

Journal/portfolio assignment: Evaluation criteria and content suggestions.

Given that the next ten years are important as per many themes in this course, I ask you to organize the journal/portfolio in a way that you believe would be interesting or useful for you to examine in ten years. Consider one or more of these exercises to add substance to your journal and feel free to come up with your own ideas too. **Two main principles** will guide the marking of the journal assignment (including your reflections on assigned readings). One principle is that you **observe and reflect** upon some aspects of your experience in and how you act towards the world. This includes the ideas you encounter through the required journal and alternative press articles for this course, but that is academic (although important, just one way you spend your life). The second principle is that I would like to see evidence that you ‘woke up’ somewhat and **attempted to change** something in your own life towards solutions for a better world. This will be simple for you to observe because, luckily this assignment is about your life and *you* are living the assignment (i.e., you’re the expert!). For me to observe your learning however, will require that you perform some self-behavioral observations, experiments, and/or demonstrations and that you journal the exercise(s). That means that you write about your experience in a descriptive way and that you *also* reflect on your experience (e.g., Did it *mean* anything to you? Did you *learn* anything?). Note, there isn’t a required number of exercises you must do. For instance, you could take just the first one (take a quick glimpse to see what I mean). If you wrote a few lines every day on that exercise only, would certainly be ‘enough’ to reflect on for this class assignment. Another strategy is that you could try a number of the exercises and write fewer entries for each attempt. I don’t necessarily want your life history (although I’d read it), but a sample of what you’re getting out of this course. In consideration of your work, in addition to the two main principles noted above, I will value demonstrations of your critical thinking, creativity, organization, and insight.

Journals (and term papers) will be graded and available for pick-up as of 2007 April 25 in Laurie’s office, four Wednesdays (i.e., Apr 25, May 2, 9, 16), from 9am to noon.

Ease up on the accelerator and notice what happens.

You can reduce your carbon footprint by driving slower. If you are a person who drives regularly over the speed limit or who switches lanes a lot, consider performing an experiment on yourself: drive 5km over the speed limit (not the speed limit, just a little over) and keep to the far right continuous lane (i.e., not the one that turns into the exit lane, but the one next to the left of it — the lane to the far right of *continuous* traffic). Notice the reactions of others as they ‘flow’ around you and your own reactions while you’re driving. Reflect afterwards on your observations of others and of yourself. Journal the exercise. This is an excellent way to observe yourself as you try to make positive changes to a deeply ingrained, environmentally destructive habit. Hint: there is a subculture of people who do this — you could meet a new friend who cares too.

Nature at the shopping mall.

Shopping malls are typically rife with contained and artificial nature. For this exercise, go to a local mall to observe the setting and people’s behavior in the setting. Take note of natural and unnatural light, greenery, water features, etc. and be on the lookout for nature-oriented merchandise. Write a short commentary summarizing your observations and analyze what those observations suggest about humans’ affinity (or lack thereof) for nature. Comment on any effect they think the natural elements have on shopping behaviors. You may notice many interesting

things. For example, at the Mall of America in Bloomington, MN (the largest mall in the U.S.), every trash bin has pictures of foliage on it, shoppers can visit restaurants decorated with fake nature (e.g., the "Rainforest Cafe") and shops specializing in nature-themed products, one wing contains an atrium with benches nestled among potted trees, there are fountains and plants throughout the mall, and in the center of the mall is an amusement park with a summer camp theme.

Take reusable canvas bags to the grocery store.

All that plastic is just garbage and it's so hard to biodegrade the stuff, I can't stress how much this one little change in your life will make on your own ecological footprint. Also, it is very interesting to observe other people around you as you do it. Be prepared for some disapproval from other customers who think you're taking far too much 'time' (go figure, but packing does seem to take them extra time somehow). Some clerks will treat you like you are from Mars, e.g., when you tell them you have your own bags, they will say things like "oh, that's okay" and then reach for the plastic bag anyway! It's best if you're not too shy to attempt this one because sometimes you have to be firm with others, but it is infinitely rewarding if you do. Shopping tip: canvas bags are usually available at thrift stores and sell for around 25 cents or so. These bags wash well and last a long time. I feel like Martha Stewart, but "it's a good thing."

