dutiful: The Tractable Burden of Environmental Oblige

KEVIN HORAN
FIRST-YEAR MASTER'S STUDENT

“AND WHAT IS MY CASE? Simply that our most important task is to get off our present collision course. And who is there to tackle such a task? I think every one of us, whether old or young, powerful or powerless, rich or poor, influential or uninfluential. To talk about the future is useful only if it leads to action now, while we are still in a position of ‘never having had it so good’ To say the least--which is already very much--we must thoroughly understand the problem and begin to see the possibility of evolving a new lifestyle, with new methods of production and new patterns of consumption: a lifestyle designed for permanence.” –E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*

NO DOUBT WHEN YOU ARE READING THIS, whether fresh off the press or as a latent, curious find, our nation's economic debt remains a seemingly insurmountable, somewhat intangible monstrosity. Our demise amounts to an accretion of accounting transgressions, lurking in warehouses filled to the brim in half-strewn paperwork, in heavily-guarded computer databases designed for the sole purpose of cataloguing our perpetual overindulgence. Given my aspirations for at least a few more good decades of fruitful sentience—not to mention the future ambitions of my theoretical progeny--this is a worrisome trend indeed.

But a part of me thinks: economic debt's not the issue. Or at least it's not the only issue. Equally foreboding, looming in the background like a cloud-swelling horizon, is our vast, rapidly accruing ecological debt.

The fact of the matter is, whether we like it or not, we rely on natural ecosystems for our own survival. But also, and perhaps more fittingly, for our own (formidable) quality of life. Ecological gifts are the foundation on which we've built everything “impressively human.” Our unique individual identities, our rich cultural depth, our elaborate social networks and our

striking economic prowess, all are rooted in the life-sustenance of the natural environment we so often take for granted. Without ecosystem function, there is no function. This includes the air we breathe, sure, but also the diversity that binds together the very structure of our biophysical reality. It's a fragile and tenuous complexity, some 15 billion years in the making, but one that has been degraded in a mere two centuries by the casual and often arrogant expansiveness of our industrial tendencies.

In plain terms, we (meaning Americans, and to a certain degree the rest of the developed world) are withdrawing natural resources faster than they are being regenerated, and depositing waste faster than it is being absorbed. For instance, when we blow up mountains to extract the anachronistically pollution-heavy coal that invisibly powers our legions of shiny iPhones, this is ecological debt. When we carelessly suck up stock groundwater reserves and douse the land in petrochemicals to create aesthetically pleasing rows of cheap corn at our local groceries, we are accruing ecological debt. When we employ auto-centric design principles that facilitate the chug of a million congested cars' collective carbon spews, we are accruing ecological debt. The bulk of our industrial system is built around an extraction-disposal process that acts as if natural systems have no value, as if they weren't the basis for our splendid existence.

This unraveling of that which sustains us is our ecological debt.

T.S. Eliot once offered: “This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang but a whimper.” And, in a way, it makes sense to apply this sentiment ecologically, in recognition of the callous way we (mis)treat nature. Business-as-usual's ever-decaying global quality of life would invoke no cataclysmic world-freezing-over scenarios (I'm looking at you, *The Day After To-*

morrow). No last minute “I told you so”s. No “bang.” Only the unheralded fulfillment of every “gloom and doom” prediction ever made.

But in these words lies a grander realization, one less tinged with Modernist pessimism. For since we can envision the eventual outcome of our current modes of production and consumption (“the whimper”), aren’t we obligated to pursue a change of course? To do anything else would be foolish. Thus, the coming shift in our ecological paradigm takes on a comfortable banality in light of its necessity; clarity eases our transition. Sustainability becomes cliché, but only because our need for it becomes self-evident.

Human beings are perfectly capable of pursuing this kind of purposeful, methodical redirection towards a more benevolent relationship with the ecological. We’ve sent monkeys into space; surely we can reduce our carbon footprint.

But the shift can’t, and won’t, happen overnight. That’s just a reality of social change. And just because the process is necessary and in our best interest doesn’t mean it will be easy or free of sacrifice. The process will have to be an evolution, a gradual-yet-unsubtle transition to “a lifestyle designed for permanence.” ■



PHOTO BY JILL JAKIMETZ

SALON: PERSPECTIVES IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Part I: A Conversation with Selected ENVS Faculty

During April 8-10, *The Ecotone* staff hosted a series of three conversations among Environmental Studies faculty. These insightful conversations reveal much about the perspectives of those responsible for educating students about the environment. We asked them to discuss their backgrounds—why the field of environmental studies attracted individuals with an array of experiences and ambitions. We also talked about the various meanings of the word “interdisciplinary,” how it relates to environmental studies, and their vision for the direction of the university’s Environmental Studies Program. Included are brief selections from these conversations.

The natural flow of each “salon”-style conversation became its own organic process directed by the perspectives and interests of those involved. We were unable to gather six busy faculty members in a single room at one time, so our participants took part in three separate conversations. This made it difficult to facilitate true conversation between all participants, but we believe the conversation was enriched by the inclusion of voices from such a wide variety of disciplines. The piece you will find below is a constructed dialogue that integrates responses gathered during the three conversations. Responses are grouped according to a set of recurring themes.

Participants include: Matthew Dennis – Professor of History, Alan Dickman – Associate Professor of Biology and Director of the Environmental Studies Program, Theresa May – Assistant Professor of Theater Arts, Brook Muller – Associate Professor of Architecture, Ted Toadvine – Associate Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies, and Molly Westling – Professor of English and Environmental Studies.

What drew you to Environmental Studies? What brought you from your background in a single discipline and gave you the desire to be more interdisciplinary in your work?

ALAN DICKMAN: I have actually been undisciplined for a long time. [...] I think I was actually always sort of a scientist at heart. [...] I did biology for many years, but I think I’ve always seen broader connections. [I’ve] been involved with Environmental Studies here, in one way or another, whether it’s teaching classes that have that as an interest, or forest biology that looks at management, looks at societal issues and uses the biology to try to understand that, or works directly with the graduate students. So even before I was formally involved with Environmental Studies, I was involved with Environmental Studies master’s students in various ways. So I don’t quite so much see it as coming from a discipline into a broader interdisciplinary thing. I don’t think that I was really well-trained in interdisciplinary studies. I still don’t. I still think I’m essentially a biologist.

Theresa May: Well, I was laughing to myself when [Amanda Peacher] said, “Nobody from theater has even come to environmental studies.” Well nobody with an environmental studies sensibility has ever shown up in the theater building, and then I showed up. So I am an anomaly in my own field, though less and less so, thankfully. [My goal] was to bring that part of me that was engaged in environmentalism and environmental studies to my main work, which was performance.

BROOK MULLER: I actually would say that I started in environmental studies and went into design. My dad and my mom are historians, and so I went off to college thinking I would study history [...] But I took an intro environmental studies course as a sophomore, and it really resonated with me. History for my dad was human beings—mostly men—and their deeds, and the environment was this passive background to these events that unfolded. There was something that really struck me—that we engage in the environment, we affect it, and it, in turn, affects us. It seemed to be a lot more truthful about how we are in the world, and so that really worked for me. It wasn’t that difficult to think about design as a career because it’s a way to make that connection, and hopefully, positively affect both people and the environment.

TED TOADVINE: As an undergraduate in philosophy, I never had one environmentally related course. Not one. [...] I was a [post-doc] research assistant in Florida for this hotshot professor [who was] very interested in environmental things. We would often go to lunch together [with] Don Marietta, who had been one of the founding fathers of environmental philosophy. He was on the verge of retirement. This was an opportunity for a number of interesting conversations about environmental philosophy. While I was there, [Marietta] had heart surgery, and they needed someone to cover his class, which was an environmental philosophy class, [and I was asked] if I would do it. [...] I really enjoyed it, and learned a lot from teaching it, [and] I realized that there were a lot of convergences between a

lot of my philosophical interests and the things that were happening in environmental philosophy.

MOLLY WESTLING: I've been concerned about the environment since I first started teaching, after I got my PhD in the mid-1970s. I was teaching composition up at Oregon State [University], where you have a theme for your course, and there was an anthology then called *The American Landscape*—a thick collection that contained readings all through American literature—all environmental readings. I taught my course with it and used *Huckleberry Finn* as a work that was set in the middle of the continent about living with the river in the heart of the land. We read Thoreau's *Walden*. Anyway, ever since then I've been teaching courses that investigated environmental perspectives in literature. When the Environmental Studies Program was founded, I got involved, and it was a natural thing, which my own research showed me.

