

Edie Meidav
emeidav@umass.edu- always write **SUSTAINABILITY** in subject heading

SUSTAINABILITY: LISTENING TO THE STORIES OF PLACE

Lead: Edie Meidav, provost professor, MFA for Poets and Writers

ENG491H -- SUSTAINABILITY: Listening to the Stories of Place – 4 credits

Linkage to the Art Sustainability Activism series

SUMMER SEMESTER –

In person:

June 2024/Sao Miguel/in coordination with the Study in Portugal Network/FLAD/University of the Azores

Credits: 4

Tuesday-Thursday 1:00PM- 3:00 PM (In-Person)

Fridays/Saturdays: field trips with other programs

Professor: Edie Meidav

emeidav@umass.edu

Course Description:

We all carry with us epigenetic, historic, and lived memories. How can we best learn from a position of creative respect when entering a new place? How do we best understand features of the environment, whether they be socioeconomic, social, historic, or geologic? How do we begin to understand what features of our environment allow for the sustainability of what matters to a culture or bioregion? Using environmental observation and oral interviews, participants both observe and write daily toward a culminating piece for performance or publication.

Student Learning Objectives:

Students learn to evaluate new situations, remember core texts and sustainability principles, understand the complexity of sustainability principles in their critical inquiry, analyze data from their field research, evaluate its relevance to issues of sustainability, and create a public-facing document or performance sharing their data. By learning how to situate themselves with cultural sensitivity in a new environment, students raise their awareness regarding environmental and sustainability issues in the Azores; conduct meaningful anthropological, journalistic, and environmental research; strengthen writing; strengthen powers of engagement with diverse culture; deepen their capacities for observation and collaboration; and craft meaningful, public-facing performances or readings which interact with the local and greater environment.

Course Materials:

- *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing
- Google-Drive for homework
- Physical Supplies
 - Notebook
 - Pens

- Cameras if desired

Attendance Policy: Unexcused lateness will affect your grade. You are expected to attend every class and field trip. If anything arises, please contact emeidav@umass.edu before class.

Late/Make-Up Work Policy: As this is a workshop, late work will affect your grade.

Grade Weight and Course Requirements:

- Participation- 30%
 - Be on time, prepared, and active in peer workshop..
- Homework- 10%
 - Be punctual, thoughtful, engaged, and thorough.
- Project One- 15%
 - Interviews, research
- Project Two- 15%
 - Daily logs
- Midterm Presentation - 10%
 - Share your progress with the class.
- Final Presentations, Self-evaluations, Imitations- 20%
 - Culminating work.

Grade Scale:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
F	0-62

Please note that a grade of D- is not valid.

Grading criteria:

Punctuality, participation, good-faith effort, progress, clear and engaging professional coherence in final project form the rubric for this course. Summative assessments (final performance, public-facing blog post) will be judged on effort, coherence, and professionalism. Formative assessments (e.g., daily log, participation in workshops, timely field research presentations) will be graded on punctuality and engagement, as they give students different learning opportunities and ways to apply, practice and demonstrate what they learned in the course.

Further resources:

We are here to help you learn and thrive. Note that in addition to the University of Azores

resources, and the UoA Moodle we will be using as our learning management system, the following are also available, some of which can be accessed remotely from the Azores: [Writing Center](#); [Student Success](#); [Libraries](#); [Center for Counseling and Psychological Health](#); [Learning Resource](#);

Course Schedule:

Week I – Origins: Socioeconomic, Cultural

Tuesday:

- Introductions
- Connect to your “why”
- Understand your assumptions
- Discussion of anthropological, journalistic, and narrative methods for knowing a place
- Discussion of narrative and theatrical learning outcomes
- Writing as a means of finding new ways of thinking: new techniques
- Discussion of reading: *Mushroom*, *Vertical*
- Community-building.

Thursday:

- Guest visitor from UoA with overview of Azorean environment: natural, cultural, historical, and current challenges
- Project formulation; initial contracts
- Student-led presentation of reading: *Mushroom*, *Vertical*
- Guided observation and continued orientation

- Meeting 1- June 3
 - Introductions
 - Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 1
 - *Vertical*, chapter 1
 - One peer work
 - Field trip
 - Assignment due:
 - June 5
- Meeting 2- June 5
 - Formulation of plan
 - Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 2
 - *Vertical*, chapter 2
 - *Sustainability*, excerpts
 - One peer work
 - Field trip
 - Assignment due:
 - June 10

Week II – Different Modes of Learning a Place: Challenges, Risks, Opportunities

Tuesday:

- -Prompts
- -Guided observation
- -Student-led presentation of reading: *Sustainability*
- -Workshop

Thursday:

