

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER



ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020: A YEAR OF CHALLENGES OVERCOME IN COMMUNITY

Hello, friends of PLU's Environmental Studies Program! It is our sincere wish that you and yours are healthy and safe. This year's Newsletter was prepared as we closed an academic year when students, staff, and faculty tackled the unforeseen challenge of moving our vibrant on-campus community to cyberspace. As you will see in the following pages, they did so with admirable creativity, thoughtfulness, and resilience: Prof. Claire Todd and her ENVT 350 students share how they ingeniously took their field work online; Grayson Peet ('21) recounts how Prof. Suzanne Crawford O'Brien's RELI 236: Native American Traditions gave him a new perspective on climate change; Brennan LaBrie, Jack Mahr, Emma Mickelson, and Elana Tracy chronicle their experience living on campus during the pandemic; we highlight an amazing set of guest speakers and events organized by Prof. Sarah Robinson Bertoni throughout the academic year for RELI 239: Environment and Culture students. Prof. Wendy Call shares the work of her ENGL 322: Place-based Writing students and we invite you to watch four digital stories created in this course.



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 2020 COHORT
IN THEIR FINAL SESSION ON ZOOM

Clover Creek (unknown date). Image from PLU University's Archive and Special Collections. Special thanks to Prof. Anna Trammell.

Our issue would be incomplete without a word on our second annual Earth and Diversity Week and a celebration of our graduating class of 2020. As Chair of the Program, I am delighted to share this work with you and believe that like me you'll find in it great hope and inspiration as well as the certainty that we are ready to navigate the forthcoming academic year with the same spirit and solidarity that we did this year.

First, though, I would like to thank outgoing Acting Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies, Dr. Kevin O'Brien, and the amazing team that sustains our work:



Kevin O'Brien
Acting Dean of Interdisciplinary
Programs and Professor of Christian
Ethics and Environmental Ethics



Christine Nicolai
Administrative and Communications
Director
Division of Natural Sciences



Teri Potts
Administrative Assistant
Interdisciplinary Programs



Tracy Williamson
Assistant to the Dean of
Humanities

You can keep up with our regular program updates by following us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM

ENVT 350: Environmental Methods of Investigation

We had a great semester in ENVT 350, despite the transition to distance learning. Our goal of the class is to assess the health of PLU's home watershed - the Chambers-Clover Creek Watershed. We began our semester with a watershed tour, led by members of our local watershed council. We studied environmental history with Professor Mergenthal, and chemistry with Professor Naasz, before we transitioned to an online format for the course. Professors Egge and Haberle from Biology joined online sessions and created online content to discuss ecological methods of investigation - including a DIY plant survey students completed from home - locations ranging from Alaska to Florida! Professor Crawford-O'Brien in religion joined us to discuss the cultural significance of salmon to Coast Salish tribes, and Chantay Anderson from the Nisqually Community Garden shared her work in sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty. Professor O'Brien in religion shared strategies for developing and communicating moral arguments - some of which you can see on [our course website](#). It was an unforgettable semester in ENVT 350, the energy and engagement of the students made it all possible - we all learned so much!!

-Dr. Claire Todd

POSTER EXHIBITS: Since students could not exhibit their posters in Rieke Science Center lobby as they do each year, they created digital posters where they share research questions, data, and results about their work on the health of the Chambers-Clover Creek Watershed. Their topics range from the impact of stormwater pollution on the shed to the wellbeing of native salmon. [Visit the full exhibit here.](#)

My Experience as a TA for Environmental Methods 350

In spring of 2020, I was given the opportunity to be the teacher's assistant for Environmental Methods 350. While my time with the class was cut

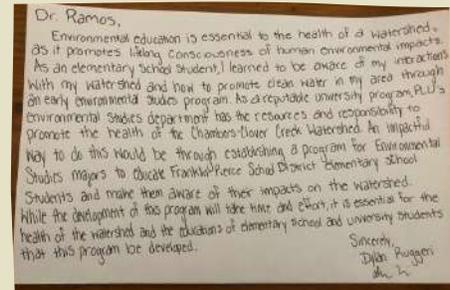
short due to COVID-19, I was still able to have incredibly memorable experiences with a wonderful group of people. Environment 350 is a class that analyzes the health of the Chambers-Clover Creek watershed through hands-on data collection and experimenting. The class itself is easily one of the most fun and exciting classes a person can take at PLU, but I was not expecting TA'ing to be even more of a blast.