* * *

“Interdisciplinary” is a major buzzword today within the Environmental Studies community and throughout academia. What are your thoughts on interdisciplinarity, and what are the challenges of achieving an interdisciplinary dialogue?

TED TOADVINE: To me, interdisciplinarity is not some state of being. It's not some subject matter. It's more of an activity. It's a way of engaging with a certain topic or area of research, and therefore, in order to be truly interdisciplinary, it has to be a process, and it has to be one that's an ongoing discovery, so it precisely can't turn into what you described--which is a prescribed interdisciplinary [way of doing things]. But I do think that the university system as a whole could do a better job of developing spaces in which those kinds of interactions can happen.

MOLLY WESTLING: [I]nterdisciplinary work is hard. And getting people able to talk about these things, you know, it's not the normal way we're trained. It's just a constant struggle-I can't even articulate myself what I think some of the relationships ought to be, but I feel that there's something there-a kind of hunch, you know.

MATTHEW DENNIS: One of the things I think is important about interdisciplinary work, is that in some cases, things will kind of merge. [...] At some point, environmental studies has emerged as something as essential as history, or English, or something. One of the important things about interdisciplinary work is that we continue to be in our own disciplines. I'm really serious about being an historian. I'm also serious about being some kind of scholarly teacher of environmental studies. One of the benefits I feel I can offer [Environmental Studies] is to stay an historian.

MOLLY WESTLING: [P]eople in one field often don't even realize that there's something over there that could be part of the

conversation. It's just not even thinking of including it. Until I started talking with Mark Johnson in Philosophy and his colleague Nancy Tuana, I didn't realize what work was going on there that could help my own ecocritical research immensely. And who would think that theater is a place that you could do anything environmental? Yet, of course it is, once you hear what Theresa [May] and her colleagues are doing, of course. But until Theresa came to campus, we never had anyone in theater involved with Environmental Studies, so it's great to bring that in now.

“...IN ORDER TO BE TRULY INTERDISCIPLINARY, IT HAS TO BE A PROCESS, AND IT HAS TO BE ONE THAT'S AN ONGOING DISCOVERY...”

What, more specifically, are the challenges of addressing an interdisciplinary approach and the barriers to linking different ways of knowing?

TED TOADVINE: Interdisciplinarity can happen at all kinds of different levels. Disciplinarity can also be really good. I want to be careful about acting as if interdisciplinarity is the new model for all work that people should do, and those who don't want to do it are bad. [...] From what I understand, Bart Johnson and Scott Bridgham have very similar backgrounds, scientifically, in terms of how they approach things. They've done some really interesting collaboration on things neither one of them could have done alone, and that's an excellent example of interdisciplinarity, although it happens between people whose fundamental approaches are quite close. If Carla [Bengtson] and I wrote a paper together about environmental aesthetics and some contemporary art, we'd be doing it from backgrounds that are very close. We'd have a lot more in common than if we did something with Scott [Bridgham] or Bart [Johnson]. There are levels of interdisciplinarity.

MOLLY WESTLING: The presence of humanities disciplines in our Environmental Studies Program continues to distinguish us nationally, and it also keeps challenging us to learn how to do really interdisciplinary work. Many faculty have tried over the years to engage specifically with fields other than their own, but we still aren't succeeding as well as I think we eventually can. I have tried, not always successfully, to incorporate some scientific materials in my own courses for example. And there have been wonderful, really generous people in the sciences who have helped me. [W]e need to talk with each other across disciplinary boundaries more, to find common ground and

SALON CONTINUED

and learn each other's ways of approaching environmental issues.

BROOK MULLER: I think the barriers are starting to break down. I think people at high levels at this university... [are] deeply concerned [...] about it. They're talking about the "S" word, sustainability, and they're talking about the need for interdisciplinary work for the first time in the history of the university. There are research funds—the Meyer Fund—which is a sustainable fund that actively, explicitly asks for interdisciplinary work. So I think there are some changes, but I think that, in my own opinion, we're not as agile as we could be in terms of addressing the issues.

What do you see as your role as an Environmental Studies faculty member? How do you craft interdisciplinary knowledge and facilitate those bridges?

ALAN DICKMAN: To some extent, I think our role is [not to create] a brand new discipline. It's taking these disciplines and thinking of them in different ways [as well as] being able to show where they fit together [...], and taking them and applying them to each other. [It also involves] being able to look at a problem from these different perspectives and knowing enough that you can talk to people and bring them together, or figure out how to make that work.

THERESA MAY: I agree with that—the importance of having a real place of depth, wherever that is. [...] That of course it's about responding and responsibility to the world, to the students, and the questions that are being asked by your moment in history, by your moment. And this moment, this historical moment, is asking the question, "How is everything related? How is everything interdependent? How do the wings of the butterfly affect the flow of the river? How does what I put down the drain affect the water quality of people two states away?"

* * *

“ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES IS A FIELD THAT ACCEPTS AND CHERISHES PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS BACKGROUNDS, AND MAYBE WHAT WE HAVE TO DO IS BECOME MORE, NOT JUST ACCEPTING, BUT VALUING OF THOSE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.”

What is the vision for the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Oregon as it progresses in the future?

TED TOADVINE: It seems to me, that for the most part, our traditional disciplinary divisions are based on going out and trying to answer different kinds of questions or going at the same problems from different angles, so that these distinct methods and distinct ways of asking questions, and the distinct training and methods that go along with those are indispensable for a richer understanding of the whole. My concern is that when we go toward a more problem-solving approach, we tend to focus only on the disciplines according to which those problems have been defined, and none of us are in a position to say what the whole problem is. [...] I envision, or at least I hope, that we will always have different disciplines, and that there will be people working in philosophy and geology, and geography, who are not necessarily doing something interdisciplinary, primarily. And if that's true, there will always be opportunities for the discovery of convergences across different ways of raising the question. I do think it would be nice to have some spaces where we can really encourage these kinds of discoveries as an ongoing process.

ALAN DICKMAN: Well, one concern is that sustainability doesn't overtake Environmental Studies. I mean that both in terms of Environmental Studies as a program but also in terms of environmental studies as a field. It's clear that sustainability is important, but it's also clear that Environmental Studies is staking its claim in being bigger than that. We are currently developing a Sustainability Certification. At the same time, we don't want that to become all we are. We don't want that to define who we are, because we're more than that. [...] I think, to some extent, our future is to remain at the intersection of those departments—of those interests. But I also think that we have people who have a deeper academic understanding and interest in what environmental studies means. People like Peter Walker or Ted[Toadvine] or Scott [Bridgham], in their different areas. It's not just sort of how do we design greener ways of transporting ourselves. It goes beyond that. How did

we get here? Why does it matter? Seeing those fold together at the same time. So for our future, I guess I would say, I want us to remain vibrant and vital and not just a slave to the sort of issue of the day [...] and Environmental Studies has a bigger history than just Earth Day and just sustainability. I hope that we do manage to forge [relationships with and]...increase our interactions with people doing Environmental Science. I would be really sad if it turned out to be a completely separate entity that didn't—that if the environmental sciences became something completely different from Environmental Studies.

* * *

In your perspective, what is the core meaning of “environmental studies”?

MATTHEW DENNIS: I don't know if it needs a really precise definition, myself. [...] A lot of us have a moral and political commitment to a particular kind of study and objective. [...] I think there are really benefits from their different disciplinary perspectives casting light on this very kind of large subject.

BROOK MULLER: I would say that we tend to gravitate around complex environmental problems. I would say that there are also problems with the way that we conceptualize the environment. [...] These are clear problems that we tend to want to shed some light on and want to fix. They all demand a diversity of perspectives. They require us to work in an interdisciplinary way, and they require us to develop and conjure some coherent story out of this complexity and diversity. That's a tremendous value and skill to cultivate. Collaboration requires lateral thinking.

ALAN DICKMAN: Environmental studies is a field that accepts and cherishes people with various backgrounds, and maybe what we have to do is become more, not just accepting, but [committed to] valuing those different perspectives. ■

SALON

Part II: A Conversation with ENVS Graduate Students

IN THE SECOND PART of our “salon” conversation, we held a friendly gathering at the home of two ENVS graduate students. Over a festive home-cooked meal and refreshments, we discussed similar topics, including interdisciplinarity and the vision of the ENVS program.

