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Sustainability Literacy in French Literature and Film: From Solitary Reveries to Treks across Deserts

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Foreign Language
Teaching and
the Environment
Theory, Curricula,
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Edited by
Charlotte Ann Melin

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Sustainability Literacy in French Literature and Film: From Solitary Reveries to Treks across Deserts

While we marvel at technological advances as our global society moves forward in the twenty-first century, we mourn the environmental and socio-economic problems that continue to plague the Earth. Given that the well-being of our planet is at stake, foreign language teachers might ask whether it is their responsibility to educate for sustainability literacy. In *Remapping the Foreign Language Curriculum*, Janet K. Swaffar and Katherine Arens argue that foreign languages foster multiple literacies that empower "individuals to enter societies; to derive, generate, communicate and validate knowledge and experience; to exercise expressive capacities to engage others in shared cognitive, social, and moral projects; and to exercise such agency with an identity that is recognized in the community" (2). Accordingly, as the humanities refocus on the role of literacy and social context, so too must foreign languages.

This essay explores the imperative to embrace a new model of education that will engage students in learning about the interconnectedness of our multispecies world, sustainability, and global solidarity—the belief "that unity of humankind can be established on the basis of some basic or core human values" (Korab-Karpowicz 305). Foreign language courses—in particular advanced-level offerings that address literacy, critical thinking, and cultural comparisons—are ideal settings for educating for sustainability literacy. Such literacy is essential to our collective twenty-first-century global identity, but it requires transformative educational practices. As we

design foreign language courses, we should strive to employ a greater variety of teaching methods and keep in mind the necessity of more comprehensive goals, which include making students more aware of principles that reach beyond forming citizens who will participate in the economic world. Specifically, as twenty-first-century educators, we should strive to imbue our students with a sense of global citizenship to instill personal responsibility that will translate into their making more sustainable choices. When we sensitize students to issues that affect them, and indeed all humankind on our planet, we prepare them to become global citizens, leaders, and stewards of the global commons (Bennett et al.).

This essay explores theoretical frameworks for teaching sustainability literacy and introduces a model for teaching an advanced French language course that applies those frameworks to classical literary texts, contemporary world literature, and film. This model advocates teaching new literacies through activities that foster critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, and experiential learning. To accomplish these larger learning outcomes, students need to study worldwide problems and reflect on what they have learned in a final project. This culminating project requires them to examine their place and responsibilities in their local environment and community while considering global concerns and addressing the complexity of perspectives on these issues.

Reorienting Education in the United States: Models for Sustainability Literacy and Global Awareness

According to the prominent environmental educator David W. Orr, the failure of education is not simply a lack of skills in specific subjects. Rather, "it is a failure to educate people to think broadly, to perceive systems and patterns, and to live as whole persons" (2). Orr sees the pressing need for profound educational reform as stemming from "the rapid decline in the habitability of the earth" (2). To address this issue, he proposes the redesign of both education and educator preparation, so that teachers might nurture young people to help heal industrial damage, redress environmental injustices, and become responsible global citizens who act in solidarity with the earth and its people (3). These are challenging goals to be sure; nevertheless, they are possible if sustainability literacy becomes a primary goal of education.

Multiple definitions of environmental and sustainable education exist. In this essay, *environmental education* refers to the process of examining ecological issues and working to improve our surroundings, whereas *sustainability education* involves a more profound examination of how human activity affects the environment. When we speak of *sustainability literacy*, we thus refer to the ability to exercise "the skills, attitudes, competencies, dispositions and values that are necessary for surviving and thriving in the declining conditions of the world in ways which slow down that decline as far as possible" (Stibbe 10). Knowledge is about learning and gaining information; literacy is about being able to use what we learn and turn it into positive action. For twenty-first-century citizens, both environmental and sustainability education are necessary. Furthermore, as Andrés R. Edwards argues, "We must shift from merely sustaining to *thriving*. The transformation from sustainability to *thriveability* challenges us to expand our imaginations and create the future we want for ourselves and for future generations" (4). As educators, our role is to help students develop their full potential and become responsible citizens. These goals are not limited by language but rather deeply connected to our ability to use language. Our objectives as foreign language practitioners must accordingly embrace the study of the interconnected relationships between cultural, socioeconomic, and environmental conditions that lead to sustainability literacy.