In the few weeks I spent with the class, we ventured out into the field almost every Friday where we collected water and sediment samples and performed various experiments whose results would prove important in determining the health of each study site. Nothing excites me more than spending all day in a stream, which is exactly what I got to do as a TA. Once in the field, our work becomes real. The class spends multiple hours outside, rain or shine, doing real life science that will then be taken to the Watershed Council in order to help find solutions to environmental problems we are experiencing in our neighborhood. When I became the 350 TA, this understanding of making a change became even more real. Being able to look back on past data and notice significant changes in water quality or the presence of benthic macroinvertebrate species solidified for me that this class is, in fact, taking strides to make a huge difference in the way we understand watershed health.

This incredible experience would not be possible without the amazing staff and students that support this program. The fond memories I made with the students in Professor Todd's class will stay with me for a lifetime and the support I felt from Professor Todd was unlike any I had had before, which truly highlights just how wonderful this program is.

- Layne Perkins

DIGITAL POSTCARDS: As part of their work with Dr. Kevin O'Brien, students penned--by hand--thoughtful petitions addressed to the general public and institutions on behalf of the Chambers-Clover Creek, like [this one](#) by Dylan Ruggeri ('22) proposing that our Program establish a partnership with Franklin Pierce School District to create a culture of care for our watershed. [Read all postcards.](#)



NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM

RELI 239: Environment and Culture

We are grateful to Prof. Sarah Robinson-Bertoni for the invaluable opportunities she created for our students throughout this academic year. Even when we went online, Prof. Robinson-Bertoni ensured our students continued to benefit from the wisdom of guest speakers.

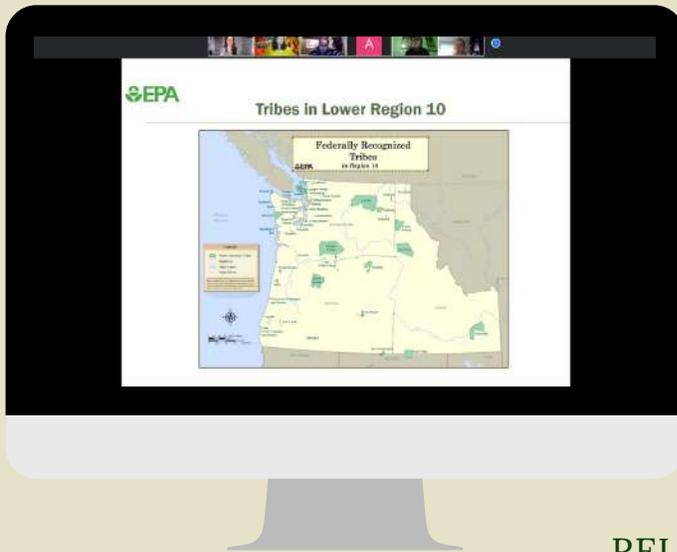


A FEW OF THE EVENTS SHE COORDINATED:

Visit to Squaxin Island Museum, Library & Research Center

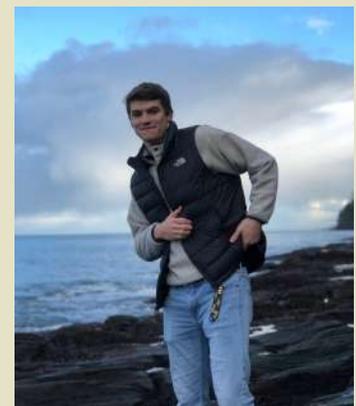
"Tribal Climate Adaptation, Environmental Policy, and Working in the Environmental Field" with Vicky Salazar, Senior Policy Advisor, US EPA Region 10 (via Zoom)

"Integrating the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, COVID-19, Equity, and Social Justice" with Yuria Celidwen, Senior Production Editor, Spanish, United Nations (via Zoom)