One of the exciting things about being a student in environmental studies at the moment is that we’re shaping and being shaped by a rapidly evolving scholarly field, while beyond the ivory tower, the question of the environment is ready on the lips of activists, politicians, and everyday citizens alike. As we all become more conversant in the languages of the environment, our discussions become more complex, our questions and concerns more nuanced. As students in a field whose roots grow from the Environmental Movement, that utilizes the tools of multiple disciplines and perspectives, and that continues to grapple with issues urgent and eternal, we’re interested in the ways we’ll fit into - and help to shape - local and global conversations about the environment.

Because environmental studies as a collegiate field is so student-driven, we’ve included a graduate student conversation about the nature of environmental studies, the potential for its future, and how we imagine ourselves along the way.

What does “environmental studies” mean to you?

ERICA ELLIOTT: When I tell someone that I’m doing research in environmental studies, they immediately assume that “studies” is synonymous with “science.” In other words, they assume that I’m using the tools of the natural sciences to study the non-human world. I consider “environmental studies” to be a more inclusive term that includes environmental humanities and social sciences, which can give us a pretty powerful critique or redirecting—and in some cases a critique of what we learn from the sciences.

CODY EVERS: I had seen [an Environmental Studies program] emerge and form itself [during my undergraduate career], and it had become a really successful program. I was really intrigued by the breadth of issues that they talked about, and I was most intrigued by how social issues were talked about in conjunction with physical and earth science issues. It created a really interesting dialogue.

KEVIN HORAN: For me, environmental studies is a moral duty. I’m a pretty chill, casual guy. It seems so rational and not that difficult for us to change our lives and do things simpler—to have a smoother connection with the natural environment.

ROB HOSHAW: In addition to “sustainability” and “interdisciplinary,” I’ve tended to think of environmental studies in terms of people. I’ve always felt like in environmental studies, I wanted to relate to other people, to be able to understand and respect different perspectives.

JILL JAKIMETZ: I’ve always felt a profound connection to anything that has shown a sensitivity to the environment—the natural world, seasonality, the kind of tangible, experiential

qualities of what it is to be alive in this world, the meanings we make from those experiences—whether as a kid, doing this and imagining that, or reading books or watching films... environmental studies offered a forum for me to talk about those experiences and relationships.

ADAM NOVICK: I came to environmental studies to have an argument, and that’s been very rewarding. It’s made me appreciate scholarship and universities as an organ of society that digests controversial ideas. Scholarship can help us speak truth to power. It doesn’t mean that power will listen to us, but at least we’ve told the truth. In the long run, maybe there’s hope that power will hear us.

AMANDA PEACHER: For me, environmental studies is very much about community. And the questions we’re facing right now, I think, have to do with how to redefine both human and ecological communities. I really think that environmental studies is the only place of the humanities disciplines that I’ve explored, that really stretch to answer those questions.

CHRIS STRATTON: I think today we talk about specialists and how important and valuable and brilliant specialists are. We don’t pay enough attention to generalists. Generalists are [. . .] looked down upon. It’s not appreciated knowing a little bit about a lot of things. It won’t help you get a good job, or make a lot of money, or be respected in our society. But I think a lot of the issues that we’re coming to face now—can’t be solved from a strictly specialist perspective. They require the making of connections between disciplines. You have to have some modicum of knowledge in each of those disciplines to make those connections. I think it’s really important to be agnostic about where we draw our ideas from—whether it be from the

SALON CONTINUED

social sciences, physical sciences, or humanities. I think they all have something to add, and there are a lot of connections to be made. To me, that's what environmental studies is about—making those connections and using them to effect change in our perception of who we are and how we fit into the rest of the world.

* * *

Is environmental studies a meeting place of disciplines? A nursery for interdisciplinary specialties? Does environmental studies share a foundational perspective?

ADAM NOVICK: If you're out in the real world, it's incredible how compartmentalized the discussion is, the knowledge is. We've had disciplines that have grown up for one reason or another, but they don't fit the challenges. Everyone's reaching to address these challenges, but all from a limited perspective. For example, thirty-two experts are working on the Willamette Valley Oak Savannah Prairie Recovery Plan, all natural scientists, none of them are social scientists, yet it's very much a social, political issue.

Environmental studies leads the way in identifying interdisciplinary, in helping to create these professions that address these more complex issues. It helps society validate these approaches. I mean, where do you sign up to be a generalist? Forget it! But if there are recognized professions that come out of environmental studies- conservation biology, environmental economics, political ecology- then we can begin to make sense of these problems and address them properly.

I think that one thing that differentiates environmental studies from environmental science or biology is that it has one foot in the natural sciences and one foot in the social sciences.

SEVERAL VOICES: And the humanities!!!

CODY EVERS: I think environmental studies has a little bit of a modernist crisis, in that it oftentimes defines itself in negation to other things. And that's fine because I think often new forms of thought are built from that state. But what I think environmental studies needs is a postmodern revolution where we're not defined by a negation, but by an assertion!

When sculpture departed from its tradition of monument building, it found itself in a crisis in which it could only refer to itself- it had lost the meaning behind all its points of reference. Suddenly it was this thing in a garden, but it was not a monument, not architecture, not the landscape. It was sculpture, but what was that? It had to define itself by its negatives, before it could define itself by what it was. And it's the same for envi-

ronmental studies and its own roots- it's natural science, but it's not; it's social science, but it's not; it's humanities, but it's not. Again, it's that crisis point, but I don't see it as a bad thing, having to become self-referential, feeling as though we've broken from a foundation, trying to find an identity, but I see it as a natural and necessary stage in the evolution of thought. Sculpture has lost its foundation, and yet now, sculpture is an idea that supersedes that of the monument.

They used to say, "Sculpture was the thing you backed into when you were looking at the painting on the wall." Well, maybe as we've been looking around at the world, environmental crisis or not, we kept backing up into environmental studies, and now we're starting to appreciate it in its own terms, or at least trying to articulate what those terms are.

JILL JAKIMETZ: So what's that assertion? What do we share?

AMANDA PEACHER: If environmental studies is truly an interdisciplinary field, then how can we find a truly common ground?

CHRIS STRATTON: If you want to call environmental studies a specialty, then I think it is less a common body of knowledge and more a common process—a way of synthesizing things.

ADAM NOVICK: It seems to me more a home to individualists. We seem to each enter the Environmental Studies program with more or less a specific focus in mind and we use the program to pursue that typically through an interdisciplinary approach, and it seems premature to set standards. I see us less as program-generalists, and more as generalists-by-necessity in order to fully examine the individual problems we've chosen to tackle.

WEN LEE: Well, one thing we have in common is that we all don't want to mess up the world more than it is, and we are interested in working toward making it better.

* * *

Is environmental studies environmentalist?

AMANDA PEACHER: Well, that's certainly a question: Is environmental studies environmentalist? Should an Environmental Studies program practice and teach environmentalism? Do you have to be an environmentalist, a conservationist, to practice environmental studies?

CHRIS STRATTON: Well, I don't know about conservationist, but yes, absolutely.

ADAM NOVICK: Well, again, I think the question is premature. Environmental studies, at this point, has a useful role for pro-

viding a place for individuals to come with these sorts of interdisciplinary problems, to work them out, get help from thousands of years of human scholarship and try to resolve them. It's there to cultivate the interests of individual people, each one bringing a unique problem, but I think it's premature to bring it all together at this point.

CHRIS STRATTON: But it has to have some structure, something that everyone has in common, however flexible.

WEN LEE: I do think that everyone in environmental studies



cares about the natural systems of our world being able to function for a long time, that's the end we all want to see, though the means are different. And of course, the means being so different can become problematic.

CODY EVERS: I think the metaphor of language is useful here. So, much like one only speaks one language at a time- I'd say Spanglish doesn't exist, nor Franglais—there are different mindsets from which to view the same environmental issue. And I think that one of the strengths of environmental studies is the requirement to understand contradictory, interdisciplinary viewpoints; we see that there are multiple ways of describing the same thing. However, fully understanding those different ways requires a complete shift, complete immersion. If I speak of something in Japanese, I can still relate to it in English, but never in entirely the same way. I think the humanities approach has a very specific way in which it is describing experience and it's different from the very specific way that natural science or social science might. (Which I think brings in the idea of institution, and how we are instructed by our social environment to view the world in a particular way...) But you can't conceive of all those ways at the same time.