Globally, debates about failure in educational systems, along with recommended standards and reforms, have been at the forefront of the news for decades. The dissimilarities between the goals expressed by educational programs in other countries and those in the United States are, however, striking. Programs in Canada and in many countries in the European Union require the study of world geography and at least one foreign language, in addition to math and sciences. In the United States, despite much debate, the Common Core State Standards stress English language and mathematics. Thus, despite public discussion about globalization, foreign languages are not considered essential to living in a global society. Meanwhile, Denmark, Scotland, and France have already implemented environmental and sustainable education programs for kindergarten through high school.¹ These developed countries, which have strong historical traditions of respecting the environment in both urban centers and natural spaces, recognize that sustainability literacy is crucial to society in the twenty-first century. Their environmental education programs accordingly reflect the

interrelation of disciplines, the development of analytical skills, civic engagement, and global solidarity.

Whereas nationally the United States lags behind in sustainability education, state governments acknowledge the importance of environmental literacy, because its value relates to an identifiable purpose of preparing students for their economic future.² Such mandated environmental and sustainable education serves a greater mission—that of instilling new behaviors and educating global citizens. Indeed, environmental education has been part of the European Union agenda since the late 1980s (Binstock 13). Although not every country in the European Union addresses environmental education to the same extent, it is considered “as important to European environmental policy as environmental protection legislation and market based instruments in efforts to gear human behavior toward more environmentally sustainable patterns” (Nicolae, qtd. in Binstock 13).

With no nationally mandated environmental education in the United States, some states and nonprofit organizations have implemented programs at the state level. In 1990, Congress found that increasing threats to human health and the global environment warranted environmental education and consequently passed the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA) to fund programs. This legislation proposes the integration of environmental education across the K–12 curriculum, linking this effort to educational reform for environmental literacy. According to NEEA, “An environmentally literate person is someone who, both individually and together with others, makes informed decisions concerning the environment; is willing to act on these decisions to improve the wellbeing of other individuals, societies, and global environment; and participates in civic life.” This imperative to educate broadly should be taken as an invitation to design curricula that encourage students to become proficient in multiple literacies, most crucially sustainability literacy. Turning now to the question of how to design such a foreign language course, let us examine a model that integrates interdisciplinary sustainability lessons, analytical skills, and experiential activities and that contributes to redefining foreign language education. Foreign language teachers are trained to teach language, culture, and literature; few are prepared, however, to embrace teaching sustainability through a global lens. In the United States, foreign language educators at the postsecondary level looking for guidance on integrating sustainability into their curriculum may turn to guidelines developed by the National Education Associa-

tion (NEA) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Another important resource, Partnership for Twenty-First-Century Learning (a coalition of educators and business leaders), has worked with NEA and with ACTFL in developing a list of skills, interdisciplinary themes, and academic content indispensable for training postsecondary school students to be successful workers and active citizens in the global community. This national coalition recommends development of world language skills, global awareness, and financial, economic, business, entrepreneurial, civic, health, and environmental literacies. Like the five Cs—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—of foreign language education articulated by ACTFL (*World-Readiness Standards*), the skills map for world languages (*Twenty-First-Century Skills Map*) illustrates how these skills and interdisciplinary themes can be woven into language classes. Its suggestions for developing creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, information, media, and technology skills do not include environmental literacy per se, but its aspiration of cultivating citizens knowledgeable about the interconnectedness of socioeconomic and global environmental problems underscores that foreign language educators play a vital role in educating for global awareness.

Given that our goals can no longer be limited to educating students to be workers in a monolingual economic community, global environmental and sustainability literacy must realistically become part of our mission as educators. We as a society want students to find gainful, meaningful employment. We also want them to commit to the global common good as arrived at through sustainable living. Foreign language educators already teach global awareness, as exemplified by ACTFL's world-readiness standards for learning languages (see Summary), and by current French, German, and Spanish Advanced Placement (AP) language and culture courses that focus on such topics as the environment, diversity, tolerance, economic issues, health, human rights, nutrition and food safety, and peace and war. Students preparing for the AP exams are advised to look at the origins and possible solutions to global environmental, political, and social challenges. To their credit, too, publishing companies have begun to integrate chapters on environmental and social issues in foreign language textbooks.³ Clearly, cultural materials and experiential learning activities in combination with literary texts can raise students' preparedness for civic, environmental, and global challenges.