- -Field trip: university library, archives, fishing village, fading industry, feminist sites
- Meeting 3- June 10
 - Orientation/Interviews/Agreements
 - Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 3
 - *Vertical*, chapter 3
 - One peer work
 - Assignment due: June 12
 - One peer work
 - Field trip
- Meeting 4 – June 12
 - Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 4
 - *Vertical*, chapter 4
 - One peer work
 - Assignment due: June 12
 - One peer work
 - Field trip

Week III – Narrative Expression: workshop

Tuesday:

- -Peer and classroom-guided discussion and theater work
- -Students revise their work toward public exchange
- -Local and university actors may be tapped to dramatize student work

Thursday:

- -Peer and classroom-guided discussion and theater work
- -Refinement
- Meeting 5 – June 17
 - Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 5

- *Vertical*, chapter 5
 - One peer work
- Assignment due: June 12
 - One peer work
 - Field trip
- Meeting 6 – June 19
 - Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 6
 - *Vertical*, chapter 6
 - One peer work
 - Assignment due: June 12
 - One peer work
 - Field trip

Week IV – Narrative Refinement: process of revision and public reading/performance

Tuesday:

- -Final reading
- -Final reflections and literary imitations turned in

Thursday:

- -Public performance and workshop
- -Next steps: discussion of actions for future

Meeting 7 – June 24

- Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 7
 - *Vertical*, chapter 7
 - One peer work
- Assignment due: June 12
 - One peer work
 - Field trip

Meeting 8 – June 26

- . Assigned Readings:
 - *Mushroom*, chapter 8
 - *Vertical*, chapter 8
 - One peer work
- Assignment due: June 12
 - One peer work
 - Field trip

Academic Honesty Policy:

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

Accommodations Statement:

We are committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. For further information, please visit Disability Services (<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>)

Title IX Statement:

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students, free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation. This includes interactions in person or online through digital platforms and social media. Title IX also protects against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, including recovery. There are resources here on campus to support you. A summary of the available Title IX resources (confidential and non-confidential) can be found at the following link: <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/resources>. You do not need to make a formal report to access them. If you need immediate support, you are not alone. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year at the SASA Hotline 413-545-0800.

Calendar overview (to be confirmed):

June 1: Arrival

June 2: Orientation/group-building

June 3: First in-person workshop (to be repeated weekly: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1-3 pm)

June 4: First site visit/field trip (9-12 Wednesdays/Fridays, some joining with FLAD/University of Azores/SiPN)

This schedule repeated weekly, with the exception of the last week (see below):

June 23: Full-day revision/rehearsal workshop

June 24: Public presentation (perhaps in conjunction with Anda & Fala/art space)

June 25: Site visit

June 26: Group review

June 27: Field trip

June 28-30: Summation

Basic course structure:

1) Daily research log: seen by you/your pod/instructors

2) Weekly: creative work: 500 words on our Canvas/Learning Management System posted by 5 pm Sunday.

3) Generative/thematic/reading-based workshops on Tuesdays

4) Research/field trip/workshops on Thursdays and Fridays

Work required:

Daily logbook and monthlong exchange with instructors

Longer writing/theatrical project (Week III-IV)

Revision submitted (Week IV)

Final reflection/peer-based literary imitation

Participation, peer workshop

If done for graduate credit, graduate students write a twenty-five-page final project submitted on the last day; if done for Commonwealth Honors College, students submit a twelve-page final project.

Initial meetings and throughout the program

Required: Sign up on the first day for a brief beginning-of-the-program with me.

Know that my office hours will be available to you after class and at other points if you are unable to meet. Please email me possible other times. Always feel free to talk with me at any point about anything throughout our program. I am truly available: e.g., whether you need direction or attention to some greater scholarly or writerly concern or whether you wish to know how to explore a topic with greater depth or breadth.

Correspondence:

Please write SUSTAINABILITY in your subject heading; I am at emeidav@umass.edu.

Required books

All readings beyond our textbooks will be given you in class or via Canvas.

Canvas:

Daily, share in your logs your research questions and observations.

By Sunday at 3 pm, post your creative work writing for the week; at least 500 words, which may help you in your construction of your longer piece. We will project and read aloud your work each week.

Presentations of Theory/Meme:

To each class, bring our coursebooks: *Mushroom*, *Vertical*, or *Sustainability*.

Each week, we will discuss our reading.

If it is your week to present:

If you are presenting, you are responsible for meeting with your colleagues outside of class, and feel free to use slides/Powerpoint.

The goal of this is to get you to think deeply in collaborative manner about our assigned readings and, for your own professional development, have the ability to present work: you know the worth of such collaboration and development

When you meet with your colleague, you might consider a piece and its ambitions. It helps to create and have handy a graph of the work: a concept map. Isolate a few key passages which exemplify a writer's point, strategy, and sensibility, and lead us in some close reading. Another way might be to consider one or more aesthetic or sociopolitical choices a writer makes: e.g., rhetorical gestures, persona, reversals, moral argument, metanarrative devices, the rupture of or adherence to initial contracts. Come up, at the end, with a question for us to consider in our more free-form conversation.