JILL JAKIMETZ: I think it's great to bring in the metaphor of languages, and I think you're right in that we understand experience through a particular language, and that learning other ways of perceiving and describing the world can require immersion, but you can't say that hybrid languages like Spanglish or Franglais don't exist. They do! There are communities that speak these kinds of languages and it's because they share an experience of these two traditions, and yet there is something distinct from just shifting from one to the other; there's a distinct culture that is influenced by both those experiences and traditions, and the language reflects that. So that's not to say there's nothing useful or important about being fluent or at least conversant in French and English, you know, hydrology, sociology for example, but that there is something distinctive about Franglais, or whatever aspect of environmental studies, and it reflects a valid way of experiencing and describing the world, and so maybe it's important to immerse ourselves in that in-between place, to pay attention to and develop that language.

ADAM NOVICK: Environmental studies is a nursery for those kinds of syntheses. But not just one-'environmental studies', but a variety of 'generalist' specialties.

CODY EVERS: Or, is environmental studies' success measured not internally but externally—by its ability to shift the bigger disciplines?

ALI ABBORS: You mean, like green chemistry or ecological economics?

CODY EVERS: Right, that environmental studies is like a third political party in the United States- it doesn't build power itself, but shifts the focus of the dominant parties. That the knowledge built in environmental studies is quickly incorporated into mainstream thought.

CHRIS STRATTON: Yes, our success is measured by making ourselves obsolete- when business is, of course, implicitly green business.

JILL JAKIMETZ: Maybe, but there's still the important question of how we do that in the meantime, and that the "how" might be as important as "the result," even if we agree environmental studies is environmentalist.

CODY EVERS: So we've certainly used the language of urgency and problem solving this evening. So would we say that environmental studies is a synthesis at the service of solving climate change, fixing the environment, addressing a crisis? Is environmental studies on the edge of a solution through synthesis? Is that unique to this time? Or is there an environmental studies body of knowledge outside of that?

ERICA ELLIOTT: Well, to a large extent, we assume, optimistically, maybe naively, that our desire to save the environment will go hand in hand with making people's lives better, but not everyone sees it that way, and that's not always true, and so it can be problematic to throw the momentum of environmental studies wholly behind problem solving.

And this is also reflected at the University of Oregon and the way it's taken up "sustainability". Will [the University of Oregon], as an institution, encourage sustainability? Will it be primarily through the Law School, through the Business School? Green Chemistry? A kind of menu of these approaches and programs?

Well, where's Environmental Studies in all of this? These are conversations that you'd think our program would be leading. There's funding for sustainability initiatives that you'd think we'd be a part of, but for some reason, we are not. Some of that is due to the leanness of the program, which is largely due to the fact that historically and still, the funding structure of a university strongly favors disciplinary research.

What's the future of Environmental Studies as a program, environmental studies as a field? Is the university funding structure an insurmountable barrier to the growth of environmental studies?

AMANDA PEACHER: One thing we've talked about with faculty is how Environmental Studies is very much a student-defined program and field. For instance, the undergraduate degree was created by student demand for a degree where these questions concerning the environment could be connected across disciplines. The same is true of the graduate program, and as Adam points out, the connections are largely made by students attempting to apply interdisciplinary research to their own focus. And so exposure to 'interdisciplinarity' is really important to the program, however there is not much interdisciplinarity among faculty—they come to this program from a very disciplined background.

Given that we're part of a generational wave getting advanced degrees in environmental studies, starting to define the field, what's it going to look like in the future as so many of us emerge from an interdisciplinary place?

ERICA ELLIOTT: Our faculty are interested in cultivating interdisciplinarity in students, yet they have also expressed interest in Environmental Studies remaining a place where disciplines can meet and share their distinct perspectives and traditions.

ALI ABBORS: But is the Ph.D. program teaching you to be interdisciplinary? Or do you feel you'll be leaving the program with an English degree with a specialty in environmental studies?

ERICA ELLIOTT: Well, the program is interested in making sure students can get a job, and job security means training in one discipline.

ALI ABBORS: Doesn't that seem to be a strange statement? 'Go be interdisciplinary, but really, there isn't a place for you to go with that, so...'

AMANDA PEACHER: Right—if, as environmental studies people, our success is measured by shifts in established disciplines, like Cody was saying, but we are not trained in those disciplines, then where do we go? What can we do in the world that reflects our unique education and academic perspective?

ERICA ELLIOTT: I'm curious about the basic question: Should Environmental Studies be the meeting of students trained in

different disciplines, staffed by a collection of faculty from different disciplines, or should students be trained in *environmental studies* so that they can go on to staff Environmental Studies programs?

JILL JAKIMETZ: It seems at least inconsistent to have a flexible, yet certainly standardized undergraduate degree, in which all of the hundreds of students holding a bachelor's degree from University of Oregon Environmental Studies Program have a baseline common understanding about what environmental studies is concerned with [the introductory undergraduate courses to Environmental Studies], but no such common understanding among those pursuing the advanced degrees.

ROB HOSHAU: When I tell people in Minnesota I'm doing environmental studies, they think it means I'm headed to U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

JILL JAKIMETZ: Right, and I'm getting a Master of Science in Environmental Studies, though my work is closer to art, geography, and design...no statistical analyses in there.

Whether the Intro to Environmental Studies 200-series is an appropriate model is another question, but there's definitely something to be said for the popular and academic understanding of a terminal degree in Environmental Studies to mean somewhat the same thing as an undergraduate degree. Maybe it already does, but we could be more strategic and intentional about how that's reflected in curriculum, if we're interested in pushing the field forward.

THOMAS MASON: And there's good reason to do that. There's a real danger in being too loosely structured around individual interests. There should be rigorous discussion of how all these disciplines work within environmental studies. I'd agree with the idea that in some ways being trained in a specialization can be a self-fulfilling prophecy in that you get trained in that specialization and then you value it for that reason. I agree in the need for generalists, but why do we think that people who study many disciplines are generalists? There's still a negative connotation there, which shouldn't be there. A lot of these people have thought very deeply about a lot of different things and have formed a specialty of their own. And I wish that in the 600-sequence we'd have something like that. Maybe that requires team-teaching, or maybe it requires a radical rethinking of how the sequence is put together, but I think it needs to be done.

WEN LEE: But how can we expect that from faculty when not only are they intellectually coming from specific disciplines, but in terms of university structure, they are financially tied to those departments?

ALI ABBORS: There are faculty members who are team teaching, or will be—Ted Toadvine and Brendan Bohannon will be teaching the Philosophy of Ecology together.

SEVERAL VOICES: That's great!!

ERICA ELLIOTT: There have been a few others as well. Ted Toadvine and Carla Bengston are teaching an art and philosophy class this term called "Ecotheory." Carla and Janet Fiskio taught the same class last year, too.

WEN LEE: Yes! I think that's a wonderful thing and a great step forward. That said, team-teaching is a difficult thing for faculty to do, intellectually and financially, and it also won't get us fully where we'd like to be as graduate students in Environmental Studies. I feel we need faculty who are from environmental studies, who are doing interdisciplinary work, who have had to think about what it means to be doing environmental studies in its own right.

JILL JAKIMETZ: I agree, but how that happens, I'm not sure. Maybe, as Amanda says, we're the generation to begin filling that role, even if it means making it up ourselves. That said, it's amazing what the program has been able to do in such a limited amount of time, with such a finite set of resources. But imagine where it could go, how it might develop if faculty could afford to devote their attention to Environmental Studies; where it could go if Ph.D. students coming from Environmental Studies Programs could be hired directly by Environmental Studies Programs, and help make that next step toward interdisciplinarity, toward a more robust understanding of what environmental studies can do. ■

IS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ENVIRONMENTALISM?

AMANDA PEACHER
FIRST-YEAR MASTER'S STUDENT

MY PARENTS' HOUSE IS NESTLED between the Boise River and a man-made lake in an isolated subdivision called Lake River Estates. It's a lazy spring day, and my dad and I are on a brief walk around the neighborhood. He makes this circuit often, so it's surprising that I'm the one who first notices the handyman's truck parked just beyond the gated community. The white Tacoma is labeled "Ada Trapping Services." I see a silhouette of an ambiguous rodent painted on the side.

"What's that about?" I ask. My dad serves on the subdivision board and generally keeps up with neighborhood affairs.

"Somebody must be here to trap the beavers," he says, unfazed. "Look, that must be the guy."

I'm a little wary of the stocky man who ambles over as we inspect his truck. Why would anyone want to trap beavers in the middle of my parent's subdivision? My dad gives a broad, friendly wave from far away. As the trapper nears, he shouts a greeting. His name is Roleigh. He's on contract to eradicate the beavers that are eating through decorative lakeside vegetation along the shoreline yards of neighborhood homes.

