The Seneca Falls Dialogues Journal

Volume 1 *Ecofeminism: Cultivating place and identity* Article 3

2015

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Recommended Citation
Browdy de Hernandez, Jennifer; Kent, Holly; and Martell, Colleen (2015) "Confronting Student Resistance to Ecofeminism: Three Perspectives," *The Seneca Falls Dialogues Journal*: Vol. 1, Article 3.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/sfd/vol1/iss1/3

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CONFRONTING STUDENT RESISTANCE TO ECOFEMINISM: THREE PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching ecofeminism is a dynamic, vital practice, which demands a great deal of both educators and students. In our experience, we often feel this endeavor to be experimental and tentative, as we work through successes and failures of teaching ecofeminism within various topics and in different settings. In the discussion that follows, we aim to offer productive, provocative suggestions that will be of use to other students, activists, and teachers working in this rich, important field. Our article examines three specific challenges which each of us has faced in her ecofeminist teaching, and how we have addressed these issues. Jennifer focuses on how to market ecofeminist courses to (often skeptical) students, Holly on how to craft exercises for the classroom which empower students to see themselves as agents of change, and Colleen on how to break through student resistance in discussing the connections between animal rights and women's and human rights. At the heart of all our discussions is the question: how can we teach ecofeminism effectively?

With much of higher education increasingly designed around hierarchical classroom dynamics, mind/body dualism, and contingent labor as the new faculty majority, our pedagogies have a responsibility to emphasize equality over domination. Lara Harvester and Sean Blenkinsop agree: "A central claim of ecofeminism is that if we are to

behave in an intelligent, logical, and caring way towards each other and more-than-human nature, we need to overcome our ethos of domination" (125).[1] Thus, ecofeminist theory and practice encourage us to creatively rethink the traditional academic format. In addition, Catherine Gardner and Jeannette Riley believe that "ecofeminist theory and practice also dictate that we cannot bring alternative approaches to teaching to the classroom that are too pre-formed; rather, our teaching is something that we learn about and develop as we engage in its actual practice" (24). As we explore liberatory, ecofeminist pedagogies, then, we also want to remember to leave room for fluidity and movement in response to students in the classroom in real time.

Dialogue is central to overcoming our ethos of domination. We need to create the circumstances under which we can have open and productive conversations with students about ecofeminist issues; we cannot have these conversations if, for any number of reasons (from student resistance to the word "feminist" to lack of funding for programs), we cannot fill or even roster ecofeminist courses. We also need to actively maintain an environment where students feel both affirmed and challenged in ecofeminist classes.

Genuine dialogue from an ecofeminist perspective might best be thought of as "a moment when two come together and, without loss of self, are able to hold each other simultaneously with an open heart and mind." Such a relationship "is built on respect and a deep sense of the intrinsic value of the other being. This is a relation of the both/and, an acknowledgment of the immediate presence of both deep interdependence and the unique autonomy of each being" (Harvester and Blenkinsop 126). Summarizing the work of Carolyn Merchant and Karen

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[1] According to Harvester and Blenkinsop, "There are many possible ways to move away from traditional formats, pedagogies, and structures in education. Everything from relationship (e.g., between students, student/teacher, school/community, human/more-than-human) to structure (e.g., external/physical structures of buildings, classroom set-up, sites of learning and internal/cultural structures such as governance, school policies and norms, funding issues, processes of decision-making) and on to practice (e.g., pedagogy, curriculum materials, assessment strategies) are suspect and in need of revisioning."

Warren, Harvester and Blenkinsop conclude that "when ecofeminists speak of transformed relationships, they are presupposing that these relationships are based on an acknowledgement of human interdependence with each other and the rest of nature" (126). Since this particular vision of relationship is so important in ecofeminist pedagogies, so are the various relationships that go into a successful course: the many moments of negotiation among students, teachers, institutional governance, community, place, and more. How we navigate these many relationships thoughtfully and with care for self and others is an ongoing part of ecofeminist practice.