You will be doing this at least once in our program.

Even if it's not your week to present, do be responsible for representing to us, at any point during any point in our conversation, the published work we have read for that week.

Handouts:

Each week I will let you know what asks for the majority of your focus. The goal is to stimulate your thinking. The moral: listen well in class when we are discussing which assignment or reading needs your focus.

Grading:

Everyone, even and especially in your academic career, depends on you for this: your punctuality, preparation, attendance, as well as your good faith in attending to your colleagues' work and your own. The progress you will make will be your gift to us and to yourself. This class has been designed to help stimulate, in our brief time together, your thinking and generativity, and to expand the toolkit of your possibilities when you think about yourself as a student, creator, and citizen in our current times. My goal is that you leave with at least one short piece close to being publishable, and that you have had the chance to explore your ideas. It still is useful for you to think this way: if you come on time, prepared, and ready to participate, your grade will be exactly what you wish it to be. Absent/late/unprepared – grades descend.

Standards:

I refer you to http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/downloads/CodeofStudentConduct.pdf: and https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/campus-policies/classroom#:~:text=Student%20behavior%20or%20speech%20that,unwarranted%20interruptions -- these are the standards to which we will adhere in our class. As the code states, these standards are necessary, and if a student cannot respect them, s/he/they may lose the right to be enrolled in a class. We will also adhere to university policy regarding health and safety regarding masks and Covid. If you cannot make it to class, please contact me ahead of time. To summarize: please do not come to class if you are sick, but if you are going to be absent, please let me know via email ahead of time. We encourage you to be in class in person, and/but will do our best to create the possibility for remote learning should there arise the need. Please always speak to me about any concerns. We are here to help you learn!

Trust:

In order to allow all the greatest freedom in our community, all conversations, written or other, within our class structure are not to be shared in any medium, social or other. We are creating a chrysalis for a certain trust together so that later in your career you can fly with confidence in a more visible, public manner.

Class dynamic:

Among other traits, I am sensitive to our class dynamic and ask you to bring concerns to me. The vision we will share in this class is one of trust: free and respectful communication allowing for the highest possible learning for all. You know this already, but it bears repeating: your ease, comfort and progress in this chosen community are essential, and are also very important to me, making up a large part of my own motivation in teaching. I ask you to come first to me, to give me a fair chance to help address any and all of your concerns. That said, let me know if you need more assistance and we can discuss other pathways within the BA program and the English department. Please consider this request (to come first to me) to be part of our course requirements.

Field trips:

We will be partnering with SiPN/FLAD for some of our field trips: we will be abiding by their parameters on any such trip.

End-of-class performance:

We will have a community-oriented end-of-class reading and publication of your work, and I ask you to early on begin considering what short piece might be most interesting for you to share in a public domain.

To help you start to generate even prior to our program, I encourage you to consider the following list:

- unrealized dreams, historical or other
- rants you would like someone to make
- apologies you secretly or openly wish to make
- betrayals to which you have paid attention
- significant triangles in your life
- favorite obsessives
- confessions you can imagine making or hearing made, by those you know and those from another time/place about your life or others'
- moments of surrealism in your life or another's
- fables you have loved at odd moments or those you could invent and could imagine being useful
- significant objects in the lives of difficult or easy people
- horrors of your hometown or paradise

In other words: please make many lists and, as ours will be a generative workshop, these will be your trove.

Relevant quotations:

To me it seems that the theme that gives rise to a good story is always exceptional, but I don't mean that a theme should be extraordinary, out of the common run of things, mysterious or unusual. Just the opposite; it can be a perfectly trivial, everyday anecdote. What's exceptional is a magnetlike quality; a good theme attracts a whole system of interconnecting links; for the author, and later for the reader, it "gels" a vast amount of notions, half-glimpsed things, feelings and even ideas that were virtually floating around in his memory or sensibility; a good theme is like a good sun, a star with an orbiting planetary system, that, often, goes unnoticed till the writer, an astronomer of words, reveals to us its existence. Or rather, to be both more modest and more modern, a good theme is somehow atomic, like a nucleus with its orbiting electrons; and all that, when it comes down to it, isn't it a proposal of life, a dynamic that urges us to come out of ourselves and enter into a more complex and beautiful system of relations?

-Julio Cortázar

Micronarrative is a **bounded and situated concept answering the need for a unit of analysis for dynamic multi-participant talk**. Language is an inherently multimodal phenomenon, which constructs meaning through various modes: verbal, vocal and gestural.

-Anna Jelec/ Małgorzata Fabiszak

At this point we can see a little better
how the use of speech
was established or imperceptibly
perfected itself in the bosom of each family; and one can further conjecture
how various particular causes could have extended the language

and accelerated its progress
by making it more necessary.

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