"Do you kill the beavers?" I ask Roleigh.

My dad jumps in before Roleigh can reply. "My daughter is an environmentalist. Better give a good answer."

Like many people who hear about my graduate studies, my dad equates my academic degree in environmental studies with environmental activism. It's not an entirely unreasonable association. Environmental studies emerged from the environmentalism of the 1960s and 70s, and most environmental studies students would consider themselves environmentalists.

But is being an environmentalist a prerequisite for being an environmental studies student today? As environmental studies becomes less about environmental activism and more about interdisciplinarity, it might behoove the field to leave the term environmentalism behind.

Today, the word "environmentalist" conjures up a set of associations: Environmentalists are pro-owl and anti-logging. Environmentalists love salmon and hate dams. Environmentalists recycle, buy organic food, compost, and ride bikes. Environmentalists would save beavers—a keystone species—over non-native, ornamental trees in a heartbeat.

But as an academic field, environmental studies is about more than polarized approaches to environmentalist debates. The term "environmentalist" implies a sort of black-or-white

relationship with the environment. Environmental studies invites us to examine the gray area. It teaches us to consider our relationship with the natural world with an interdisciplinary lens. The typical understanding of "environmentalism" does not do justice to the multi-faceted themes underlying environmental studies.

If environmental studies were concerned only with environmentalism, the field wouldn't need a home in academia. That's not to say that environmental activism is not important—it's a vital way to effect change. Hopefully, engaging in interdisciplinary reflection and study brings environmental studies students closer to formulating their own judgments within polarized debates. But it's not the role of environmental studies to assign judgment or demand action.

After my dad announces my environmentalist leanings to Roleigh, the beaver trapper looks at me reassuringly. As he leans against the fence that lines Lake River Estates, Roleigh explains the neck-popping device that he says swiftly and painlessly dispatches the unwanted rodents.

In this moment, I have an initial impulse to make a snap decision about whether killing beavers is right or wrong. Yet environmental studies invites us to consider a deeper array of questions. Do certain policies condone the swift riddance of a beaver? How is this connected to economics? What are the underlying aesthetic values that lead us to favor manicured yards over wildlife habitat? If we end discussions like this with an instinctive condemnation, we dissolve a distinct opportunity for meaningful interdisciplinary dialogue. ■

OUR COMMUNITY

The Environmental Studies Program

NEW STUDENTS

Kevin Horan



I hail from Concord, California, the middle of five children in a creative and energetic household that nurtured my general open-mindedness and disdain for suburban materialism. I graduated from UC Santa Barbara in 2006 with a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Law & Society. My interests have shifted from national parks to environmental law to urban planning to renewable energy, eventually centering on my current research focus of climate change policy (specifically, the development and implementation of the Western Climate Initiative).

Sue Dockstader



I graduated with a B.S. in Community Health from the UO. I have training in alternative energy design and installation with certification in photovoltaic knowledge from the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP). I have spent most of my adult life fighting wildfires and working for economic, racial, and social justice. I am an avid mushroomer and brew my own beer. I've lived in Eugene for over 20 years with my girlfriend, who is a professional set designer. My thesis topic is a quasi Marxist-feminist political economy of the effects of agrofuels on female farmers in the Global South.

Kevin Belanger



I am a concurrent student in Environmental Studies and Community and Regional Planning. I came to the UO, after getting my B.S. in Geography from the University of Maryland, to study the social aspects of sustainable and local agriculture, but like all good graduate students, my interests have changed. For my terminal project, I will be using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to study pedestrian access in suburban multifamily housing. Since I have been here, I've worked at the Lane County Farmers Market and for the City of Eugene in Transportation Planning, trying hard to bridge my interests.

Amanda Peacher

I grew up in Boise, Idaho, and have worked as an environmental organizer to restore endangered Snake River salmon, as a wilderness ranger in the backcountry of Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains, and have dabbled in freelance writing since college. I received my BA in 2005 in Environmental Studies, English, and Music at the College of Idaho, a small liberal arts school. I am interested in the intersection of nature and culture, environmental writing, and environmental justice issues.

Chris Stratton



I am from a small town in Kentucky, and I'm pursuing concurrent master's degrees in Environmental Studies and Architecture. I received my bachelor's in Environmental Studies from Oberlin College. For my terminal project, I will be revising and updating part of the Campus Sustainability Plan.

Thomas Mason

I grew up in the suburbs of Cleveland and then headed off to England to do my undergraduate degree in Art History. Afterwards, I joined the Peace Corps as an environmental volunteer and taught a variety of gardening, farming, and nutrition practices in a small village in Tanzania. My interests lie primarily in the preservation of wilderness areas in the developing world and in finding practical and positive ways to reduce the environmental impact of poor, rural communities that often share the same space. My thesis will involve an analysis of the land use changes associated with AIDS in Malawi.



Dana Maher



I graduated from the University of Kansas in 2007 with a BS in Physics and spent the next year working for the state of Kansas, first as an energy policy researcher and later as technical staff for energy and water efficiency projects in public facilities. My interest in ecological design grew out of a general environmentalist sentiment fostered by my parents, my cooperative living experiences, and many of my college courses. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, mountain biking, kayaking, exercise in general, (amateur) carpentry, electronics, live music, and food. I have a beautiful German Shepherd/Black Lab mix who has grown into adulthood under the care of my partner, Steph. Fortunately, both of them will soon be moving here from Kansas.

MEET

THE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES OFFICE STAFF

A closer look at the wonderful women responsible for the day-to-day business of our program!

Alissa Manske

Gayla WardWell

RaDonna Aymong



Job Title: Undergraduate Coordinator

Hometown: Norfolk, NE

Employee since: 2002

Best part about working for ENVS:

“The students and their excitement about classes, projects, and making a difference in the world.”

Favorite ENVS memory:

“Any graduation ceremonies. It’s hard to let people go, but I love hearing about their future plans and how they’re planning to improve our environmental situation here (and abroad).”

If you could have any superhero power to help you with your job, what power would you choose?

“Whatever superhero can delete e-mails with a single glance! Maybe even delete them before they arrive...”

Job Title: Graduate Coordinator

Hometown: West Bridgewater, VT

Employee since: 2002

Best part about working for ENVS:

“The egalitarian nature of this program and the variety of constant ‘newness’ of my job. I’m never bored.”

Favorite ENVS Memory:

“[I have] great memories of all the wonderful students I’ve seen enter our program and graduate over the years. Our students are the best!”

If you could have any superhero power to help you with your job, what power would you choose?

“I wouldn’t. It’s much more fun being constantly surprised.”

Job Title: Office Manager

Hometown: Blackfoot, ID

Employee since: 2006

Best part about working for ENVS:

“All the great people!”

Favorite ENVS memory:

“My favorite memories will always be my interactions with all the students.”

If you could have any superhero power to help you with your job, what power would you choose?

“Flash, because he is fast at whatever he does! Batgirl too, because she has a photographic memory.”

TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION for Gayla, RaDonna, and Alissa, *The Ecotone* asked the people of the environmental studies community to share why they feel the women of our office are irreplaceable. The response from students, faculty, and staff was overwhelming! The following is just a short list of those excerpts.

(Thanks to Wen Lee for organizing)

“They create a special chemistry. They share so much, love what they do, and try to share that meaning with everyone around them. It inspires us all to do the same, and reminds us how much good people matter in our lives.”

“ENVS is made up of people from all across the university. I think for many [people across the university] their most consistent contact with the [program] is through the three wonderful, incredibly hard-working women in 10 Pacific.”

“These women are organized, knowledgeable, kind, thoughtful, patient, hilarious troopers, and I feel damned lucky to know them, and be supported by them, these precious few years. THANK YOU!”

“They always seem to work in harmonic balance and willing to lend each other a hand. Even though I have to leave my house to come to work, these great ladies of 10 Pacific help make my workplace feel like home.”

“When I turned in my acceptance letter Gayla literally cheered – how supportive is that?! RaDonna spent a couple of hours getting me set up with keys and calling around campus to help me locate a secure place to park my bike. In the course of doing this, I mentioned I had a printer problem at home, so she called her husband at work to get advice on how to help me resolve it! Alissa smiles at me every time I enter 10 Pac to pick up my mail. She is just fun to joke around with; she has a great sense of humor and is the perfect person to have across our front desk.”

“THANK YOU RADONNA for being so nurturing, organized, and supportive. ELP wouldn’t be the success it is without your quiet leadership and can-do attitude.”