In keeping with these pedagogical goals—overcoming the ethos of domination, resisting pre-formed approaches that preclude genuine dialogue, and respect for interdependent-autonomous classroom dynamics—the ecofeminist teaching philosophy that we collectively define in this article suggests ways to effectively meet students where they are, as well as ways of navigating complex institutional structures that influence our ability to bring ecofeminism into our classrooms. While our individual experiences reveal the many ways we can use ecofeminist content in the classroom -- from ecofashion to breastfeeding -- together our collaborative project suggests the following ways of catalyzing positive change for students in ecofeminist-themed classes:

- Package classes strategically: Filling seats with courses that center disadvantaged voices may very well be more important rostering courses with the word "feminist" in the title.
- Institutional politics matter. We aren't just activists as educators, but activists within the structures of higher education. Know and examine your relationship with your institution. Be strategic in terms of filling seats, getting important key terms on the books, leveraging your power, protecting your job.
- Address student resistance in open dialogue by identifying stigmas associated with hot-button terms or avoiding too-controversial terms when necessary. Empower students to make change by providing them with small, concrete, doable actions in order to help them avoid feelings of hopelessness or burnout.

- In addition to making ecofeminism relevant to students' own communities, empower students to make meaning with their own bodies. Traditional pedagogies, and traditional Western dualistic thinking, operate on a mind/body binary. We want students to care about the earth and non-human animals but we often ignore the power of their own bodies in this dynamic. As Fawcett argues, "How our bodies are taught and learn how to sense nature certainly makes a difference to how we know nature" (139).

In this paper, we write about the books and assignments to which we have returned productively, and consider the projects we've had to edit and reconsider, given student feedback and responses. We also share some new ideas for pedagogies, approaches, and assignments that emerged from our discussion with one another and with the audience during our Dialogues session. Finally, we analyze how we as teachers have worked to bridge the gap between our classrooms and the "real world" beyond these academic spaces.

It's important to note that each of us comes from different disciplines and teaches ecofeminism in a wide range of college courses. Jennifer teaches Comparative Literature, Media Studies and Women's and Gender Studies, incorporating ecofeminism into her courses on global women's literature and in communications courses oriented around environmental writing. Holly teaches History and Women's and Gender Studies, and has integrated ecofeminism into her courses on the histories of U.S. fashion culture and U.S. women's activism. Colleen teaches interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies courses in African-American Studies, American Studies, and Public Health programs, often focusing on the politics of breastfeeding and mothering, and intersectional animal rights issues. We have taught these classes at a range of institutions, including liberal arts colleges, research universities, and state colleges, and with a range of students, from first-year to graduate level. We also have different institutional relationships with academia: Jennifer is a tenured professor, Holly is tenure-track faculty, and Colleen is contingent faculty. As such, we also note that our ability to bring ecofeminism into our classrooms is not only affected by

the size and rank of our colleges and programs, but also by the politics of those institutional relationships. Teaching a wide range of students in these different institutional settings has given us insight into how to make ecofeminist issues meaningful for students from diverse backgrounds, who are engaged in numerous types of study.

"UNDERCOVER ECOFEMINISM: FILLING SEATS WITH STRATEGIC LANGUAGE"

JENNIFER BROWDY DE HERNANDEZ

There were some disapproving stares in the audience at our Seneca Falls Dialogues panel when I told the gathering that after twenty years of teaching Women's and Gender Studies at my small liberal arts college, Bard College at Simon's Rock, I had decided to take the expedient route and, when offering courses with an eco-feminist focus, simply not announce in the course title exactly what it was we would be talking about. I teach two classes in particular that include a strong component of eco-feminism—but I do not foreground eco-feminism as a foundational theory for the class until the semester is well underway. I learned this strategy the hard way: at a school of only 300 students, it is sometimes hard to fill elective classes, and getting students in the door of a women's studies class can be especially challenging in an age when students are reluctant to self-identify as feminists, even when, for all practical purposes, they certainly are. The term "eco-feminist" still carries the connotation of "tree-hugging, Birkenstock-wearing, New Age hippie vegans," which can make many of today's technology-oriented young adults want to run screaming in the other direction. To get them to stay in their seats and thoughtfully consider just what eco-feminism is all about, and why it is an appropriate topic to be studying in the early years of the twenty-first century, I have had to package my classes strategically. Here I discuss two of my most successful recent attempts at teaching eco-feminism without explicitly labeling the courses as such.

