

SHORT COURSE

Reflective Social Practice

for Transformative Social and Environmental Learning

The Environmental Learning Research Centre and The Proteus Initiative, in collaboration, present a four module Postgraduate Short Course for environmental learning and social-ecological sustainability practitioners and researchers, introducing a radical practice for demanding times.



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Purpose

This four-part short course aims to support practitioners and researchers working on social-ecological sustainability and social justice to develop a reflective social practice. Such a practice can enable deep observation, reflexivity, and build competencies for social process facilitation and learning-oriented action research. These capacities are valuable for professionals seeking to work in transdisciplinary ways to enable transformative social learning and change.

Overview

If we wish to live in a world which is alive, vital, and whole, then we need to learn ways of thinking that enable us to see the interweaving processes of life that allow the intricacy and intimacy of relationship to arise. Such relationships are the bedrock of social and environmental health and justice. How to find a way to be, to participate meaningfully, in this world where we are both individual and independent, as well as communal and interdependent? We will not achieve environmental justice without achieving social justice – everything, in a living world, is connected, interwoven, mutually influential and influenced.

To engage in transformative social learning and transdisciplinary praxis in complex social-ecological systems, practitioners and researchers need to develop reflexivity and be able to facilitate social change processes.

The Reflective Social Practice course offered here is a particular approach to developing these capacities. Its strength lies in helping us to see more accurately and with rigour: to become able to read and make meaning of living process as it unfolds, to see the connections between natural and social processes, and to see ourselves within these. It offers methods and practices to support self-reflection and reflexivity.

If we consider ourselves agents of change, we need to be paying very careful attention to ourselves and our practice. Reflective social practice is a constant moving between our inner world and the outer world; it is about action rooted in observation, and observation as a particular form of activism. What this short course offers is a space to deeply and carefully question why we are doing what we are doing; it is about caring as much about how we do things as we care about what we do. If we don't reflect and think rigorously about what we are doing, and how or why we are doing it, we might just perpetuate or entrench that which we are struggling to change. It is about the simultaneity of the relationship between the world and with ourselves.

Through this unique course, the Environmental Learning Research Centre (ELRC) and the Proteus Initiative invite you to contribute to our evolving, collaborative thinking and learning about how to bring reflective social practice into the realities of contemporary environmental sustainability and social justice challenges. We invite you to bring your work alive in the course, to question how your work can be strengthened through a reflective social practice, and how this course can be strengthened through insights from the realities of your work.



Course Outline

Module 1:

The wholeness of life – a new approach to social and environmental activism

This module introduces participants to entirely new and intrinsically alternative ways of seeing and thinking. Ways that enable us to perceive the energies and dynamics that lie at the heart of social life, generating its possibilities and constraints. Through this journey we will become aware of patterns of approach that we had never thought of before – encouraging us to find new ways of being, more commensurate with the living world we are seeking to enhance.

Participants will explore the art and practice of developing an ecological sensibility and so moving differently in the world and in their practices by learning to observe natural and social phenomena, reflecting on the relationship between connectivity and wholeness, from the personal to the collective to the organisational, and reflecting on their own embeddedness in context.

Module 2:

The delicacy of intervention – exploring the relationship between observation and intervention

This second module aims to help participants to articulate and describe what they are learning to see in social situations – the meaning they are making of them – so that they may better accompany people in those situations. A Reflective Social Practice involves accompanying individuals and social situations in their processes of becoming, their processes of navigating their own stuck places, their processes of seeing themselves and so becoming more conscious of their own journeys. The art of social intervention lies most significantly in the work of enabling individuals and social situations to become more aware.

This module offers an intimate and potentially transformative personal and professional development opportunity for participants to reflect on themselves: in the context of the organisations, communities, landscapes, and wider society they are living and working in. Participants will work with emergent and complex processes – building capacities to be able to 'stay with' uncertainty, unresolvedness, and discomfort which emerge from the very real challenges of sustainability and social justice facing our world.

Module 3:

The fundamentals of practice – facilitating social processes

In this third module, we will be exploring the notion of practice, and what this means as a way of enabling integration in our personal and professional realities. How such a relationship to practice can – and does – enhance and strengthen our self-understanding. How building such a practice requires that we step back, take a look at the whole, and become reflective practitioners, able to observe ourselves in practice. Working with these understandings, we will practise the art of facilitation, deepening both our sense of self and our facilitation practice.