“Gayla has always bent over backwards helping us. [...] I’ve never heard her complain about all the things we demand of her, even when it would be justified. I personally owe so much to Gayla. I can sincerely say that my life is better because of the work that she does.”

“Not only is Alissa really helpful and always there when we need assistance, she keeps a cheerful smile on her face even amidst our seemingly endless questions. Alissa is one of the most dedicated ENVS club participants as well. She brings goodies to potlucks and dresses up for costume contests!” ■



The Environmental Leadership Program

Innovative, Hands-On Learning

KATHRYN A. LYNCH

THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (ELP) provides innovative, hands-on learning opportunities to undergraduates at the University of Oregon (UO). Housed in Environmental Studies, the ELP is a service-learning program that provides students an opportunity to get involved in local environmental issues. Instilling an ethic of civic engagement is integral to all ELP projects -- we aim to give our students the awareness, knowledge, skills and motivation to tackle the serious environmental issues we as a society currently face. By participating in our service-learning program students develop their communication and collaboration skills and gain the confidence to get involved and apply their skills to solve difficult conservation issues.

2008-2009 was a great year for us. In total, we offered eight projects in two main focal areas: Environmental Education and Mapping and Monitoring. This included a new fall term educational project called the Sustainable Education Partnership that assisted eight local schools become certified as Oregon Green Schools. In addition, thanks to the generous support provided by the Gray Family Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, we offered four projects that focused on translating environmental sciences into engaging environmental education in four different ecosystems: forest, marine, riverine and wetlands. This included launching our exciting new Canopy Connections program in which middle school children climbed into the canopy of an old-growth Douglas-fir forest to learn about forest ecology and a new Plants & People project in the West Eugene Wetlands, in which children learned about the Kalapuya tribe and the cultural and ecological values of wet-

lands plants. Likewise, our Turtle Team, after three years of western pond turtle habitat monitoring, transitioned to turtle population mapping and monitoring out at the West Eugene Wetlands to help guide the BLM in their efforts to protect this sensitive species. Our Restoration Team helped local watershed councils monitor the success of their restoration efforts. Below you will find descriptions of our two focal areas this year and summaries of all of the ELP projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE

In 2006-2007 we launched an ambitious Environmental Education Initiative. The rationale was simple. We have a large number of students who want to become environmental educators, and local nonprofits and governmental agencies have environmental education (EE) programs that are in need of support. Although Eugene is located near spectacular natural areas, many local children have never visited the wetlands on the edge of town or explored the magnificent old-growth forests or the tidepools just a short drive away. This initiative is designed to help our community partners give more children an opportunity to explore these areas first-hand. We begin by training a cadre of enthusiastic educators in environmental education, then connect them with community partners who have a need for assistance.

To participate, ELP students must first complete at least one upper-division science course pertaining to the ecosystem where they will work. This provides a natural science foundation. They then take Environmental Education in Theory

& Practice, where they learn about the history, learning theories, and techniques behind environmental education. In addition, they obtain Project Learning Tree, Project Wild and Project Wild Aquatic certification through a weekend workshop. Community partners facilitate field trips to their sites, participate in an orientation meeting, and provide mentoring throughout the project. From the beginning of winter term, the teams begin work on their group project. Since quality EE curricula are usually already available, the students focus on modifying existing curricula to fit the needs of their community partners. Each team develops an educational unit for their specific community partner and ecosystem. Their final projects must: 1) incorporate an interdisciplinary approach; 2) include multi-cultural perspectives; 3) use experiential, inquiry-based methods; 4) promote civic engagement; 5) articulate assessment strategies; and 6) result in a professional educational unit that teachers and environmental educators will find useful.

During spring term, the UO students develop their skills as educators by implementing their educational units and facilitating EE programs for their community partners. Each UO student completes a minimum of 120 hours of service. While each team is slightly different, this usually entails facilitating field trips, classroom visits, staffing educational booths, and developing supplemental educational materials (e.g. wikis, posters, websites). The overarching goal is to inspire a sense of wonder and provide local children with the knowledge, skills, and inspiration to work individually and collectively to protect the environment.

MAPPING AND MONITORING INITIATIVE

The Mapping and Monitoring Program within ELP matches teams of students with non-profit organizations and governmental agencies working on environmental and sustainability oriented field projects. Students have the opportunity to network with local community partners and gain experience in field data collection, analysis and review. Their findings are then used by our community partners to reach conservation and rehabilitation goals.

To participate in this initiative, ELP students must complete an upper-division course that pertains to their project area. For example, students engaged in the Restoration Stewardship project, which involves monitoring the success of riparian plantings for local watershed councils, must take an upper-level plant identification course. Students then take Mapping

and Monitoring Skills and Methods, where they learn about the needs and applications of environmental monitoring using GPS, GIS, remote sensing, and other sampling technologies and techniques. This class is focused on field application, and field trips are used to familiarize students with the course methods. During this winter quarter, students have an opportunity to meet their teams, become familiar with their project and methods, and be introduced to their community partners.

During the spring term, students embark on the bulk of the field work for their projects. Each student completes a minimum of 120 hours of service work, and this includes gathering field data, developing deliverables (websites, posters, and final reports) and offering professional presentations to each community partner. The Mapping and Monitoring Initiative provides students with excellent field work experience, helps develop their leadership and teamwork abilities, and familiarizes them with local environmental projects and project partners. The professionalism gained by the students graduating from this program makes them quite competitive when seeking both environmental non-profit and government positions.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Mapping & Monitoring Teams

Restoration Monitoring Team

PROJECT MANAGER: KEVIN HORAN

TEAM MEMBERS: RALPH ALVARADO, JORDAN ANDERSON, MARAH COOK, RENATE DIETRICH, LIZZY KAY, JOHN KNEUBUHLER

This year's Restoration Monitoring team provided services to three local watershed councils, the McKenzie River Watershed Council, the Middle Fork Willamette River Watershed Council, and the Coast Fork Willamette River Watershed Council. The project sites varied slightly in their nature, but all included data collection on recently planted riparian shrubs and trees. The monitoring projects assisted in assessing shrub and tree establishment, mortality rates, and vigor. Data gathered included species identification, status, and current measurements of height. This implementation monitoring differed from effectiveness monitoring in that it did not address how the plantings assisted or detracted from the overall goals of the project, i.e. water quality, bank stabilization, canopy cover increase, etc. Rather, the Restoration Monitoring team's implementation monitoring addressed assessment of survival and vigor.



Turtle Monitoring Team

PROJECT MANAGER: KEVIN BELANGER

TEAM MEMBERS: KATELYN ARMSTRONG, DAVID DUNKLEY, AUSTIN HIMES, BRIANA O'LOUGHLIN, HANNAH SATEIN



A group of five University of Oregon students made a difference for one Pacific Northwest native, the western pond turtle. In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, the Turtle Team conducted a monitoring pilot study of the at-risk turtle in the West Eugene Wetlands. In recent decades, western pond turtles have suffered from habitat fragmentation, predation by invasive bullfrogs, and competition with the red-eared slider, a non-native turtle that was once a popular pet. The Turtle Team's findings provided a population estimate of western pond turtles in the West Eugene Wetlands. Their work will inform future projects about the most effective methods for western pond turtle monitoring.

Environmental Education Teams

Canopy Connections Team

PROJECT MANGER: ROB HOSHAW

TEAM MEMBERS: EMILY CHI, MACKENZIE LEE, KALI ORTON, TOMMY ROYER, MOLLY SIMAS, ALEX WARD, JASMINE ZIMMER-STUCKY, AND KARA ZWICKEY

The Canopy Connections Team was a group of eight University of Oregon students who share enthusiasm for both education and the natural world. The team utilized their backgrounds in Environmental Studies and Sciences to brainstorm, create, and apply the eight lesson plans in the Canopy Connections packet, which centered on a four-part field trip with optional pre- and post-trip classroom lessons. The pre-trip lessons introduced students to old-growth forests and natural cycles of a forest. The four-part field trip lesson plans utilized the forest location to teach decomposition, “Leave No Trace” ethics, microclimates, habitats, and canopy height. Field trip participants engaged in opportunities for hands-on learning, including climbing into the canopy of an old-growth Douglas-fir tree! The post-trip lesson plans built on the field trip experiences by focusing on human interaction with interdependent forest systems and the conservation of natural resources.



