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Environmental Humanities Course Module
Exploring Environmental Issues Using Eco Art

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User Guide and Sample Implementation

This user guide has been developed following a sample implementation of the learning module in a course titled Environmental and Sustainability Planning, offered in Spring 2019 and taught by Dr. Meenar, Department of Geography, Planning, and Sustainability at Rowan University. Total enrollment in this course was 24. The module—including a pop-up Eco Art exhibition—was implemented in nine sessions.

Lesson Steps

1. INTRODUCTION:
   a. Begin the lesson with a "do now" type of activity that gets students thinking with one another about Eco Art projects and how they connect to environmental issues. Ask students to do a quick online search and collect a few Eco Art samples. Now ask students to take turn and talk to compile a bullet-point list of what they already know or might guess about Eco Art or Environmental Art on a post it note. Encourage that they write anything that comes to mind. At the end of a few minutes, have the students post the post-its on the whiteboard.
   b. Use the post-it notes to find some common student-themes about Eco Art. Write the common themes on the board to reference throughout the lesson. This allows the instructor to draw on student input and ask for elaboration of the themes throughout the lesson.

   Time: No longer than 10-15 minutes total

2. PRESENTATION: (PowerPoint presentation, Eco Art samples, case studies)
   a. Introduce the definition of Eco Art and Environmental Art and check with previous student-themes for matches, elaborations, additions, and variances.
   b. Review important Eco Art projects created by well-known artists.
   c. Review community-oriented and public Eco Art projects such as murals and sculptures.
   d. Present case studies – how Eco Art projects can influence a community's perception or understanding of environmental issues they may be facing.

   Time: About 20-30 minutes

Activity 1: Eco Art: An Illustration Activity, with Three Examples
The following in-class activity offers students a series of ways to conceptualize and, in the end, visualize sea level rise. It also acts as a quick and colorful introduction to three examples of Eco Art.

Scientists, activists, and educators who seek to increase awareness or provoke action in response to sea level rise typically rely on things like IPCC climate models or facts about global temperature, often using charts, tables, or infographics to get their message across. While these methhods can help students understand the significance of something like sea level rise projections, they don't enable students to visualize it.

The following activity also demonstrates to students that there is a wealth of excellent, exciting information and artworks readily available. By stimulating the activity of web browsing, it makes for a dynamic in-class activity that students can follow along with if they have their own computers.

1. For this in-class activity, begin by (briefly) showing students an 80 page PDF published by the IPCC in 2013. Showing the PDF will impress on students the level of scientific rigor involved in producing this knowledge and how easy it is to access.
2. Next, scroll through this webpage on the site RealClimate, pausing to briefly discuss the charts and maps produced by the IPCC data. The point of this demonstration is not to deliver the info precisely, but rather to show students some examples of how scientists visualize data sets.
3. Now, show the students the first of three example of Eco Art: the painting *Landscape of Change* by the artist Jill Pelto. Pelto's painting takes data like the charts shown above to visualize how climate change and sea level rise will affect our world. (The painting is aesthetically pleasing, but not necessarily a clear illustration of sea level rise).
4. Then navigate to the artists' web page for the installation *Lines (57° 59′ N, 7° 16′W)* by two Finnish artists, Pekka Niittyvirta and Timo Aho, who use LED sensors to demarcate how sea level rise will affect the Outer Hebrides in Scotland. This page includes many striking photographs of the artwork as well as an arresting video. One thing this installation demonstrates is how Eco Art is often integrated into a site.
5. Finally, show students one final Eco Art work: *Unmoored,* a virtual reality experience by Mel Chin. This three minute video features an interview with the artist as well as replications of the work's VR experience.

After students are exposed to these three examples, they should gain an understanding of how Eco Art can foster experiences and forms of knowledge that data and graphs cannot.

