



July 3, 2023

Dear ESSYI Student,

Welcome to ESSYI 2023! As the Summer Director, I oversee and coordinate the 2-week institute. The other staff and I are probably just as excited about working with you as you are to immerse yourself in ESSYI. Below are a few reminders, themes, a reminder of your reading assignment, and a short description of a sample day.

Journaling

Although I coordinate all aspects of the institute, my primary focus is on the academic dimension—as an academic program my goal is for you to develop deeper and broader understandings of environmental studies. Through your experiences (e.g., field work, classroom sessions, films, project work, hiking, and many conversations with students, staff, and professors) you will gain a myriad of insights into the richness of environmental studies. But being a passive sponge will not lead to personal growth. You must *actively reflect* on, *analyze*, and *connect* what you experience, see, hear, and think. The key to useful reflection will be your journal. In it you will: take class notes, record data, solve problems, outline projects, collect quotes, note references, and regularly make analytically reflective entries to help you make sense of and integrate your experiences. These journals are vital to your learning, and they will also be evaluated to determine whether you earn academic credit for the Institute. We will provide journals, and a few other resources, upon your arrival.

Diversity

The participants in this institute come from all over the country and the world. Even those of us who come from the same zip code are likely quite different. We all have different experiences, strengths, challenges, values, interests, goals, and ways of being in the world. Our approach is to celebrate and embrace this diversity, to fully respect and support each other as we learn, and ultimately to benefit from what everyone has to offer. Insensitive behavior will not be tolerated. We all share the same home: Earth – and it is the only home we have; we must respectfully cooperate in the enjoyment and protection of our shared home.

ESSYI Themes & Goals

- Environmental studies is the *intersection* of social, scientific, political, economic, cultural, and ethical ways of thinking: *everything is connected*.
- Environmental studies also entails a *personal dimension* and ESSYI will enable you to see the world more clearly and will empower you to change it: *you are agents of change*.
- ESSYI will expose you to myriad academic and career paths related to the environment: *reimagine your future and your relationship with the environment*.
- The planet faces real challenges and amazing opportunities in a vast universe, we need to work together to appreciate, understand, and protect it: *it takes a diverse village* to solve critical problems.

Cell Phones During ESSYI and Day Trips

Although the world has become increasingly connected via technology, technology can hinder our connection to each other and to nature. During ESSYI, we strongly recommend that you focus on the here and now—immersed in the moment with the people around you. On certain day trips, we will collect all phones allowing you to have an “unplugged” experience with nature. We will be able to be contacted by your parent(s)/guardian(s) in an emergency and you will be able to contact your parent(s)/guardian(s) through a director or staff member, should any emergency arise. Students often report that the perspective gained from an “unplugged” experience is among the most rewarding aspects of ESSYI. Join us and unplug.

A Sample Day

Rest up! The two weeks are tightly scheduled and quite full. A typical day might include breakfast at 7:45am, collecting data in the field or on a lake, a quick half hour lunch before afternoon classroom sessions on environmental economics, then a little free time (also prime journaling time!) before dinner at 6pm, followed by an evening workshop on writing environmental manifestos, and then some brief free time in the dorm to relax, talk, and reflect on the day before lights-out for much needed sleep at 11:00pm, to get ready for another day just as full with different experiences! Your minds and bodies will be fully engaged—come prepared!

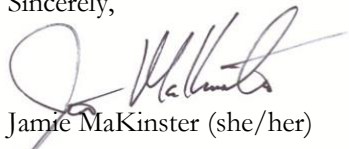
Reading Assignment - Falter

By now, you might be most or all of the way through reading Falter. Please do take notes as you read on what you find most interesting, confusing, shocking, inspiring, and useful in thinking about the environment and our relationship with it. As you read, make connections with what you already know, and imagine connections that you want to make during ESSYI. In many ways, ESSYI is a long conversation that will be enriched by what you bring to the conversation and by the connections you make across topics, people, books, and ideas.

Integration & Inspiration

Throughout the two weeks you will encounter many familiar and unfamiliar ideas. I will challenge you personally to move a bit out of your comfort zone as you explore your relationship to the environment and orient yourself in the field of environmental studies. The integration of scientific research, humanistic expression, socio-politico-economic policies, ethical reasoning, and applied problem solving is particularly challenging given the complex systems involved; however, the challenge is worth every effort we can make—the sustainability of the planet and humanity depends on us accepting the challenge. There are countless diverse ways, small and large, to become a part of the solution. My hope is that each of you will experience something amazing, will do something for the first time, will grow in an unexpected way, and that you will be moved to help others even as you are inspired by them. Know that I and the rest of the staff are here to help you integrate as much as possible of the two weeks into a renewed view of the planet and our place on it. See you soon!

Sincerely,



Jamie MaKinster (she/her)

ESSYI Summer Director

Professor of Science and Environmental Education

*The human race is challenged more than ever before
to demonstrate our mastery—not over nature but of ourselves.*

—Rachel Carson