This module will support participants in building their personal and professional capabilities as facilitators of processes of social change. The module encourages self-reflection in facilitation, i.e. the ability to see ourselves in this practice.



Module 4:

The action of reflection – learning-oriented action research methodologies

In this fourth module, we will be exploring reflection, and reflective practice, as a way of life, a way of being in the world. Using action research as a methodology for deepening our reflective capacity, we will explore how the four moments of action research – choosing (an intervention), acting, observing and reflecting – are both sequential and simultaneous. We will discover how this reflective capacity is really an essential way of making meaning of all that we are doing in the world, and that it belongs to both the past and the present as a generative necessity for enhancing understanding, self, and practice.

In this module, participants will develop capacities to work with learning and reflection-oriented approaches to interventionist research and practice. They will put into practice the principles of reflective social practice and action research to engage and intervene in a social-ecological situation.

Short course facilitation team

From the Proteus Initiative:

- Sue Davidoff
- Allan Kaplan

For further information see: <http://www.proteusinitiative.org/about-us#allan-kaplan-and-sue-davidoff>

From the Environmental Learning Research Centre:

- Jessica Cockburn
- Taryn Pereira
- Heila Lotz-Sisitka

For further information see: <https://www.ru.ac.za/elrc/people/>

Course structure and dates

The course will be held as four 5-day block modules over the course of 2020. Each module consists of five days of 'contact time' and an assignment. Participants may complete the full 4-module course and the assignments to receive a '**Certificate of Competence: Reflective Social Practice**' or may participate in individual 5-day modules to receive a '**Certificate of Attendance: Reflective Social Practice**'. The course will be hosted at the ELRC in Makhanda, and is accredited by Rhodes University. Participants are encouraged to consider using the course as spring-board into a Masters in Environmental Education with a special focus on Reflective Social Practice.

Block module dates:

Module 1: 24-28 February 2020

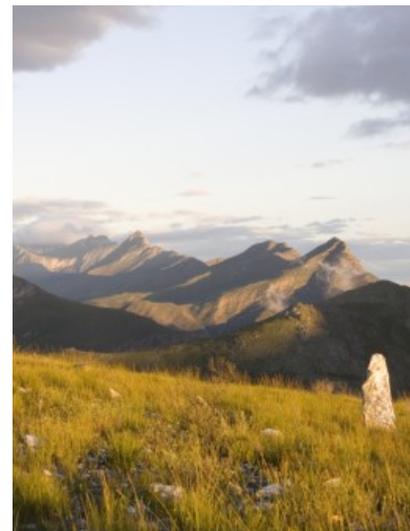
Module 2: 25-29 May 2020

Module 3: 31 August – 4 September 2020

Module 4: 2-6 November 2020



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Course fees

Full 4-module course with assessment: R 46 000 (for Certificate of Competence)
Fee per single 1-week module (no assessment): R10 000 (for Certificate of Attendance)
Participants will need to cover the cost of travel and accommodation.

Practitioners from NPOs or CBOs or students may apply for a reduced course fee.
Please contact us for further information.

Application process

To apply for this short course please send the following documents and information to Samantha Abdul at the ELRC: s.abdul@ru.ac.za

1. Covering motivation letter of max. 2 pages.
Please outline the following in your cover letter:
 - Why you are interested in this course.
 - How participating in this course will contribute to your practice.
 - Your current work environment: the organisation you work in, the work you are involved in.
 - If you would like to apply for a reduction on the course fees, please state this in your cover letter, providing a motivation.
2. Curriculum Vitae (short version, max 5 pages).
3. Copies of degree certificates (minimum requirement is a Bachelor's degree).

Please indicate in your application which mode of participation you are applying for:
Mode 1: Full course participation (full attendance of 4 modules and assessment) [for Certificate of Competence]

Mode 2: Single-module attendance (attendance of one or more separate modules without assessment - please note which modules) [for Certificate of Attendance]

Mode 3: Long distance - assessment only (for all four modules - note this is only by pre-arrangements with Proteus) [for Certificate of Competence]

The deadline for applications is Friday 17 January 2020..
We will notify you of the outcome of your application soon after the deadline.

“All social-ecological work is about facilitating conversation, nurturing connections, and about building relationships.

At its foundation all of our work is about relationship - with land, nature, ourselves and each other. The Reflective Social Practice work helps us to see whole landscapes – both natural and social landscapes – and then to facilitate connection and relationship building across these socio-ecological landscapes.”

-- A previous participant on a Reflective Social Practice Course.



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