The first course is a mid-level Women's Studies seminar called "Women Write the World," which I've been teaching for about a decade. I decided in the spring of 2014 to offer a version of the course with an eco-feminist theme, but I didn't use the "f-word" in the course description,

choosing instead to call the special focus of the course "Women Writing Environmental Justice." I don't think it's an accident that I ended up with three young men in the class, in addition to seven women, even though it's often a struggle to get any men to take classes with the word "women" in the title. The course description informed the group that we would be exploring "how women have used the power of creative expression to advance their goals of building environmental awareness, creating social movements for social and ecological justice, and impacting public perception and public policy in order to change the world for the better."[2] The reading list included Julia Butterfly Hill, Wangari Maathai, Mary Daly, Joanna Macy, Vandana Shiva, and Terry Tempest Williams, along with selected essays, short films and a number of invited speakers. Our class had thoughtful, in-depth conversations about the approaches to "environmental justice" taken by each of the writers, both in their writing itself, and in their work in the world. Did the students get less from the course because I didn't identify it explicitly as "eco-feminist"? I don't believe so. It was clear from the reading and from our discussions that these writer/activists are part of the larger environmental justice movement, and that in this movement, strong women's voices are essential and valuable. At the early undergraduate level, I think that's enough of a lesson to impart, in the hope that having gotten the students in the door and around the seminar table to seriously consider a whole semester's worth of eco-feminist voices, their minds will be opened to further forays into the eco-feminist movement in their future studies and activist explorations.

I also bring an ecofeminist approach to one of my media studies classes, "Media Strategies for Social and Environmental Justice." Again, I've found that students respond better to the gender-neutral moniker "environmental justice," at least when it comes to the course title. This was a two-credit, half-semester course, followed by a second half-semester course called "Leadership, Writing and Public Speaking for

[2] I'm happy to share the syllabus with readers on request. If you are interested in seeing a copy of the syllabus, please e-mail me at Browdy@simons-rock.edu.

Social and Environmental Justice." Students could elect to take either course independently, or both in sequence. In the Media Strategies course, we read two books: Bill McKibben's *Oil and Honey* (2014) and Eve Ensler's *In the Body of the World* (2013). Taken together, they offer an outstanding window into the ways that eco-feminist practice moves quickly out of the academy into real-world action.

Both are personal narratives. McKibben's book tells the story of how he founded the climate-change environmental advocacy group 350.org with a small group of Middlebury students, and how together they built 350.org into the powerful organization it is today. In a media studies class, the many short films and interview clips available to illustrate the book, as well as the brilliant media advocacy work 350.org is constantly doing, make this an especially great choice of text. The same is true for Eve Ensler's cancer memoir, *In the Body of the World,* which deftly weaves together Ensler's personal battle against cancer with her work with the V-Day organization, fighting violence against women in some of the most dangerous places on earth. Ensler's TED Talk, "Suddenly, My Body," provides a hard-hitting 13-minute introduction to the ways in which she comes to see the poisoning of her body by cancer and by chemotherapy as analogous to the poisoning of the Earth by human over-consumption and toxic contamination.[3]

In this cultural moment, at my very small institution, teaching eco-feminism under the guise of social and environmental justice seems to be the best I can do to advance the essential work of helping students to become more conscious of the very real environmental challenges of our time.

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[3] Ensler, Eve. "Suddenly, My Body." TED Talk uploaded on August 5, 2011, available on You-Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHLgTUV0XWI. I teach this book because its style works so well with undergraduate students, while I also acknowledge the problems that Ensler's campaign has had in recent years. For indigenous women's critics of V-Day and its racism, see http://www.racismreview.com/blog/tag/eve-ensler/and Lauren Chief Elk, http://chiefelk.tumblr.com/post/49527456060/an-open-letter-to-eve-ensler

"Bringing Ecofeminism Home: Assignments to Help Make the Global Feel Local"

Holly Kent

Like Jennifer, one of the primary challenges I have faced in teaching ecofeminism has centered on bringing ecofeminist issues to a student population sometimes suspicious of anything involving the "f-word." Discussing ecofeminism in my class on U.S. women's activism, for example, has at times proved difficult as it is a general education course, open to any students who need to fulfill the requirement in United States-focused classes at my university. While this also represents a tremendous opportunity as it brings students into my classroom who might not otherwise sign up for a course about gender or activism, it has also presented some challenges. Chief among these is the fact that some students come into the class with negative stereotypes about activism generally, and about feminism and ecofeminism specifically.

