

# A Course in Spiritual Ecology

with Benjamin Weiss



A deep dive into earth-inspired culture, community,  
& consciousness.

“ . . . the upsurge of Spirit is the only plausible way to stop the ecological destruction of our planet. Even people who have no interest in a communal solution to the distortions in our lives will have to face up [to] this ecological reality. Unless we transform our relationship with nature, we will destroy the preconditions for human life on this planet.”

*-Rabbi Michael Lerner*

*A note from a long-reluctant guide:*

For more than a decade, friends, students, and colleagues have asked me to teach a class such as this. In permaculture courses, on days foraging in the forest, and evenings around camp-fires, people have encouraged me to speak about my spiritual connection with nature and have asked me to teach them the magical and meditative practices that I've cultivated. Mostly I have refused. Out of reverence for the age-old process of the passage of secret knowledge from master to apprentice, I have waited many years for the moment in which I would feel an appropriate degree of comprehension and ability within myself before transferring these lessons to others. And, out of great distaste for, and distrust of the widespread misappropriation of mysterious— and dangerous— esoteric practices from the world's treasure-trove of traditions, I have long hesitated to contribute to this maelstrom of mystical mayhem. But enough! As one of my teachers has said: “The only real endpoint of any work is when we decide that what we've done is sufficient.” And so, it is with great gratitude and wonderment that I invite you, finally, to undertake an immersion with me into the realm of spiritual ecology... The Earth as we know her is in dire condition. The state of humanity has never been more strange. To save ourselves and rediscover the balance of harmony with Nature we must work in realms unseen.

*-Benjamin Weiss*

**The class will take place at several locations in Lancaster, Pennsylvania:**

- Urban Edge Farm.
- A Cemetery.
- The Hundred Acre Wood.
- Your Mind.
- The Dreamtime.

## Schedule:

**August 21<sup>st</sup>, September 4<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th\*</sup>, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, & 30<sup>th</sup>, November 13<sup>th</sup>** (& November 27<sup>th</sup> as a rain date)

Arrive by 6:30pm. Class from 7pm-?. *\*Class on Sunday September 26<sup>th</sup> will be held at 1pm in the afternoon.*

“The central purpose of the Work that Reconnects is to help people uncover and experience their innate connections with each other and with the systemic, self-healing powers of the web of life, so that they may be enlivened and motivated to play their part in creating a sustainable civilization.”

*-Joanna Macy*

## Topics to be covered during the course include:

- The deepest ecology
- The language of symbols
- The interpretation of, and design of myth
- The use of sigils
- A natural state of mind and view of reality
- The cosmology of place-based spiritual practice
- Shamanic warfare
- Communication with Nature
- The dangers of Earth worship
- Deriving personal power from right-relationship with Nature
- The role of art in sustainable ecology
- Meditative presence
- Trance states
- Magic for balancing creation



## The Syllabus: Here is a summary of the curriculum:

- August 21<sup>st</sup>: *Cosmology & Mythology*
- September 4<sup>th</sup>: *Meditation & Dreaming*
- September 26<sup>th\*</sup>: *Music & Art*
- October 2<sup>nd</sup>: *Magic & Madness*
- October 16<sup>th</sup>: *Healing & Death*
- October 30<sup>th</sup>: *Warfare & Chaos*
- November 13<sup>th</sup>: *Balance & Peace*

*\*Sunday afternoon class*

“Scientists tell us that we have enough technology to save our planet. . . . Yet we don’t take advantage of this new technology. . . . The technological has to work hand-in-hand with the spiritual. Our spiritual life is the element that can bring about the energies of peace, calm, brotherhood, understanding, and compassion. Without that, our planet doesn’t stand a chance.”

*-Thich Nhat Hahn*

**Benjamin Weiss** is a certified permaculture designer and teacher, activist, herbalist, farmer, musician, and writer from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Ben studied natural building and permaculture at The Farm Ecovillage Training Center, received a permaculture teacher certification from CRMPI, studied urban agriculture at Growing Power, and has studied herbalism with Sarah Preston of Radiance, shamanic dreaming techniques with Adhi Moonien Two-Owls, and forest



garden design with Dave Jacke. Ben was also the administrator and a long-time volunteer for the Lancaster Coalition for Peace & Justice, and has helped to organize many other initiatives and actions related to racial and environmental justice. Ben has facilitated many classes and workshops, has designed and managed four organic farms, and forages professionally. He owns and manages Susquehanna Apothecary and Urban Edge Farm.

In addition, Ben has been a lifelong student of meditation, mysticism, and magic. Ben has studied Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, Ghandian philosophy, the Bhagavad Gita, the B’hai Faith, Rastafari and Obeah, Wicca and other neo-Celtic traditions, Lakota spirituality, Ayahuasca traditions, the mythology of Indigenous Australia, ancient Mesopotamian religions, the Norse pantheon, the Egyptian pantheon, the Greco-Roman pantheon, as well as the works of Gurdjieff, Castaneda, and above all, Kabbalah. Through these studies and practices, Ben has cultivated a cosmology, a meditative practice, and magical tools and techniques that center around the repair of the Natural World by those responsible for breaking it— human beings.

#### **Tuition:**

The cost of this class is two-fold: a cash payment to cover expenses, as well as a “by-agreement” barter.

- \$500 per student covers facilitator’s compensation as well as other materials. This fee is negotiable.
- In order to finalize registration, each student will need to work out a unique barter exchange with Ben that could be anything from work-trade to an exchange of skills or professional services, to a trade for material goods... Ben will schedule a phone call with each student to craft the details of this exchange.



***The class will be limited to 12 students. Due to the intimate and intense nature of this material, it is mandatory that registrants are either close friends with Ben or have taken a class with Ben in the past and are familiar with his teaching style, curriculum, and personality.***

**Registration Deposits:** A registration deposit of \$250 must be submitted at the time of registration in order to hold a place in the class. **This deposit, as well as full tuition, is non-refundable** except in legitimate emergencies.

#### **Warnings:**

- This class is not recommended for people who are struggling with or have recovered from addiction. Portions of the curriculum will include examinations of and experiments with varying types of intoxication.
- This class is not recommended for people who are experiencing severe depression, anxiety, or other significant mental and emotional upheavals because the curriculum’s explorations of the nature of consciousness, the boundaries of reality, and the crises facing humanity may exacerbate these hardships.

- This class is not recommended for people who are exceptionally religiously observant nor for those who are rigorously practicing a system of meditation or magic that has strict boundaries or prohibitions. Many of the ideas and exercises during this class may be challenging to the student's worldview, belief system, politics, morals, ethics, and inhibitions.

"It gradually became clear that the Green Belt Movement's work with communities to repair the degraded environment could not be done effectively without participants embracing a set of core spiritual values."

*-Wangari Maathai*

### **Preparedness for the Class:**

The class will take place outdoors around a fire. Students will be notified beforehand if class will take place indoors due to inclement weather. Students should **come fully prepared to be outdoors for extended periods in varying weather, and to participate in physical activities including walks through rough terrain and dancing.** None of the spaces we'll be in are ADA compatible but we will happily make any accommodations that we can in order for students with specific needs to participate. Please notify us of any pertinent allergies or physical limitations before the class begins. No student will be allowed to utilize media captured during the class for anything other than their own educational purposes. **Please do not miss any classes.**

Things to bring include:

- drinking water
- snacks
- notebook
- pencil/pen
- bug spray
- sunscreen
- sturdy shoes/boots

\*Students will be notified of any other required materials as the course progresses.



**To register email:**

**[herbal.apprenticeship@gmail.com](mailto:herbal.apprenticeship@gmail.com)**