

## Introduction to Environmental Arts

**Course Number:** 07:557:121

**Course Format:** Lecture

**Mode of Instruction:** Online Asynchronous

**Introduction to Environmental Arts** is a three-credit, multidisciplinary course that examines the unique role Environmental Arts plays in addressing the climate crisis. However, given the intersectionality of this crisis, Introduction to Environmental Arts uses an ecological entry point to investigate tangential aspects of the climate crisis including psychological, cultural, economic, educational, and governmental injustices and challenges caused by what is widely (albeit imperfectly) known as the Anthropocene.

For the purposes of this course, “Environmental Arts” encompasses artwork of any genre (visual, music, dance, theatre, film, etc.) whose dominant concepts engage the environment and ecosystems, from undeveloped to built. These concepts often include any combination of the following: communicating/translating knowledge in the fields of environment-related science, technology, philosophy, and sociology; exploring systems, processes, and phenomena; encouraging relationship, empathy, and action; and shifting individual and cultural consciousness.

Accompanied by a selection of content by thought leaders spanning the arts, humanities, and sciences, students will study artists who have cultivated and critiqued the current eco-artscape (history and theory), identify potential impacts within this broad and diverse field (purpose), and create their own multi-disciplinary works of environmental art (practice) with a focus on artistic process rather than result. Through readings, recordings, artwork, writing assignments, critiques, studio practice, and engagement with the outside world itself, students will consider and respond to the challenges and potentials within questions such as: What are the impacts environmental arts are striving for, writ large? How can environmental arts contribute to moving our global community toward a more inclusive and restorative paradigm? Why are artists uniquely poised to participate in discussions about the climate crisis, and how can they do so effectively? In doing so, students will think critically about themes such as empathy, curiosity, sustainability, site-specificity, community, transformation, environmental justice, collaboration, and art-as-research.

### Learning Goals of Course

Upon completion of this course, students will possess the knowledge and skills to:

- Articulate definitions and values aligned with the category of Environmental Arts.
- Identify notable environmental artwork, artists, and their contributions to the field of environmental arts as well as how they are cultivating, critiquing, and engaging the climate crisis writ large.
- Discern types of environmental arts such as data visualization, audiation, performance, public art, art-sci collaboration, etc. – and understand that they are not mutually exclusive.
- Think critically about how process, content, collaboration, and delivery can most effectively achieve an artwork’s desired level of accessibility and impact in addressing the climate crisis.

- Cultivate curiosity, empathy, and connection using multimedia approaches to making environmental art.
- Practice virtual, interdisciplinary relationship cultivation and project management through thoughtful engagement with the online modality—a mode of human relationships that is becoming increasingly prevalent and important in addressing the global climate crisis.

## New Jersey Visual and Performing Arts Standards

- Anchor Standard 1: Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
- Anchor Standard 2: Organizing and developing ideas.
- Anchor Standard 3: Refining and completing products.
- Anchor Standard 5: Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
- Anchor Standard 6: Conveying meaning through art.

Students will complete ten studio or fieldwork projects. One example is the second studio project, “creating a ritual.” In this assignment, students will research personal and community rituals, design their own, and document the performance of their ritual. This multifaceted assignment requires the students to develop an idea and walk it through the entire process from conception to realization.

The final project is a group assignment where the student groups must plan a presentation outlining their plan for an “ecosystem” involving Artwork (of any medium), an accompanying community program, an engagement component, and intended impact on the target audience.

- Anchor Standard 4: Selecting, analyzing and interpreting work.
- Anchor Standard 7: Perceiving and analyzing products.
- Anchor Standard 8: Interpreting intent and meaning.
- Anchor Standard 9: Applying criteria to evaluate products.

There are ten “critiques” required in the course. Students respond to peers’ projects within a designated group, assessing the techniques used and the effectiveness of the artwork in communicating its intent. Critiques are encouraged in various formats and should focus on the work’s intent and technical prowess.

The weekly responses are another opportunity for students to analyze and interpret readings or artwork. In the response for week 7, for example, students are asked to interpret and apply concepts from readings about Creative Placemaking from both economic and art historical perspectives. They are then asked to select and analyze artworks that explore these themes in creative practice.

- Anchor Standard 10: Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
- Anchor Standard 11: Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

Fieldwork projects are an opportunity for students to engage with the material in a personal way, creating artwork from objects they encounter in the physical environment as well as their own day-to-day tasks and emotions. This allows them to relate the readings and concepts to their own experiences. Some of the fieldwork assignments ask students to investigate and find inspiration in other cultures, while others ask students to pull from their own communities.

In each weekly response, students are given a spreadsheet of international, multidisciplinary artists. Students choose three artists to research and are prompted to specifically relate the artists' work and ideas to that week's content and conversation.



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