

Faculty of Exact Sciences

Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences

The Department of Environmental Studies

Course Title:

## Ecological Firmness

(MA Seminar)

0910405301

Spring Semester (B) – 2022

Porter Bld. Room 105

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Course requirements:

Attendance and participation in classes; reading papers, presenting and discussing in class; final paper

Final grade components: reading papers, participation in class; final paper (or seminar paper)

\* The syllabus is subject to changes

Abstract

The course/seminar develops the concept of *ecological firmness* as a radical contemporary discourse, based on the tradition of deep ecology and ecocentric ethics. Based on the distinction between environmentalism and (ideological) ecologism (Dobson, 2009), this new concept is rooted in the ideas of “nature knows best” (Barry Commoner), also with respect to human and habitat health. This concept serves as a methodological tool, enabling discussions of alternative to the limitations of mainstream concepts of sustainability and sustainable development (and SDGs).

From such a perspective, a critical outlook evolves regarding current worldview, which seems to presume that humans knows best, based on science and technology, which could allegedly improve nature, including human nature (trans humanism), as could be seen in the framings and promises of medicine, biotechnology and genetics.

The ecological alternative is based on ecocentric bioethics, holistic, systemic, trans and multi-disciplinary frameworks, critical thinking, and on alternative learning and lifestyle including biohacking and eco-hacking (e.g., permaculture, TEK).

Ecological firmness is inseparable from bioethics, and therefore the course will examine key issues in bioethics, relevant to ecological radical theory and to contemporary emergence of medical technocracy of public health.

This seminar will therefore serve as a students' lab for critical and ecological thinking regarding current concepts of science, nature, health, and human nature in the post-corona era.

22/2/22

Seminar structure:

Introduction: environmentalism vs. ecologism, bioethics, controversy theory, sustainability, & more.

Ecological thinking: biophilia, eco/biohacking, permaculture, ecological consciousness, the commons, etc.

Integration: ecological firmness

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Students are encouraged to propose topics for the seminar (open source ethics), and to discuss final paper' topics in class.

The seminar includes physical and breathing exercises, demonstrating biohacking. This complementary part is not mandatory and is for the benefit and enjoyment of the students only.

Students are encouraged to use (provided) Yoga mattresses and to seat / stretch on the floor (in other words: chairs are not mandatory).

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Prolonged abstract

For the past two years, policies allegedly based on “science” determines every aspect of life, in the individual, institutional, states and global levels. These policies are allegedly based on the disciplines of Medicine and especially on the sub-discipline of “public health”.

The brunch of ethics dealing with such topics is Bioethics, commonly understood as (narrow) medical ethics, though it was at first articulated as a broad holistic and systemic new outlook on Science focused on ecological survival, based on insights from both reductionists disciplines of hard science (different branches of biology, chemistry etc.), as well as the social sciences and the humanities (and especially Ethics), on the model of Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold and Deep Ecology (Potter, 1970).

Corona masks serves as an excellent example, since they cause tremendous widespread environmental pollution. We learn that current policies fail to incorporate an environmental or global ecological outlook. This fact requires critical discussion of the premisses of Science, and the difficulty to promote environmental and ecologically minded policies, especially at the paradoxical meeting points of the environment and health.

Ecological Firmness is an experimental concept in “deep” ecological thinking. The original insights were published in Hebrew (2018), arguing for a new concept of Health, based on insights from Yoga & Tai Chi. It began to evolve during visit to the Philippines (Mindanao, 2019), combining field research in rural indigenous areas, firmness workshops and lectures.

There, while travelling with Prof. Rogelio Bayod, we made plans for an Ecological Bioethics & Firmness Labb as a joint research project, postponed due to Corona restrictions. The joint project was supposed to articulate the idea of ecological firmness, in order to help indigenous communities to protect their habitat from government’ plans to surrender their mineral-rich territory for open mines and destruction.

For two years (2020-2021) this seminar was given in Hebrew, focusing on Firmness as an embodied concept of ecological consciousness, in the spirit of Deep Ecology and VR Potter’s Bioethics.

The concept of Firmness will be introduced in the seminar, and is based on Biohacking research, of which participants will be able to experience for themselves.

"Biohacking" is an open-source alternative (with empowering individual hacking ethics), based on critical thinking, subjective self-experimentation, embodiment, and objective scientific knowledge and know-how, to ensure democratic communication and public-participation in science, medicine and health (Mishori, 2019). Eco-hacking is similar, with respect to our ability to live with and of the earth.

The seminar is based on the distinction between Environmentalism and Ecologism, as two different modes of framing Human-Nature relationship.

Ecological Firmness is a seminar (or an elective course) that strives to be practical, critically examining the ethical and rational aspects that influence environmental policy, and in particular the premisses of this policy as reflected in the concepts and modes of action of

science and health, as reflecting concepts of human nature. As an academic concept, it is inherently critical of mainstream “disciplinary” science (science as structured by semi-autonomous disciplines, as manifested in Academia).

The seminar assumes a direct connection between the body, consciousness and place [Makom] [מקום] (public space, nature, the absolute — the location of one’s body). This connection is realized through involvement in the world, designed to improve the quality of society and the quality of the place, and therefore emphasis will be placed on practical aspects and socio-ecological involvement.

The connection between the body-of-consciousness and the environment, exists in environmental research only partially. Therefore, we will get to know approaches from deep ecology that deal with the idea of ecological consciousness and a sense of place. We will also deal with issues of biophilia, biological and ecological "hacking" (Eco / BioHacking), bioethics (according to VR Potter), and more. Special emphasis will be given to issues of public space, and the treatment of nature.

The seminar endorses open-source philosophy, and encourages student to contribute texts and ideas to the seminar.

## Firmness

Firmness is the common root of martial arts and yoga. It enables the practitioner to be firm, have a proper posture, a straight back, and relaxation, enabling deep meditations and control of body and mind. The philosophy and method of learning and practice "Firmness" includes guidelines for standing, sitting and moving in a stable and effortless manner.

There is a connection between our personal and cultural habits of using the body, regarding it as a mindless machine, and the difficulty people find in sinking into deep meditations. Deep meditations enable the mind to learn to control their inner force and healing power (Chi, Prana, elan vital [Bergson, 1907]). The proliferation of chronic "affluence" diseases, environmental degradation and the multi-dimensional ecological crisis are other prominent examples of the errors of culture, science and medicine today. The source of some of these mistakes is the renunciation of the truth and reason in the body, of "Firmness" and of the lack of understanding of the meaning of this concession.

The most obvious expression of these errors is inefficient or utterly wrong breathing (should be first exhaling, then inhaling), the sitting on chairs (especially the use of a backrest), the wearing of high heels, the unnecessary use of shoes in general, the detachment from the natural clocks of sunrise and sunset (as well as natural light and frequencies of the sun), the changing of seasons, etc... These make people inflexible, causing back pain and other ills and inconveniences, and reduced resistance to diseases.

The book "Firmness: Meditations on First Philosophy and Environmental Ethics" (Graff Publishing, Hebrew, 2018) deals with these and other topics. Forthcoming a paper on ecological biohacking that expands on these ideas and concepts.