Time: 20-25 minutes

Activity 2: Creating Eco Art Projects
Ask students to brainstorm about the Eco Art projects that they would like to create at the end of the semester. They need to select an environmental issue of their choice (e.g., climate change, water pollution, brownfields) and then come up with an Eco Art project concept and medium (e.g., collage, sculpture, painting, and photography). Invite a professor from the university's Arts

department or the director of the university Art Gallery (of someone who is knowledgeable about art) to offer initial feedback on student concepts. Discuss the implementation plan – how to execute their concepts and how to install/display their work once completed.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Suggested Assignment

Reviewing and Creating Eco Art

Purpose
The purpose of this semester-long assignment—with a series of deliverables—is three-fold. Students will study how environmental issues or challenges have been presented through a variety of ecological/environmental art forms (Eco Art), create a database for the class by collecting and explaining Eco Art work samples, and finally create their own Eco Art projects on environmental topics of their choice.

Description
Throughout the semester students will search, collect, and submit eight different pieces of Eco Art work samples in various formats (e.g., digital files of the art work samples, link to web sites). The subject matters of these art works will vary from week to week, as specified below. Students can choose any "type" of "art" (broadly defined) that focuses on the environmental topic assigned for a given week. The art types may include paintings, sculptures, public art (e.g., murals), photographs, architecture, music, movies, documentaries, creative writing (e.g., poetry, novella), graphic art (e.g., posters, infographics), apps, and video games.

Due Dates
Each student will submit a total of eight Eco Art samples (one in each week) based on the assigned topics (one example per topic per student). Please see below a list of nine potential topics. You will submit any eight samples out of nine. Finally, in week 10, each student will submit their final Eco Art project.

Week 1 – Eco Art example 1 (Topic: Climate change—cause, effect, resiliency, or mitigation)
Week 2 – Eco Art example 2 (Topic: Sustainable development, suburban sprawl, destruction of natural resources for development, etc.)
Week 3 – Eco Art example 3 (Topic: Air pollution, air quality, air-related health issues, etc.)
Week 4 – Eco Art example 4 (Topic: Water pollution, water quality, water-related health issues, etc.)
Week 5 – Eco Art example 5 (Topic: Natural disasters, resiliency, mitigation, etc.)
Week 6 – Eco Art example 6 (Topic: Working landscapes, farmlands, land preservation, etc.)
Week 7 – Eco Art example 7 (Topic: Toxic land, brownfields, vacant land, etc.)
Week 8 – Eco Art example 8 (Topic: Sustainable transportation, smart transportation, automobile dependency, alternative modes of transportation, mass transportation, trails, bike lanes, etc.)
Week 9 – Eco Art example 9 (Topic: Sustainable energy, green or renewable energy, etc.)
Week 10 – Eco Art project due (Topic: You will choose your own topic. This must be your own art work.)

Submission Guidelines

Eco Art Examples
Total 8 examples, one in each week. For each example, please submit the following on Blackboard before 2 pm it is due:

- Download the actual art work (an image of the art work) and then upload the file on Blackboard. If you are choosing a novella or movie, you may use the front cover or movie poster. If you are choosing music, you may collect the lyrics. If you are choosing an app, you may use a screenshot. Please talk to your professor if there is any confusion about the format. We will try to be creative about the formats.
- Along with the art work example, please also submit a note on Blackboard with the following items:
  - Title and description of the art work (what is it?)
  - Artist/creator's name
  - The web site address (URL) from where you found the art work
  - A brief narrative of the theme/concept of the art work (this is not your opinion – but the narrative you found on the web site or other sources)
  - Why or how this work can be termed as an Eco Art? (this must be your own language – just a few sentences will be fine as long as they make sense)

  Please remember, without the notes (mentioned above), your art work submission will NOT be accepted.

Eco Art Project
In week 10, students will submit their own Eco Art projects. A pop-up exhibition will be installed near the department office. You will submit a title and write the concept behind your project. Further details will be discussed in class.

Grading Distribution
Eco Art examples 40% (8 x 5%)
Eco Art project 60% (detailed rubric for the project will be created after the class discussion.)