One way I have worked to address these difficulties is by having students articulate at the beginning of our unit on ecofeminism what they think common cultural attitudes towards environmental and animal rights activists are, and what mainstream perceptions of ecofeminism are in contemporary American society.[4] This exercise has proved useful, as it has enabled me to get a sense of the specific stereotypes which my students associate with ecofeminist activism. The activity accomplishes its goal in a way which does not make students feel "put on the spot" or singled out or stigmatized for their own attitudes, as I am asking them not to say what they feel personally, but rather what they think broader cultural understandings are. Taking this approach

[4] I am aware that not all environmentalist or animal rights activists define themselves as ecofeminists, and that definitions of what constitutes ecofeminism differ widely among those involved in the movement. In my course on women's activism, we focus on environmental activism and animal rights activism as part of the broader ecofeminist project, but I am also sure to emphasize to my students that definitions of what does (and does not) constitute ecofeminism are by no means universally agreed upon.

helps students feel more comfortable in expressing any negative perceptions which they may have come into the class with.

The most common stereotypes articulated by students about ecofeminist activists are that they are out-of-touch extremists, who engage in ineffective and irrational forms of activism (with students most frequently referencing the freeing of animals from research laboratories and the throwing of paint onto those wearing fur coats). Once my students have outlined these understandings of ecofeminists, we can then engage in a broader discussion about what animal rights and environmentalist activists' goals are in engaging in the types of activism that they do, and why many Americans have stigmatized such actions as "extreme" and dangerous. We also do readings from female environmentalist and animal rights activists themselves, so that students can encounter women's own explanations of the ideals and principles undergirding their activist work, and explore the actual activists behind the stereotypes. I seek to make these readings as diverse as possible in terms of activist approaches and ideological perspectives to demonstrate to students that there is no one unified approach that ecofeminists take to their activism.[5] Doing this in my course has helped to provide students with a more nuanced vision of how ecofeminists put their principles into action.

In my course on U.S. fashion history, the primary challenge I have faced is a sense of hopelessness on my students' part about the possibility of ever successfully reforming the fashion industry's environmental practices. In the course, we discuss ecofeminism primarily in terms of the production of clothing in sweatshops, and the rising trend of organic fashion. The students read about how the majority of retailers have their garments produced through ecologically unsound processes, and about how efforts to reform the fashion industry have resulted in many resolutions on the parts of designers and companies which have not yet translated into widespread change. We also examine the rise of ecofashion, considering how despite the

[5] Please see our Works Cited page for these recommendations.

eagerness of businesses to be part of the trend for sustainable fashion, the criteria for labeling garments "green" are often unsystematic and misleading, with ostensibly organic fashions being created in environmentally damaging ways.

As is often true for students who are analyzing systemic injustice for (in many cases) the first time, reading this literature often proves dispiriting. The lament that "things will never change!" is frequently heard during our unit on ecofashion and clothing production. In our session at the Dialogues, I posed this issue as a question for our audience, and the resulting discussion provided me with tremendously useful insights about how to productively push past this sense of hopelessness. The audience recommended that I send students to my university's bookstore, to investigate whether the apparel sold there was created through sweatshop labor, and if it was, to start a movement on campus to buy apparel from another (ecologically-sound and worker-friendly) company. They also noted that it might be of value to have my students go to local vendors who sold organic clothing, and research whether the garments sold in these shops matched the criteria for sustainable fashion. If they did, students could encourage vendors to make this sustainability a larger part of their marking strategy, and if they did not, the vendors could be encouraged not to carry these products. When I next teach the class, I look forward to implementing these suggestions and feel sure that they will help to address my students' desire to take positive steps forward on ecofeminist issues.