RELI 236: Native American Traditions

I had the privilege of taking Religion 236: Native American Traditions in the Spring of 2020, taught by Prof. Suzanne Crawford O'Brien. When I chose Environmental Studies as a major, one of the things I was most excited about was the interdisciplinary nature of the department. PLU offers a well-rounded liberal arts education and the Environmental Studies department follows this objective by integrating many disciplines to create a holistic approach to environmental issues. Prior to taking this course, I didn't understand the perspective of Indigenous people regarding environmental degradation and climate change. These topics had been heavily discussed in my other courses but through the narrative of science or ethics. This course opened my eyes to the deep-rooted spirituality that connects Indigenous people to the natural world. We defined and discussed ideas about kinship, respect, reciprocity, spirituality, and cultural revivalism in a way that altered my perspective on how I approach environmental issues. Prof. Crawford O'Brien offered a respectful approach to understanding Native American perspectives by identifying thematic similarities between the many Indigenous cultures under study. We listened to stories of creation and learned about the historic events that marginalized and suppressed expression of spirituality in these communities. We discussed movements of cultural revivalism in different tribes throughout the United States and we gained a greater understanding of the trauma introduced to Indigenous communities through colonialism and European settlement. I walked away from this course with a new perspective on history and a newfound appreciation for the holistic view of the environment that has been cultivated by Native American communities for thousands of years. The connection Indigenous cultures establish between human and nonhuman forms of life is something that we can all learn from as we think about ways to combat climate change.



-Grayson Peet

NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM

ENGL 322: Place-based Writing

In Prof. Wendy Call's English 322: Place-Based Writing, ENVT majors and English majors and others came together to study (i.e. observe and research) specific places and place-based literature and to create their own artistic responses to place. We did this in the form of essays—both written and digital essays. Four ENVT students created videos about the places they studied during our semester together. Emily Toycen studied American Lake and Jack Mahr studied a rooftop in Parkland for the entire semester. Frankee Broer and Theo Houck ended up back home, in Colorado and Alaska, respectively, because of the pandemic. They each created videos about their homeplaces. As Frankee Broer put it, "Creating the video was a reflection of place outside of myself, yet also of myself, exhale. Watching others' presentations created the wind that blew open the door that has been cracking open all along. Opening to a new meaning of place."

- Prof. Wendy Call

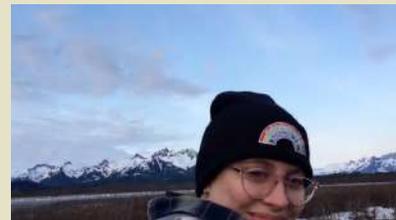
PLEASE ENJOY
THE VIDEOS
THEY CREATED!

Select the
images to
watch or visit
our website
[here!](#)

JACK MAHR



THEO HOUCK



EMILY TOYCEN



FRANKEE BROER

Faculty-Student Research

Sense of Place on the Page



For the academic year 2019-2020, I was fortunate enough to work with English professor Wendy Call on the project Sense of Place on the Page through the Kelmer-Roe Fellowship in Humanities. I got to take part in all kinds of place-studies research: reviewing syllabi from place-focused university courses, taking part in Prof Call's English / ENVT Place-Based Writing class, and reading excerpts from writers focusing on place. I developed a place-based work of creative nonfiction about the Indigenous Sámi man for whom the building Xavier is named. I was supposed to present this paper at several research symposia in the Northwest, yet all but the University of Washington Research Symposium was canceled. The UW symposium happened online. I was lucky to share an essay excerpt in a lightning talk and engage with other presenters about it afterward. One of my favorite parts of this project was being able to listen to and engage with students fascinated by place-based writing. Even though this year turned out different than we all expected, I feel very lucky to have had this learning experience and it is something I hope to bring with me in my future work.

-Mathilde Magga

NOTES FROM CAMPUS LIFE

Our majors share their experiences living on campus during social isolation.



Emma Mickelson

Since distant learning has started, life on campus has been different. It has been very quiet and strange having the campus be so empty. When I walk through campus I get images in my head about what events and activities "should be" happening during the spring semester that just aren't. However, being around PLU now has also allowed me to take time to explore the campus I usually take for granted and mindlessly walk through. I've been checking out places like the little woods by the UC, the golf course, the slugs that come out during sunset by Morken, and looking at all of the beautiful spring flowers!

