

## Greening Your Curriculum 201: Eco-Literacy and Local Connections

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**Assignment: Students and Sustainability**

### Objectives:

Understanding of terminology and theory of ecology

Understanding of community and development of relationships between communities

Understanding critical thinking skills and analysis of sources

Students will be assigned various readings about the theory of ecology in terms of the historical knowledge in literature and the study of great books in literature, such as Thoreau, and more contemporary models, such as Rachel Carson. Students will begin keeping a journal of observation of nature at Moraine Valley, as well as at their homes and communities. The objective is to re-introduce the students to nature in the world. Although all our communities have been built around it, nature continues to persevere and adapt to what we do.

1. Students will be given a number of websites to use for reading assignments on-line. These sights for Thoreau and Carson are as follows:
  - a. [Silent Spring](#)
  - b. [www.science.smith.edu/~jcardell/Courses/EGR100](http://www.science.smith.edu/~jcardell/Courses/EGR100)
  - c. [Walden.org/library](http://Walden.org/library)
  - d. [Thoreau.eserver.org/harton.html](http://Thoreau.eserver.org/harton.html)
2. Students will also use the website Naturewriting.com produced by Ron Harton, a nature writer from Fresno, CA, as an example of how to create their journals and to be able to look at a variety of examples which include student examples. Instructors should feel free to add or change any of this material according to their own preferences.
3. **Assignment: Students will write a one page summary response of each article/section they read, and should be prepared to present and discuss their readings in group and whole group discussion.**

In the second part students will work in groups and complete research relating to the ideas of eco-literacy and sustainability. They will begin by researching what is being implemented here at Moraine Valley with direction from the instructor and through observation, interview and on-line research. This helps students to begin to understand empirical and primary research instruction.

Students will also begin to research in their own homes through interaction with family members, and also within their communities through dialogue and discussion with neighbors when possible and with community leaders through contact at the municipal level.

Students will also begin working in the virtual library through the Moraine Valley website. Students will be instructed in the use of databases, and in analysis through critical reading skills.

**Assignment: Individually students will write an annotated bibliography of their sources in a work document in MLA or APA format, depending on the class and the instructor.**

Students will present their findings through panel discussion. This assignment may last two weeks or could even be sustained throughout the semester as a long term goal. Instructors will then be able to conduct other required assignments while keeping students engaged in the continuing study of community.

The following strategies are recommended for delivering this assignment:

- Engage students into an active, experiential learning process.
- Gradually increase complexity of instructional tasks dynamically adapted to student's current competency level.
- Promote cognitive realism by engaging students into instructional tasks that have real-world relevance and match the activities of professionals in practice.
- Engage students in learning situations where they are challenged by complex problems requiring analytical thinking, critical reading, and systematic interaction with peers.
- Provide opportunities for performing scientific inquiry and reflection on individual and group work.

**Assessment:** Journals will be assessed through a mega learning essay assignment at the end of project. Instructors may collect journals; I prefer that students learn ownership of their writing and will ask them occasionally to read aloud to the class from their journals, or type and submit a collection of their work.

Panel Discussion: students will be supplied with rubrics at various stages of the project and research methodology.