In my classes on the history of U.S. fashion and U.S. women's activism, I include several different assignments that take students out of the classroom to reflect on ecofeminist issues in the "real world." In my history of U.S. fashion class, on the first day students are assigned to select one item of clothing which they are then wearing, and to find out as much as they can about where this garment was made (and under what conditions) before the next class. I do not give students any specific guidelines about where to go to find this information, simply telling them to see what kinds of data they can find, based on what they know about the garment. In our second class, we discuss what they have found out

about how and where their garment was created, and the impact that its production had on workers and the environment.

This assignment is initially a frustrating one for students, as they begin it confident that they will be able to readily locate information about their garments and where and how they were produced. Very often, however, they hit a dead end early in their research, as most clothing companies are far from transparent about providing comprehensive information about the conditions under which their garments were made and the environmental impact of their production. This frustration about not knowing the specifics about how their garments were made provides a useful introduction to the issues we discuss all semester about the intersections between environmentalism and fashion culture and the ecological impact of the global fashion industry.[6]

In my course on women's activism, one of our class assignments is for students to identify a local activist and interview her about what motivated her to become an activist, the nature of her work, and challenges and opportunities which she has faced in her activism. Each student selects a different unit in the course, locating an activist involved in that unit's specific form of activism. As such, each semester several students interview activists involved in ecofeminism (most often, in environmental advocacy.)[7] Students present to the entire class about

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[6] Once students have worked on this assignment, we discuss the efforts of organizations and activists to hold companies and designers accountable for where and how their clothes are made, and talk about how such groups have sought to make these processes transparent (frequently very much against the wishes of fashion businesses and manufacturers). Two prominent organizations that work to ensure fashion is created in an ethical way, with workers working in safe conditions and being paid fair wages, and the environmental impact of production being low and well-monitored, are the Clean Clothes Campaign (at http://www.cleanclothes.org/), and Fashion Revolution USA (at http://www.fashionrevolutionusa.org/).

[7] Perhaps because the town where my university is located (Springfield, Illinois) is the state capital, we have several active environmental organizations where my students have been able to successfully make connections. Among these are the Environment Illinois (http://www.environmentillinois.org/), the Illinois

their interviews; hearing multiple students discuss how a range of activists define ecofeminism and engage in ecofeminist practice vividly underlines the reality that ecofeminism is not a monolithic ideology or strategy.

I have also found these interviews and their associated presentations to be extremely beneficial for students, as they help to reinforce the reality that activism is ongoing, doable, and local. Since my class is a history course, focusing mainly on the "great women" of the American past (such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, etc.), I am always eager to assign projects which give activism a contemporary face, stress its ongoing importance, and make it clear that activism is accessible to all women (and all people) today. There is always a danger in discussing the history of activism and the women who engaged in it that students will think of activism as always happening elsewhere, and being engaged in by people are in some way "special" and unlike themselves. Talking to activists from their own community helps to put a human face on contemporary ecofeminist activism, making it more accessible for my students.

"From Cow's Milk to Breastmilk: Teaching Animal Ethics through Human Infant Feeding"

Colleen Martell

My experiences teaching animal ethics in a range of interdisciplinary classes, along with my experiences teaching maternal and child health classes, have inspired me to think through one question in particular about confronting student resistance to ecofeminism: might greater awareness of human biological birth processes, which remind us of the extent to which humans are indeed animals, potentially create greater empathy with other living beings?

Environmental Council's Young Professionals (http://ilenviro.org/get-involved/young-professionals/), Illinois Stewardship Alliance (http://www.ilstewards.org/), Springfield Green (https://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldGreen), and Sustainable Springfield (http://sustainablespringfield.org/).

For the past five years I've taught units on food politics, often with an emphasis on animal ethics, in classes such as feminist theory, Black feminist thought, American Studies, and Introduction to Gender Studies. In my experience, the topic of animal rights is almost always met with resistance and defensiveness. These are classes in which we discuss sexual violence, the prison industrial complex, gay, lesbian, and trans* parenting, and contentious economic issues with relative respect and open-mindedness.[8] But the ethics of animal consumption is frequently a fraught and tense conversation.