I live just a block away from campus, and ever since PLU switched to distance learning and campus cleared out, I've enjoyed taking walks through campus and admiring all the



Brennan LaBrie

beautiful cherry blossoms and the wide variety of rhododendrons. I'm bummed that so many of my peers can't enjoy the flowers or the tall grass on Admin Field (which should always be kept that high, I think), but they'll be there next Spring. My favorite part of living near campus has been my ability to visit Clover Creek, which I studied this past semester as part of Claire Todd's ENVT 350 class. Every time I go on a run, I stop and examine how high the water level is, what plants I see growing along the stream, and occasionally I go down to its banks to look for little water insects (benthic macroinvertebrates, which we spent a while studying this semester. I highly recommend that people try to find Clover Creek when we all get back to campus, especially when it fills up with flowing water in the winter months. Spanaway Creek, which flows year-round, is also close by, and is especially beautiful in the Fall and Spring. You can access it at Spanaway Lake Park and Bresemann Forest, two beautiful places that I feel too many Lutes don't know about.

Life on campus after the transition to online learning was very hard to acclimate to at first. Campus quickly became quiet and the community we're all so familiar with seemed to vanish into thin air, leaving an eerie essence around those of us left here. However, after we all got the hang of Zoom and Google Hangouts, a distant sense of community began to return and I felt less strange wandering around our empty campus. Living on campus during this time has had its perks and downfalls, but I have to say, being able to walk around campus in full spring bloom without human traffic has been something I will never forget. While I'm sad to have missed the buzzing atmosphere so characteristic of PLU this time of year, seeing PLU in "pause" has allowed me to interact with campus in new, unexpected ways and I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to revel in our campus' beauty this spring.



Elana Tracy

Some days, campus feels like a videogame where I am one of the only players. Quarantine has me convinced I am stuck on the same level. The birds call out and the wind blows and I might be the only one to hear it. I miss the small hellos when I go for walks. Transitioning to distance learning has pushed me to be the driver of my own day as so many of my usual activities involved other lovely people. My quarantine experience has been tough and monotonous, but nature surely helps bring back some normalcy and color. This is a photo of me in the overgrown stream at Parkland Prairie Reserve by the frisbee golf course. My hair is messy in a not cute way because I hadn't seen anyone in a few days. Having studied this site earlier this year in Environmental Studies 350, I knew there was more to explore. My best friend and I meandered the dry creek, scaring residents who likely had never seen someone in their backyard streams. I would never have found myself hanging out under bridges and picking orange poppies for bouquets had it not been for my Environmental Studies 350 class.

Jack Mahr



ANNUAL EARTH AND DIVERSITY WEEK

We had planned a very exciting Earth and Diversity Week in collaboration with our wonderful partners, Kenzie Gandy (ASPLU Diversity Director), Nicole Juliano (dCenter, Director), Dr. Michael Artime (Political Science, Chair), and other campus collaborators. Our initial intent was to kick off this important program with David Roberts, Seattle-based environmental journalist, continue with now traditional student-organized events that include Grabology and Sounds of Solidarity, celebrate Prof. Chuck Bergman's new book, and host Sen. Rebecca Saldaña (Seattle, 37th District) for our annual Earth Day lecture. Even though David Roberts was unable to join us, we were able to hold alternative versions of most events. Sen. Saldaña shared a video advocating for the importance of electing women of color to congress, PLU's own Chuck Bergman held a Zoom book launch of his most recent work, *Every Penguin in the World*, and Grabology and Sounds of Solidarity hosted virtual events that brought our campus community together. [Our E&D website](#), where you can learn more about these events and watch Sen. Saldaña's video, is a testament to our community's commitment to collaboration, to diversity, and to the earth. We look forward to making these events an on-campus reality again next year!

THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020

Please join us in celebrating the wonderful graduating class of 2020. While we were unable to clap and cheer for our students in person, we are looking forward to doing so once we can gather for Commencement. In the meantime, we are celebrating their work through our website, where you can find a full description of their projects and their heartfelt acknowledgements to family, friends, and mentors. Through their projects, they have examined some of the most pressing issues of our time exploring them through original methodological and theoretical frameworks. Please visit [our online Capstone program](#) to learn more.



