

Nature and culture final essay



Out of all the courses I took this semester, “Understanding environment through culture, field study of sustainable design” course was definitely an exception since my area of studies are more related to mathematical subjects. As a civil and environmental engineering student, I recall this one lecture I had from my first year in college quite vividly. It was an introductory course about civil engineering and one of the guest lecturers asked us what kind of qualities we should have in order to become a good civil engineer. Since he gave us multiple answers to choose from, majority of the class went with the obvious and most probable answers which were, a degree, certificates, qualifications, knowledge etc. however, he surprised us all by choosing the answer that was not in the slightest took my attention. “Communication skills” that was the answer he chose and later on he elaborated more on why and how it is essential for a person who is involved with the environment and the public should acquire good communication skills. According to that lecturer we should excel in dealing with our clients and in understanding their wants and needs to build the bridge between them and nature without destroying the natural bond that already exist between each other. I think that was something I myself overlooked and had not realized the importance until then when it was mentioned during the class. Therefore, I would like to say by taking this class I tried to make myself more connected to the environment through some fundamental concepts we learned in class.

Through out the course we learned some concepts like SDGs, about commons and from field visits to places like kamakura we were able to meet local farmers (Mr.Wada). Mr. Wada’s planting system is entirely different comparing to the conventional organic farming methods that is commonly being used, where some of the animal produces are also mixed in the fertilizer and so on. It was extremely delightful to see

people like Mr. Wada himself trying to promote his style of farming more to larger groups of people to understand the hidden gems in those type of unique concepts. Thus having field visits in the course made it more easier to understand the pure bonds that is there between nature and human beings and how we can preserve them by getting involved with our surroundings from time to time.



During our final class of this course we had an amazing opportunity to have a fish bowl discussion. The idea of fish bowl was entirely new to me as that was the first time I was involved in a conversational presentation like that. Our main goal was to discuss matters on commons which were briefly introduced in class. I view the discussion as a success since we were able to share most of our ideas, questions, thoughts and opinions on the sub topics the three groups were assigned; spirits, grassroots and policy. I remember when the first group started their discussion and how easily everyone in the audience (outside of the circle) was able to connect very easily with the question that was asked on how environment can affect/influence one in good ways, that we almost ran out of time. Nevertheless, it was pleasant while our group discussed a topic leaning more towards environmental justice with the theme policy, where we talked about large-scale farming its victims and criminals etc. the final and the third group was pointing

out their discussion concerning the recent fires that occurred in Australia and its impacts etc. Hence, the symposium covered a reasonable amount of vital areas regarding commons. Concerning the our group discussion, our team members gathered before the fish bowl discussion the day before to summarize and we came to understand how people are misusing commons and that how earth itself is the biggest common of all and how the a little bit of the involvement of rules and regulations can actually make a difference in terms of reducing the damages. As I mentioned before, personally my classes do not involve discussions like these, therefore, it was truly an eye opening and enjoyable experience for me. I am glad that we were able to have a conversational style way of expressing and sharing the things we looked and did research upon as the environment of the symposium was rather friendly, interesting and enjoyable.

Finally I would like to conclude my thoughts on this class by sharing the opinion I have on ecological ethics. Ecological ethics are defined as “moral principles governing the human attitude towards the environment, and rules of conduct for environmental care and preservation”¹. From the definition itself, the idea of ecological ethics can be taken simply as how human beings are treating towards the well being of the environment or the eco-system. Through out this class the concept of ecological ethics were talked from time to time. During the last few classes, when the concept of commons were introduced, this matter was thoroughly discussed. If the concept of environmental ethics are being stressed on everyone, it is easier to use commons in a less damaging and a good way. Educating people is a good way to promote these concepts in order to protect the environment ultimately. As students this was a great opportunity for us to get familiar and to be active in contributing to the well being of the environment, so I am really grateful for this wonderful experience and recommend anyone who is willing to have an insight about some of the Japanese practices and cultural experiences that are closely related to the nature.

Ravindee Jayawickrama
1X17DG02-1
2019/02/05

References

1. OECD. Ecological ethics. (September 2001) retrieved from <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail> accessed on the 04th of Feb. 2020