When I assigned Carol Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* in an undergraduate Introduction to Gender Studies course, our discussions exploded into a defensive, angry dynamic. My students' conclusion was that Adams was precisely the kind of crazy person who gives feminism a bad reputation. When I assigned Raj Patel's *Stuffed and Starved*, an investigation into the global food network, to an American Studies graduate seminar, our discussion turned into a guilt-ridden three-hour apology for consuming meat, with responses such as, "I don't want to eat meat, but I can't stop." I assigned Michael Pollan in a first-year writing course and the consensus was that Pollan was going to put a lot of people (specifically factory farmers) out of work and besides, people need to eat meat to live. In an otherwise totally engaged class entitled "The Politics and Poetics of Black Feminist Thought," a few days connecting race, gender, and animals through a discussion of the Sistah Vegan Project (http://sistahvegan.com/) by A. Breeze Harper fell flat. They just weren't inspired, the students told me.[9]

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[8] The asterisk denotes all identities that fall outside of the gender binary. For more on its use, here's a good primer by Hugh Ryan on Slate. http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/01/10/trans_what_does_it_mean_and_where_did_it_come_from.html

[9] In the interest of full disclosure, I am a lifelong vegetarian and have been vegan for the past seven years. Early on in my ecofeminist teaching experience, I started to wonder if I was the reason my students couldn't talk about animal ethics without feeling defensive or bored or apologetic. At that point I stopped outing myself as a vegan, and even worked hard to create a supportive environment for meat-centric arguments. Nothing changed. Food seems to be

Over the last two years, I've had the opportunity to teach courses on breastfeeding and maternal and infant health. My course, "Breastfeeding and Public Health,"[10] examines breastfeeding from an interdisciplinary public health perspective. We consider historical and social contexts that shape our understanding of this practice, from breastfeeding in public to commercialization. We cover many topics, including: pleasure in breastfeeding and why that isn't used in public health campaigns, media representations of breastfeeding, family and medical leave, milk banks and the economics of breastfeeding, and the politics of leaky, messy bodies. We also consider health concerns for mothers and infants (including emotional and psychological as well as physical), health disparities, and strategies for supporting freely chosen breastfeeding practices.

I have practitioners come in and talk to students: RNs, lactation consultants, La Leche League Leaders, and more. In those sessions we discuss the ingredients of breastmilk, the health benefits, the pros and cons of formula feeding, the carbon footprint of breastfeeding versus formula, as well as the politics of birth and fun things like baby poop. The course also includes an experiential learning component in which students individually or in groups work on a semester-long project to support communities in reaching their infant-feeding goals or to educate communities about infant-feeding issues. Students have worked with our local city breastfeeding coalition to make pamphlets and websites, they have encouraged local businesses to display "breastfeeding friendly" signs, have raised money for local La Leche Leagues, and have done projects at our local WIC office, to name a few projects.

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quite a controversial topic for discussion, which makes sense, really, considering how personal our food choices feel most of the time, and when paired with feminism, food politics can be a recipe for inflammatory in classroom discussions.

[10] As far as I know, this is the first class of its kind – in the U.S., at least. It has been a successful class for public health and Women's and Gender Studies programs. I would be happy to share my syllabus and discuss the class with anyone interested in learning more about it.

I've taught the course a couple of times now, both online and in person, and in every discussion, students themselves came to question the ethics of animal consumption. They'd ask, if human milk is so perfectly suited and important to human infants, why do we drink cow's milk? Isn't cow's milk then perfectly suited to infant cows and not meant for humans? If so, are we stealing it? In the same way, we discuss the labor and economics behind producing human breastmilk. In addition to this, my students repeatedly find that the environmental reasons for breastfeeding rather than formula feeding are the most compelling.

After years of finding that readings on the ethics of animal consumption only lead to classroom arguments and disagreements, I've been surprised to find that a class centrally focused on the human body, seemingly not at all connected with non-human animals, repeatedly opens up an engaged and curious discussion about animal welfare and rights.