Frankee Broer, Jasper Cantrell, Megan Daugherty, Kenzie Davidson, Tyler Erickson, Siri Fretheim, Ryan Gaschel, Khaleesi Gonzalez, Daniel Hachet, Sharlaine Hesira, Ea Kirkland-Woodward, Anya Nelson, Layne Perkins, Orion Schomber, Danielle Skibiell, Austin Smith, Cassie Wilkins (not pictured), Jun Wu.

Poem - For the graduates

Based on the message of Claire Greensfelder for my own Conservation and Resource Studies alternative graduation in the University of California Botanical Garden, Berkeley, California

Every spring
as graduates straighten
their black capes and square hats
redwood trees
quietly unfurl
new growth
drawing on winter's rain
percolating among roots
from underground streams
new tendrils of spring
return in light green contrast
with the darker green
of seasons past
remember
as your eyes find these leaves
All things renew
in their season

Each graduating class
like this new growth
expands the reach
of the community tree
spreading potential
toward the sun's light
sinking roots deeper into quiet
currents underground

May you find places
to thrive and grow
you by your nature
by your wholeness
by your unique, complex, and
even wordless truth
by your being
our community tree
expands its reach
beyond the past
toward what is
alive
and ready
for the New



OUR THRIVING COMMUNITY

Our final pages highlight how much we have to celebrate. We'd like to begin, though, by welcoming our new Interim Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies, Dr. Teresa Ciabattari. We are excited to work and learn with her in the years ahead.



FACULTY IN THE NEWS

A study-away favorite for all Environmental Studies students is the Holden Village Philosophy 226: Environmental Ethics J-Term course taught by Dr. Sergia Hay (Philosophy). The course was highlighted in this year's issue of Prism (Division of the Humanities) showing how Dr. Hay invites her students to "think hard about the attitudes they hold and the choices they make" as inhabitants of the earth who wish to be environmental stewards. Read the [full story here](#).

STUDENTS IN THE NEWS

Environmental Studies Students Join Sunrise Movement

In the fall of 2019, PLU's GrassRoots Environmental Action Now (G.R.E.A.N.) club joined forces with the Sunrise Movement to strengthen a movement that aims to slow climate change and fight for the Green New Deal. Environmental Studies majors Ayana Freeman, Mackenzie Knapp, and Dylan Ruggeri, as members of G.R.E.A.N. club, became active members of Sunrise Tacoma (the Tacoma hub of the Sunrise Movement).

The Sunrise Movement is a youth-led, intersectional organization that seeks to fight climate change and implement the Green New Deal from within the largest polluting country, the United States. The Green New Deal is a policy resolution that outlines a plan to decarbonize the United States while creating millions of new, high-quality jobs in the process.

In September of 2019, Sunrise Tacoma took to the streets to demand that the city of Tacoma recognize the effects of climate change on the city and declare a climate emergency. In December of 2019, Tacoma became the first city in Washington to declare a climate emergency.

In December of 2019, Sunrise Tacoma sought to illustrate the difference between the dying world that we are currently on track to create and the thriving world that could be if we take climate action now. Sunrise fought against the creation of the LNG facility in the Port of Tacoma and for the creation of a Green New Deal.

On April 22nd of 2020, the hub celebrated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by holding a virtual climate strike, during which they pushed for the implementation of the Green New Deal and a People's Bailout through the COVID-19 pandemic instead of a corporate bailout.

As active members of Sunrise Tacoma, Freeman, Knapp, and Ruggeri planned and attended these strikes, educated the Tacoma area on climate issues, fought for a clean and just future, and worked within their communities to build people power that uplifts the Green New Deal and climate justice.

During a time in which the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis are putting significant stress on the lives of young people, members of Sunrise Tacoma know that being in community with people who want a clean and just future is soul-healing. They also know that the world needs to implement bold climate policy before the effects of climate change are irreversible. Pushing for this action with others of similar minds is what being a member of Sunrise is about.