Nurturing Sustainability Literacy: From Solitary Reveries to Treks across Deserts

As the Partnership for Twenty-First-Century Learning framework recommends, before citizens can take individual and collective action toward addressing environmental challenges, they must “demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the environment and the circumstances and conditions affecting it, particularly as relates to air, climate, land, food, energy, water and ecosystems” (*Framework*). These concepts are generally taught by science educators; outside an advanced immersion setting, scientific lessons will rarely be taught in a target language setting. What interdisciplinary literature and culture courses have to offer, on the other hand, is the opportunity to explore themes, such as food and water resources, through authentic materials that reflect culturally rich and diverse bioregions in relation to their respective cultural values and societal conditions.

In the advanced interdisciplinary course *From Solitary Reveries to Treks across Deserts* (see appendix), students explore the complex interrelations between human beings and the natural world through close textual and visual analysis, personal experiences, and experiential activities. Landscape and culture leave a permanent imprint on writers, filmmakers, and photographers, making their creations an effective springboard for introducing and examining environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural issues. Although the key objective in this course remains the learning and practice of a second language, the emphasis on developing analytical skills helps students understand the challenges faced by people from various cultures across the globe.

Matching my skill set and research expertise with content, as all instructors must do in designing such a course, I include Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (“Reveries of the Solitary Walker”), an autobiographical text emphasizing the importance of nature in the eighteenth century, and Colette's *Sido*, which reveals her twentieth-century relationship to nature. Present-day francophone writers and filmmakers offer immersion into global natural settings and cultural traditions as well, while simultaneously revealing insights into sustainability issues. For instance, Chinese-born French academician François Cheng's novel, *Le dit de Tian-yi* (“The River Below”), and writer-filmmaker Dai Sijie's *Balzac et la Petite Tailleur chinoise* (“Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress”) were used to introduce students to lush Chinese landscapes, Buddhist and Daoist rela-

tionships to the natural world, and multifaceted issues such as the controversial construction of the hydroelectric Three Gorges Dam.⁴ Additionally, Nobel laureate Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio's novel *Désert* ("Desert"), set in both the Sahara and France, presents geographical juxtapositions that foreground environmental, economic, political, and social issues that are intricately woven together and fosters reading and interpretation through an interdisciplinary and global lens. Similar textual and visual materials can be selected to nurture socioeconomic and global awareness, because they offer the opportunity to study environmental, cultural, and multispecies diversity. Moreover, many francophone writers and filmmakers share a profound relationship to place and a commitment to social and environmental justice that makes their work particularly suitable for such courses.

Redefining Foreign Language Education by Considering the Local and the Global

In order to examine the close relationship between a writer and the environment, let us begin with Rousseau, France's first ecologist, whose meditations describe his relation to the biologically diverse world before the industrial revolution. Rousseau defines his own sense of place by mapping his surroundings through words. Reading Rousseau encourages students to question their own relation to our nonhuman world and grapple with the importance of place in their own lives, especially when literary analysis is coupled with tasks that incorporate experiences close to home.

One such assignment is inspired by the "Sense of Place Map" designed by Mitchell Thomashow to focus attention on our personal relation to place and ecological identity (193). Students paint, draw, or make collages that reflect their emotional attachments to places they have lived. Thomashow explains that this nontraditional task requires students to delve deeply into their individual experiences with location: "This map becomes a form of storytelling, a document that explains a person's relationship to the earth" (195). Through this compelling project, students realize the complexity of their interactions with place, particularly if they have frequently moved or traveled. Students' descriptive presentations of their "Sense of Place Map" also yield surprises, however, for they reveal that definitions of "place" can include such varied locales as the inside of their own heads, the four walls of their room, or a cabin on a lake. These ideas about locale do not necessarily connect to nature, rural areas, or even urban spaces. Furthermore, not

