



Environmental Education for Sustainability: Motivating People to Action through Learning Experiences and Educational Materials

A 12-week course and professional learning opportunity offered by Mass Audubon for environmental educators who design and deliver programs and educational materials for adult audiences

Winter 2023

Thursdays, 2:30-4:30pm ET, January 26-April 13, 2023.

Instructor: Lucy Gertz, Mass Audubon's Director of Adult Education, currently a Lesley University doctoral student examining the relationship between environmental education and conservation behavior in adult learners.

Fee: \$150 per person to take this as a non-credit course.

Optional three graduate course credits available through Lesley University. Students seeking to earn credits will complete additional class assignments and will pay Lesley University for the credits: \$165 per credit plus \$20 registration fee.

When we connect our adult learners with nature, share the wonder of natural history, create caring nature center communities, and provide information about environmental issues, we tend to expect that all involved will self-identify as environmentalists and be inclined to act in environmentally responsible ways. This assumed progression, from interest to understanding to action is a key goal of environmental education, but do we know if individuals in our adult learning communities are actually behaving in ways that are protective of the living things and systems they are so interested in learning about? Over thirty years of research studies have found that there are many psycho-social factors and influences at play in people's lives and behaviors, quite reliably predictive of how individuals engage with conservation behaviors.

The goal of this course is to help environmental educators become proficient in developing and delivering new EE content and using new research-based approaches for program development, teaching, designing materials, and facilitating engagement to support learners in their progressive environmentalism. We'll look at how the **Environmental Education** community of practice is evolving, and becoming more focused on **Environmental Education for Sustainability**. We'll look at landmark research studies in conservation behavior and sustainability behavior change. We'll cover the approaches, theoretical frameworks, and best practices for effectively teaching adult learners including Adult Learning Theory, learning styles, teaching models, and adult lifespan development. We'll review past and current educational initiatives and campaigns developed to promote individual behavior change, looking at what was learned in design and implementation. We'll incorporate all of these components as we expand our individual and collective EE practices.

This course is designed as an in-depth, 12-week, professional development training and learning opportunity for adult environmental educators and other interested conservation professionals whose work prioritizes moving people to act in environmentally responsible ways. This course is applicable for anyone who teaches or communicates with an adult learning community.

Course Components (for non-credit)

- *Introductory Reflection Worksheet or Essay:* A reflection on your professional experience with Adult EE, including what you know about your audiences and how you currently incorporate conservation action content into one of your programs/materials. Each student will be invited to share this in one of the first two class sessions.
- *Weekly Synchronous Online Class:* Over the 12-week semester, January 26 – April 13, 2023, there will be a two-hour class held each Thursday, 2:30-4:30pm ET. Class sessions will be recorded and made available for registered students who miss a scheduled class or want to view it again.
- *Readings:* For several weekly class sessions, there will be suggested readings from published research or professional journals. Associated questions and prompts will be provided to facilitate class discussions of readings.
- *Incorporate Course Content into Design and Practice:* Students will have the opportunity to develop, share, and receive input on their individual plan for a new program/material, or to assess an existing program/material, and devise a plan to incorporate course content and delivery approaches to effectively promote one or more conservation behavior changes to their audience.
- *Plan for Utilizing New Skills and Competencies:* Students will have the opportunity to develop, share, and receive input on their individual plan for incorporating course content and learning into their Adult EE practice. This can include continuing and advancing this work within the EE community of practice by engaging in post-course professional networking, mentoring colleagues, or developing and delivering trainings.

Course Requirements (for earning 3 graduate credits)

- *Introductory Reflection Essay due by February 2, 2023:* A brief (1-2 page) written reflection on your professional experience with Adult EE with elaboration in any or all of these areas:
 - How you currently incorporate conservation action content into programs/materials
 - What feels most important and effective in the work of an environmental educator
 - The challenges you experience in your practice related to moving learners to engage in environmental activism.
- *Weekly Synchronous Online Class:* Over the 12-week semester, January 26 – April 13, 2023, there will be a two-hour class held each Thursday, 2:30-4:30pm ET. Students earning credit are expected to participate in weekly class discussions and engage in all class exercises.
- *Weekly Readings and Written Assignments:* There will be regularly assigned readings from published research or professional journals. Students earning credits must complete all assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Four brief (2-page) papers on individual or combined assigned readings must be written and submitted before the completion of the course.
- *Incorporate Course Content into Design and Practice:* Students will complete a project – design a new program/material, or assess an existing program/material, and devise a plan to incorporate course content and delivery approaches to effectively promote one or more conservation behavior changes. Students will present the project in class through an oral presentation, a slide

presentation, or by other media. Students will submit a written summary document on their class presentation, and should include citations from the course (3-5 pages.)

- *Plan for Utilizing New Skills and Competencies:* Students will develop, share, and receive input on their individual plan for incorporating course content and learning into their current or future Adult EE practice. This can include continuing and advancing this work within the EE community of practice by engaging in post-course professional networking, mentoring colleagues, or developing and delivering trainings.

A full syllabus is available for anyone who wants more details about the course.

Questions?

Contact the course instructor, email Lucy Gertz at lgertz@massaudubon.org or call 781-259-2177.