

Welcome



Eco Poetry: Hike + Connect = Write

G25050104

with Carrie Nassif

May 4-10, 2025

Welcome to Ecopoetics: Hike + Connect = Write

When I think back to my earliest memories, they are suffused with the natural environment. Our old swing set backed into a huge lilac bush, there were fascinating grand-daddy longlegs in the tractor-tire sandbox, and I would sit in the branches of the nearby cottonwood tree and daydream myself up in those clouds for hours and hours. Likewise, when I recall my darkest days, I can say with certainty that what brought me back to life were those sorts of snippets of sensory memory: walking around a shallow lake on an old apple orchard, green leaves of the canopy turned yellow in patches by the bright sun overhead, wedges of sunlight slicing through the deep shade, dust motes glittering in a dance that was undeniably magical.

This magic is there still, even though as an adult, I often sit too long in front of the screen before my very persistent dog can lure me out into the beauty around me. Despite our mistreatment of mother earth, she is still willing to heal our souls if we would just open up our eyes to the miracles of nature we live alongside. I want to savor that childlike marvel of how to really take a look at something beautiful without millions of obligations and distractions pulling me away from the moment, to recapture that visceral intuition of how everything is an interconnected web, and how we are, every single one of us, humans AND animals AND stardust. And I want us all to notice these things - how we all resonate - and to write about it from a sense of emotional vulnerability. I want us to share this feral medicine in hopes that more of us can allow ourselves to be moved, to feel our ways back into our collective nature, and lean into a healthier balance within ourselves and along our journey on this planet. I think you may feel this way too...

Ecopoetics is poetry with a sensitivity to the interconnectedness of natural systems. It may explore a collective sense of self, nurture a sense of wonder, and/or call us to advocate for the planet.

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This generative workshop is for writers of all levels and provides representative readings & links ahead of time as well as unique writing exercises and prompts to help you explore your own eco-poetic sensibility. Weather permitting, we will hold classes outdoors, walk trails together, reflect on our experiences, and have opportunities to share what we write.

Ideally, we'll spend the cool of the mornings walking and hiking and finding good spots to stop, read, reflect and write once the day warms. Plan to pick up a bag lunch at the cafeteria so that we can finish up our writing exercised in the early afternoon so that your evenings should be free to write our socialize as you wish. Come ready to explore the trails and be inspired by the landscapes of Ghost Ranch in a new way. Dress in layers, bring rugged shoes, sunscreen, a hat and a water bottle, and whatever else you might need to take with you for taking notes on the go. We'll have meditative exercises to promote grounded and embodied perspectives while we explore the environment individually and as a group.

Although we will discuss craft aspects of the readings in the packet, and apply them to our own work and the writing of our classmates if they indicate it is welcome; the majority of this course will be centered on cultivating a more eco-poetic awareness and comfort with the vulnerability needed to express it using a wide variety of new methods. That is, while you will leave having responded to many prompts, the focus is more on the process than on fine tuning a polished product. Having said that, I can be available after supper for brief consults for those who desire more constructive feedback.

You'll be sent an email with readings and/or links to poetry that will help spark our inspiration every day. Internet connectivity is temperamental at most locations and the printing capacity is minimal at Ghost Ranch, so PLEASE download and/or print out these handouts so that you can access them along the trails.

We'll look at the classical nature writers like Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, as well as more contemporary followers of that tradition, like Annie Dillard and Rebecca Solnit.

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We'll explore indigenous viewpoints on the land with excerpts of Robin Wall Kimmerer and Joy Harjo. Finally, we'll see the newest works of experimental ecopoets like Brenda Hillman, Lucille Clifton, Nancy Lynsee Woo, Forrest Gander, and others. We will determine, as a group, how we feel comfortable sharing our observations, writing, and/or calls to action, and then spend Friday preparing for this project.

Finally, PLEASE read through the packet and select one poem that you resonate with and would be willing to read aloud to your classmates as a way of introducing yourself on our first day, you will probably be asked WHAT pulled you to choose that particular poem as well.

I cannot WAIT to meet you and share this experience.

Carrie Nassif

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SCHEDULE

SUNDAY 05/04 CHECK-IN & 6:30 Meet-up after dinner @ dining hall

MONDAY 05/05 - THURS 05/08 Schedule

9 AM-5:30PM HIKE & WRITE

7-9 PM 15 minute individual craft consultations with Carrie

FRIDAY 05/09

9 AM-12 HIKE

1-5 PM Prepare for group project/presentation TBD

6:30 ART SHOW AT ART CENTER

SATURDAY 5/10 10 AM CHECKOUT