Global Connections Team

PROJECT MANAGER: CODY EVERS

TEAM MEMBERS: ASHLEY FOWLER, ISABELLE FRANCOU, BECKY ROTTENSTEIN, JULIE STUMP, AND WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER WOOLIS

Team Global Connections 2009 developed an innovative lesson unit that utilized technology, theory, and the scientific process to connect fifth grade students in Eugene, Oregon with their student peers in Lethbridge, Alberta.

In teaching about the impacts of climate change on our planet’s glaciers, students were given the opportunity to learn through inquiry, perform experiments, deepen their understanding of the earth’s natural processes, and participate in a cross-cultural dialogue intended to broaden students’ perceptions of human relationships to the environment.



Marine Team



PROJECT MANAGER: WEN LEE

TEAM MEMBERS: COLLEEN COLEMAN & HANNAH NICHOLLS

The Marine Team's main goal was to provide hands on environmental education promoting coastal stewardship in Charleston, Oregon. We worked in conjunction with Oregon State Parks, South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology. Through these community partners, we introduced many students to the wonders of the Oregon coast.

Sustainable Education Partnership

PROJECT MANAGER: WEN LEE

PROJECT TEAM: KATIE BOOM, COURTNEY BRINKOFF, WILL CLARK, CHRISTINA DIAMOND, RYAN JOHNSTON, ELIZABETH SHAW, NIK STEINBERG, ADRIEN WILKIE, JESSICA WILSON, & WHITNEY WINSOR

The Sustainable Education Partnership was a collaborative effort between the ELP at the University of Oregon, the Institute for Sustainability Education and Ecology (ISEE), and Oregon Green Schools to help K-12 schools in the Eugene-Springfield area become certified Oregon Green Schools. In order to help the participating schools achieve certification, we worked with students, staff, and parents to assess the "green" status of each school and establish short-term waste reduction and resource conservation goals. In addition to helping schools become green certified, we aided each school in establishing the infrastructure necessary to achieve long-term goals and become role models in sustainability for other schools and the surrounding community.



Wetlands Team

PROJECT MANAGER: SUE DOCKSTADER

TEAM MEMBERS: SOPHIE PERILLO, LINDSI CAGAN, TRAVIS BRANUM, NANCY BETH WILSON, & CELIA RUSSELL

The Wetlands team created curricula and taught students in the Eugene area about local plants and their relationships to people. Lessons focused on the cultural significance of various wetland plants to the Kalapuya people of the Willamette Valley. The team members led field trips for Eugene area schools each week throughout spring term. The Wetlands Team also helped WREN with classroom facilitations, WEW events and programs, as well as other miscellaneous volunteer work. Each member completed 120 hours of Wetland Team related work during the 10 week term.



X-Stream Team

PROJECT MANAGER: DANA MAHER

TEAM MEMBERS: KATIE MACLACHLAN, REBECCA MARCUS, JANNA GREEN, JOLYN OVERTON

The X-Stream Team partnered with the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council and the United States Forest Service in the joint pursuit of educating youth on the environmental issues that affect the streams and rivers in their lives. Using a six-foot stream simulator, our group facilitated hands-on lessons that teach students about watersheds, land use effects on watersheds, how to identify pollution, and the complicated issues surrounding dams. Lessons centered on Western Oregon's waterways and were adapted to the learning opportunities presented by each unique classroom setting. The X-Stream team was called to service from the shared belief that the next generation deserves a head start in meeting the environmental challenges we face today and tomorrow.



We would like to thank all of our community partners and funders for their generous support of the Environmental Leadership Program.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TEAMS

All: Gray Family Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation

CANOPY CONNECTIONS TEAM: Steve Ellis, H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest, Pacific Tree Climbing Institute, REI, and an anonymous donor from the H.J. Andrews Forest Fund.

MARINE TEAM: OIMB, Oregon State Parks, and South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

WETLANDS TEAM: Willamette Resources and Educational Network (WREN), and the Institute for Culture and Ecology

X-STREAM TEAM: Middle Fork Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest and the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council

MAPPING AND MONITORING TEAMS

RESTORATION STEWARDSHIP TEAM: Coast Fork Watershed Council, Middle Fork Watershed Council, McKenzie Watershed Partnership

TURTLE MONITORING TEAM: Bureau of Land Management

If you are interested in learning more about the Environmental Leadership Program, or participating as a student or community partner, please contact:

Dr. Kathryn Lynch, klynch@uoregon.edu, 541.346.5070

Kirsten Rudestam, krudesta@uoregon.edu, 541.346.5945.

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Achievements, Awards, Announcements

OUR FEARLESS LEADER

A few months ago, we elected a leader with sound judgment, compassion, and foresight. He's an advocate for change who's not afraid to face complex problems. He has shown us that movements built from the ground up can succeed, and he's given us hope for the future.

No, I'm not referring to our newly elected President Barack Obama. I'm talking about Alan Dickman, the recently reappointed Director of our Environmental Studies Program.

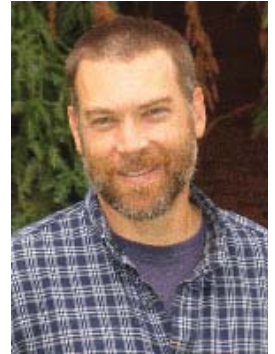
As far as I know, there was no swearing in, but during winter term of this year, we begged Alan to stay on as Director, and he graciously accepted our offer. Alan has been Director of ENVS for the last three years, and he's done what can safely be called a bang-up job.

That's not surprising given Alan's background, teaching and administrative abilities, and temperament. Alan received an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies before ENVS was trendy, and then he completed a Ph.D. in biology at UO. Since then, he has been a forest biology guru, an award-winning teacher, an irreplaceable administrator, and a mentor who is always willing to give his time and energy.

Those of us that have the pleasure of working with Alan every day value his willingness to listen and work towards positive change, his sense of fairness, his dedication to the development of our Program, and, of course, his sense of humor.

*Alan: As a congratulatory gift in celebration of your reappointment, we decided not to publish the photograph of you wearing antlers. Thanks for agreeing to stick with us for another three years!

ERICA ELLIOTT
Ph.D. STUDENT



FACULTY AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

ADELL AMOS (School of Law) & TED TOADVINE (Department of Philosophy & Environmental Studies) were selected as 2009-2010 Wayne Morse Center Resident Scholars.

BRENDAN BOHANNAN (Department of Biology & Environmental Studies) was selected as a 2009 Leopold Leadership Fellow.

BRENDAN BOHANNAN was also awarded a Williams Fellowship for demonstrating extraordinary commitment to undergraduate education.

ALAN DICKMAN was once again acknowledged for his outstanding teaching with the Thomas F. Herman Faculty Achievement Award for Distinguished Teaching.

RON MITCHELL (Department of Political Science & Environmental Studies) was one of 20 University of Oregon faculty to receive a 2009 Faculty Excellence Award.

BROOK MULLER (Department of Architecture) and BRIANNA ORR (undergraduate in Environmental Studies) are winners of the Civic Engagement Award-Engagement in Sustainability.

BROOK MULLER was also granted tenure as associate professor in Architecture at the University of Oregon.

TED TOADVINE was granted tenure as associate professor in Philosophy at the University of Oregon.



STUDENT AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS:

JANET FISKIO has accepted a tenure-track position in Environmental Studies and English at Oberlin College.

JILL JAKIMETZ was awarded a Fulbright-Schuma Fellowship for study in the European Union. She will be examining relationships between landscape, identity, and agro-environmental subsidies in the Netherlands and Ireland, starting December 2009.

WEN LEE has accepted a Production Coordinator internship with Free Range Studios in Berkeley, California.

AMANDA PEACHER was awarded second place in the *Oregon Quarterly* Northwest Perspectives contest for her essay entitled "First Salmon."

SARAH JAQUETTE RAY has accepted a tenure-track position in Environmental Studies and English at University of Alaska-Southeast in Juneau.

SHANGRILA JOSHI WYNN is a recipient of the 2009-2010 Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics Dissertation Fellow. Wynn's dissertation is titled "Climate Justice and Geopolitics: Analysis of India's role as an emerging economy of the global South in International Climate Change Policy Negotiations."