While many animal rights campaigns emphasize animal bodies' suffering, hoping to shock or guilt readers into making lifestyle changes, the rhetoric of birth and breastfeeding classes and support groups emphasizes the beauty of what bodies can do when they interact lovingly with other bodies. For example, we hear of skin-to-skin contact, instinctual bodily sounds and movements in labor and nursing, trusting one's body to know what it needs to do. Breast milk is described in the ways in which it is perfectly suited to human infants.[11] In other words, while animal rights brings up defensiveness in students -- when I eat or wear this, I cause suffering -- breastfeeding encourages them to feel empowered: Look at what I am capable of doing! How might this inform an ecofeminist turn toward non-human animals and the environment? It seems that attentiveness to human bodies potentially connects us with the material world around us in dynamic ways. I'm not suggesting that ecofeminist pedagogies "return to nature;" we know from history that

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[11] Breastmilk is produced without waste; in each nursing session the milk itself contains a beginning, middle, and end – light like an appetizer at first, heavier like an entrée in the middle, and sweet like a dessert at the end.

this essentializes women, human bodies, and humans giving birth. In addition, pedagogies of maternal and infant health must be cognizant that ideas about birth, breastfeeding, and baby wearing are steeped in issues of race, socioeconomics, location, religion, bodily capacities, and more. It is not some perfect, conflict-free topic. On the contrary, it is mired in controversy and debate. And yet, I'm suggesting that in general, a move toward recognizing the power of bodies, the power of touch, and the power of physical connection for human health and happiness, particularly in our Western dualistic mind/body patriarchal culture, might be an important part of revaluing non-human animal bodies and the earth/environment. The current popular rhetoric about breastfeeding and skin-to-skin touch might be one way to show this value, to show our connectedness.

At the very least, it seems to be a compelling entryway to bring students to ecofeminism. If they can see themselves and their own bodies as meaningful and, simultaneously, as connected to non-human bodies and to the earth, they might themselves take the next step of seeing the political and ethical implications between gender and the environment. By seeing human bodies as central to the discussion, students aren't immediately on the defensive. This is about them and for them. It's not, on the surface, threatening their food habits or their food-based traditions. Breastfeeding shows students the processes and potential of human bodies, and potentially allows them to come to the question: If we are like animals -- instinct-driven, embodied -- how might animals be like us?

CONCLUSION

Participating in the Dialogues shaped our thinking about our ecofeminist pedagogies and practices in profound and meaningful ways. Engaging in conversation with one another and with our audience members powerfully reinforced our awareness of the need for sustained, continuous dialogue about ecofeminist education across disciplines, and between activists and academics. All too often, those of us who teach and work in the field of ecofeminism are isolated from one another and

lack the opportunity to fully engage in in-depth discussions about the successes, failures, and challenges of our work inside (and outside) of the classroom. Specifically, many educators who teach ecofeminism face significant structural challenges, as a high percentage of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies departments and programs struggle for funding, and many WGSS instructors are contingent faculty members who often need to create courses with few resources. These factors often lead to those of us who teach ecofeminism being isolated from our colleagues. Given this reality, we perceive the need for more opportunities for ecofeminist educators to share ideas and approaches with each other. Having participated in the Dialogues, we even more clearly recognize the need for there to be institutional, systematic spaces for ecofeminist discussions to take place, through the development of professional networks, online listservs, and ongoing in-person meetings and conferences.

Our session additionally leaves us with several ongoing questions about how to be the most effective possible ecofeminist educators. Some of these questions center on how we can best bring students into our classrooms in the first place. What are the advantages and disadvantages of including (or removing) the feminist label from our course titles, descriptions, and syllabi? What do we gain and lose when we make the feminist nature of our classes explicit, and when we do not do so?

Other questions focus on what happens once students have made their way into our classes. How can we break through students' (often powerful) resistance to the complex, challenging material which our courses cover? How can we give our students the necessary tools to engage with difficult texts in productive ways? How can we successfully challenge some students' tendency to see the "animal world" and the "human world" as separate from one another (and as hierarchically related to one another?) How can we best break down the divisions between the "ivory tower" of the academy and the "real world" of activism, and ensure that our students bring the ideas they learn in our classes into their daily lives and political choices? How can we make our

classrooms empowering, hopeful places which inspire students to fight for change, while also fully reckoning with the depth and scope of local, national, and global anti-feminist, anti-environmentalist structures of power?

We do not have definitive answers for all of these questions, nor do we believe that definitive answers are possible. Instead, we hope that by sharing our personal experiences of teaching ecofeminism, we can facilitate a broader dialogue about best practices in ecofeminist pedagogy, and provide ideas, inspiration, and insight for our colleagues in the academy and outside of it, working within this important, ever-growing and changing field.

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