You can learn more about the Sunrise Movement [here](#). You can learn more about Sunrise Tacoma and join the movement by emailing sunrisemovement.tacoma@gmail.com

Our very own Daniel Hachet ('20) was recently awarded the "Leadership in Sustainability" award by PLU Student Affairs for his invaluable contributions to our campus through his leadership and advocacy for the sustainability of the earth and its inhabitants. Learn more about Daniel's legacy [here](#).



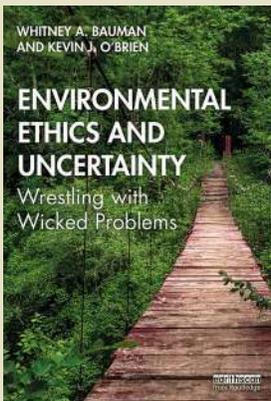
-Ayana Freeman, Mackenzie Knapp, and Dylan Ruggeri

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR FACULTY



Congratulations to Dr. Claire Todd (Environmental Studies/Geoscience) for her promotion to Full Professor, for being awarded a Regency Scholarship by the Office of the Provost and a Chambers-Clover Creek grant for her project "Chambers-Clover Creek Archive at PLU" co-led with Prof. Anna Trammel (Archive and Special Collections).

Congratulations to Dr. Priscilla St. Clair (Economics) who has been promoted to full professor!



Kevin O'Brien (Christian Ethics and Environmental Ethics) co-published *Environmental Ethics and Uncertainty Wrestling with Wicked Problems* with Whitney A. Bauman. This book offers a multidisciplinary environmental approach to ethics in response to the contemporary challenge of climate change caused by globalized economics and

consumption. It synthesizes the incredible complexity of the problem and the necessity of action in response, highlighting the unambiguous problem facing humanity in the 21st century, but arguing that it is essential to develop an ethics housed in ambiguity in response.



Michael Rings (Philosophy) published "Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism and the Challenge of the Exotic" in the Oxford journal *British Journal of Aesthetics* (Vol. 59, no. 2, April 2019)

This paper explores how the virtuous aesthetic cosmopolitan—one actively engaged in cultivating an authoritative appreciation for culturally unfamiliar works or traditions of art, in a manner informed by moral cosmopolitan principles—engages with the 'exotic' artwork in a manner that is both morally responsible and aesthetically discerning and argues that the cosmopolitan's best strategy is a mode of appreciation that is 'conversational' in nature, an open-ended approach modeled on an exchange between the appreciator and an other-cultural interlocutor. In proposing such a model, it draws on the work of Kwame Appiah and Maria Lugones, as well as Anthony Laden's recent work on conversational norms.

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS

Elana Tracy ('21) has been named a 20-21 Peace Scholar

Kenzie Knapp ('23) was featured in Sunrise Tacoma social media donning her PLU sweatshirt as she advocated for the extension of Interim Regulations in Washington State

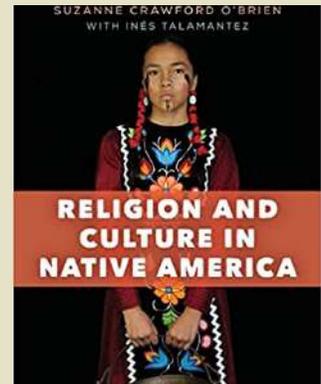


Clover Creek Running through Campus from Mortvedt Library's Archive and Special Collections. Special thanks to Prof. Anna Trammell.

Suzanne Crawford O'Brien (Religion and Culture) published *Religion and Culture in Native America* with Inés Talamantez.

Religion and Culture in Native America presents an introduction to a diverse array of Indigenous religious and cultural practices in North America, focusing on those issues in which tribal communities themselves are currently invested.

These topics include climate change, water rights, the protection of sacred places, the reclaiming of Indigenous foods, health and wellness, social justice, and the safety of Indigenous women and girls. Locating such contemporary challenges within their historical, religious, and cultural contexts illuminates how Native communities' responses to such issues are not simply political, but deeply spiritual, informed by sacred traditions, ethical principles, and profound truths.



This Newsletter would not be possible without help of Sami Hoskins (Global Studies/WMGS/IHON '20).