ADAM NOVICK With cost-share assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, master's student Adam Novick saved an additional eight acres of oak savanna from loss to fire exclusion on private land near Eugene by simulating fire with mechanical means. Adam also submitted public comment on a draft recovery plan, draft programmatic safe harbor agreement, and draft habitat conservation plan for oak-associated prairie species of western Oregon and southwestern Washington, under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. In addition, Adam gave presentations at the annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology (on "Risk to biodiversity from orthodoxy in the regulation of species"), the annual meeting of the Oregon chapter of The Wildlife Society (on "Risk to maintenance-dependent species from orthodoxy in species-based land-use regulation"), and the UO-sponsored conference "Thinking Through Nature" (on "A war of musical chairs: What have we done to Leopold's land ethic? (And what else can we do?)"). Adam was also invited by the Institute for Natural Resources to give a presentation at Oregon State University on implications of disequilibrium ecology for public policy to conserve biodiversity on private land. Adam thanks all who have discussed these ideas with him.

CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2009!

Environmental Science

Emily Chi
Adam Davis-Turak
Ethan Devitt
Emily Dixon
Dylan Esmonde
Reuben Granskog
Austin Himes
Jenna Kulluson
Daniel Ohrn
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Amanda Le Blanc
Aaron Michalson
Juan Jose Mora Flores
Juan Carlos Mora-Flores
Tuula Dorothea Rebhahn
Sheena Reichter
Rebecca Rottenstein
Max Tepfer
Ben Teton
Mark VanDyck
Alexis Verkozen

Emily Wagenknecht
Alex Weber
Rebecca West
Daniel Williams
Collin Wise
Tracy Wright

ENVS Master's

Alison Abbors
Chu Chen
Robert Hoshaw
Jill Jakimetz
Yeun-Wen Lee

ESSP Ph.D

Janet Fiskio
Sarah Jaquette Ray

STUDENT VOICES

A Reflection on My Time in ENVS

WEN LEE
SECOND-YEAR MASTER'S STUDENT

SOMETIMES I THINK SOME OF US joined this program because we don't know what the heck we're doing with ourselves. We deeply care about nature, we want to do great things for the world, and we have brilliant ideas about how human societies could be more sustainable. However, some of us are not exactly sure how we personally want to go about solving all the planet's problems. So, we figure grad school would be good idea. We apply to this program because we think it will forgive us through its refreshing interdisciplinarity and hopefully give us some direction.

And honestly, I think that's okay.

It's okay to not be sure about what exactly you are doing. It's okay to be fuzzy about the details. What's important is that our drive, motivation, and passion are genuine. We are heroes-in-training. Heroes searching for our Gotham City and discovering our unique superpower (or are at least putting together one heck of a utility belt).

In the meantime, we exemplify excellence for the University. Students admitted into the ENVS program are notoriously outstanding. From the impressive body of work and accomplishments I've witnessed ENVS grads produce over the past two years, I know these expectations are justified. I am continually humbled as well as inspired by my esteemed colleagues and my good friends. And for all this, I am proud and thankful to be part of this remarkable program.

I am also thankful for Pacific Hall, our home for the past several years. In Fall 2009, the ENVS offices will be moving to Columbia Hall. The following words commemorate countless memories from the ENVS Master's Student Office, 6 Pacific (or 6 Pac for short). I'd also like to give special thanks to RaDonna Aymong for her efforts to furnish and decorate this wonderful space. ■

ENVS MOVES TO COLUMBIA

After being housed in Pacific Hall since 1996, the ENVS offices will move to Columbia Hall in Summer 2009. The following words and panoramic photo commemorate the countless memories from 6 Pacific for dozens of master's students over the years. Special thanks to RaDonna Aymong for her efforts to equip and furnish this wonderful space.



PHOTO: WEN LEE

ODE to 6 PAC

WEN LEE

SECOND-YEAR MASTERS STUDENT

In a program notorious for cultivating independent work
Where every person walks a unique scholastic path
Where 20 master's students enroll in just as many academic departments
How could there be a sense of community?
How could there be a sense that we share an identity
That we belong to the same family
That our home is Environmental Studies?

Perhaps part of the reason is
Because we share a common space
Room 6, Pacific Hall
Its function transcending that of a typical office with computers
It's about more than that

It's about careening across the floor in those black rolling chairs
Taking power naps on the most comfortable couch in the world
Naming the printer
Opening the door each time with anticipation to see who's inside
Posting trivia questions on the board

Sharing free food and as well as distracting YouTube videos
Leaving at 2am
Coming in at 2am
The comfort of seeing familiar faces
The joy of telling stories
The stimulation of debating ideas
The release of built-up stress

Laughter, laughter, more laughter

There are dirty dishes on the shelves
There are fruit flies in the plants
There is a severe lack of cell phone reception
But there is also something much more important here

Over the years
A place to work
To connect
To take a break
To remember who we're here with

Over the years
A place that we made
That we painted
That we built
That we loved
A place that is ours

Thank you 6 Pac



Siesta Lane

A Sense of Place Stays With Our Students

Siesta Lane: One Cabin, No Running Water, and a Year of Living Green
by 1994 alumna Amy Minato.

REVIEWED BY KEVIN BELANGER
FIRST-YEAR MASTER'S STUDENT

I TOOK *SIESTA LANE* with me on a recent trip to the mountains of Colorado. I was a year removed from a job I held that had me living in a secluded ghost town with two other people. That's why I found it delightful when Amy Minato opened her book by talking about her reasons for moving from the fast pace of Chicago to the self-paced West Coast to the downright crawl of her life in a cabin outside of Eugene, Oregon on Siesta Lane.

Minato lived in a secluded cabin during her time as an environmental studies and creative writing graduate student at the University of Oregon, listing reasons from "recovery to renewal." Her elegant prose describes the path that brought her to a rural desire, and "attempt to wriggle free from a consumer lifestyle that I know to be harmful to nature and to our nature."

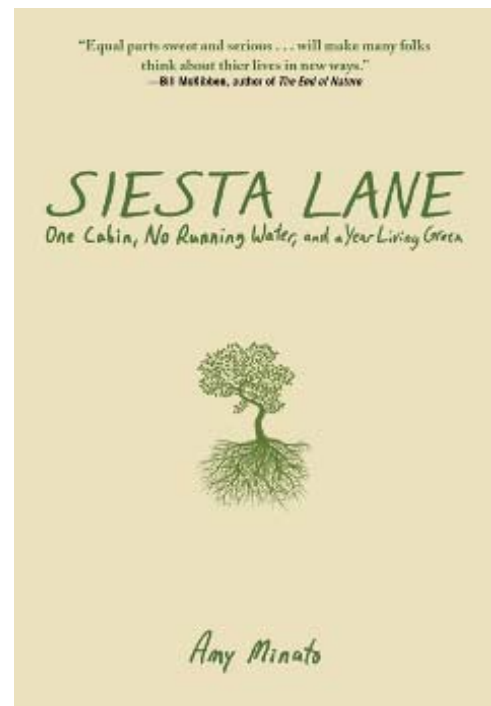
One thing that stands out in *Siesta Lane* is the candor with which Minato tells her story. She talks of relationship struggles, confusion, and small triumphs--all the while making this book less about its tagline ("One Cabin, No Running Water, and a Year Living Green") and more about a woman who is exploring a transition in life and actually doing what many people talk about doing but never have the courage to actually carry out.

I found myself fully absorbed in *Siesta Lane* on the flight back from the mountains, both missing my own adventure in seclusion and finding camaraderie in Minato's gift for making you feel like you are harvesting the potatoes with her or listening to the night's silence. Minato also makes some astute observations on society from the lens of her double life. She finds that it is "no wonder that some turn to drugs, television, shopping. How impossible to sit in all awareness in our delicate skin, pelted by the incessant rain."

Through *Siesta Lane*, Amy Minato illustrates what we may do to change some of our ways. Short of everyone finding a Siesta Lane of their own, Minato's experience can at least provide an example through which some can gain a greater insight on respect and appreciation of our role in nature.

Amy Minato currently teaches creative writing as a visiting writer in local elementary, high schools and after school programs. She teaches nature writing at Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center, Breitenbush Conference Center and the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, and occasionally teaches poetry as an adjunct professor at Washington State University.

Siesta Lane was part of Minato's graduate work in Environmental Studies.



Siesta Lane: One Cabin, No Running Water, and a Year Living Green by Amy Minato (2009) is published by Skyhorse Publishing out of New York City and is currently available in hardback.

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PHOTO BY REBECCA BRIGGS

THE ECOTONE
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ECOTONE: A transition zone between two adjacent communities, such as a forest or grassland. It has some of the characteristics of each bordering community and often contains species not found in the overlapping communities. An ecotone may exist along a broad belt or in a small pocket, such as a forest clearing, where two local communities blend together. The influence of the two bordering communities is known as the edge effect. An ecotonal area often has a higher density of organisms and a greater number of species than are found in either flanking community.