Read labels. Eat organic and less processed foods. Eat food grown and processed locally.

This one will be more expensive than how you eat usually (unless, of course you already do this). In either case, you can note any cost differences, availability, quality of the food you get, anything else you notice, e.g., 'glances' from other customers? Journal the exercise.

Plant a tree.

In the spring, right after frost break (usually around the end of this course) is a great time to plant a tree. Get permission from the property owner and take a picture of yourself doing it (I just love the sight of folks planting trees!). Do this exercise and journal how it goes. How much was the tree? Where did you get it? Was it difficult? Dirty? How did you feel afterwards? Hint: there's going to be 1 bonus mark in course grade for those who do this, so you might as well get journal credit for it too.

Plant 100 trees.

You get to teach the course (well, one lecture is yours, but I get to talk too).

Explore energy efficient, green, earth, or alternative materials home building.

Lots of you will be purchasing or building your own homes sometime in the future. Research one aspect of home construction (e.g., installing solar energy or building a house out of old tires) and report on your findings. Write also about your own values and beliefs about home ownership. Would you consider implementing what you researched if you were to build a home? Do the findings from your research affect the kind of previously owned home you would purchase?

Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows where you live.

Take a picture of yourself doing it. Smile when you do it, because you're my hero. Put the picture in your journal envelope.

Buy recycled paper or envelopes. Use the other side of the paper you use. Print on two sides of the paper. Don't print the pages of this (and other) course documents (e.g., .pdf files), only read them in 'virtual' form.

Demonstrate this one in the assignments you turn in. Yes, you can hand in assignments printed on used paper — I encourage you to do so (just put a highlighter or pencil line though the other side or I'll start to read it). You can also write about it in your journal. For instance, is this new for you? Have you done it before? Was it a hassle? Hard to get used paper? Will you keep on doing it? Why or why not?

Read a current news article about something environmental and ask one critical question.

Psychology graduates are valued in the work world for their critical thinking skills and it's not surprising to me to find that Brock students are valued especially for this (I believe it is the special nature and value of the pedagogy of this seminar system). In any case, *you* are in the enviable position of being able to think and argue critically. This is *crucial* over the next ten years in terms of many themes in this course, because the right questions are essential to finding useful answers. *Think about* what you hear, read, and see on available communications media. *Ask yourself* if there is a perspective that is *missing*. Ask a question that maybe only *you* can ask. Tell why it's important to find an answer to your question. Include the question and rationale in your journal/portfolio.

How much is enough?

Over-consumption is a major cause of some of our most serious environmental issues. There is general agreement that the time has come for each consumer to really question how much stuff they should buy. Re-read pages 79–81 of the textbook and ask yourself “how much is enough?” for your own life. Journal your response. This is a great chance to take some pictures too: perhaps photo chronicle some of your current possessions or the rooms you live in and compare them with those things in 10 years when you get there.

Chronicle your contribution to an environmental cause you believe in.

Participate in a nonviolent protest and have a picture of yourself taken there. Include a picture of yourself at some past protest. Send a letter to an MP about an environmental issue and include a copy in your journal envelope. Make a contribution to an action group you believe in e.g., go to this website and send them something they need; <http://www.spoonerdirect.org/> and click on “Our needs.” The people in the canopy of the Redwoods depend on these items for their (and the trees') survival (note, I'm not suggesting you do this single thing, but that you come up with your own — if I was doing the assignment this is only what *Laurie* would do). Photograph yourself with what you do. Do something like this to help any environmental cause you find intriguing and/or worthy. Help them to continue their work. Then, write about what you did, why, and its effect on your intended future behavior. Would you do it again? Why or why not?

Take the ecological footprint quiz and reflect on your own ecological footprint.

You can find a version of this quiz at www.rprogress.org/newprojects/ecolFoot or you can use another source (there are lots of ecological footprint calculators on the internet). Report your findings in an informal style. What is your footprint? Is your footprint larger or smaller than you expected? Also, reflect on your ecological behavior. Can you change your footprint? Would you? Why or why not? Also, ask critical questions about the exercise itself, e.g., does the quiz

you took cover enough of your 'world' to capture your true ecological footprint? Come up with your own critical questions, in addition to answering the one suggested.