everyone can relate to the idea of an ecological identity, since the experience of nature is too frequently missing from our daily lives. Many students believe that being in nature requires visiting a state park or designated wilderness area. They often do not realize that simply walking across campus is certainly an experience in nature. Most of them have not spent their childhoods playing outside, so positive reactions to contact with dirt, sand, or insects are rare. Richard Louv developed the expression "nature-deficit disorder" to describe this "growing gap between children and nature" (3). Whereas psychologists and educators agree that spending more time in nature is vitally important for present and future generations whose daily lives are so intertwined with technology, for postsecondary students, college may be the last opportunity before they enter the workforce to cultivate this sense of place in a concentrated and analytical way and to engage with the natural environment both individually and collectively.

Tellingly, "Sense of Place Map" presentations develop a feeling of community that is often in direct opposition to students' developed sense of individualism. These collective, community-building discussions lead to questions of *ecological identity*, which, according to Thomashow, "includes a person's connection to the earth, perception of the ecosystem, and direct experience of nature" (3). He clarifies that to have a balanced ecological identity we need "both scientific awareness and reverence for the processes of life, both personal stories and the responsibility of a citizen" (xxi). Because of growing populations, pollution, and finite resources, we face environmental issues that result from problems in people's beliefs and actions, posits Richard Borden (26). He notes that childhood activities in nature, such as camping, hunting, or fishing, are formative experiences that help people become environmentally committed and feel responsible for the future (32).

Whereas foreign language educators cannot make up for students' lack of childhood experiences in the outdoors, they can create opportunities for positive experiences in nature that change both their conceptions of nature and sense of responsibility to the environment (Borden 34). Since many of our students seem to have had little exposure to the natural world, a focus on the environment emphasizes the connection between academic pursuits and the community of real-world ecosystems in which we all live. In *The Nature of College*, James J. Farrell's insightful analysis of what matters to college students and how they can learn to become strong advocates for sustainability, he argues that college is the ideal place for students to think about culture and ecosystems, examine habits, and learn new behaviors (xiii). Pairing

the “Sense of Place Map” assignment, which helps students discover their personal ecological identity, with a French translation of our university’s sustainability pledge allows students to assess their environmental footprint regarding recycling practices, energy use, food waste, water conservation, and transportation choices (“Hollins University”).

Here, experiential learning beyond the four walls of a traditional classroom helps students develop vital skills. Since many millennial students appear to be inseparable from their technology, experiential learning has become a key method to connect them to the outdoor environment. Leslie K. Hickcox reasons that through a hands-on approach students can acquire new skills and interact with their teachers in a more personal manner (123). Indeed, close mentoring and engaging learning environments are vital for student success and often part of liberal arts colleges’ mission statements. As Adrianna J. Kezar and Jillian Kinzie elucidate, “Quality undergraduate curriculum requires coherence in learning, synthesizing experiences, ongoing practice of learned skills, and integrating education with experience” (149). In contrast to assignments that require thinking about the natural environment in the abstract, experiential activities introduce students to the physical world, leading them to question their own relation to nature. Successful activities can include campus walks identifying plants, weeding a community garden, painting a recycling bin, and cooking and sharing a local and sustainable meal that includes vegetables from a community garden. Disconcerting though it may be to discover that some students are afraid of dirt, it is rewarding to guide them through the identification of edible plants by leaf shapes and fragrance, and to see their amazement as they discover that a beautiful flower will become an okra pod or a tomatillo. By integrating such activities, teachers can help students understand the interconnections within their community.

After discussions of personal ecological identity and sustainability practices, students turn to unfamiliar global cultures and landscapes. In order to appreciate the array of topographical regions around the globe, as well as to learn unfamiliar vocabulary, they view Yann Arthus-Bertrand’s film *HOME* (available on *YouTube* with narrations in several languages). Shot almost entirely from above the earth, it shows the beauty and diversity of life on our planet and how we are threatening its ecological balance. *HOME* introduces themes that are studied throughout the course: water resources, renewable energies, forest exploitation, agriculture, food production, production and consumption of consumer goods, and human migrations. In

general, students have a basic understanding of such environmental issues but need guidance in drawing connections between environmental conditions, population growth, economic growth, and social dimensions, including health, lodging, consumption, education, employment, culture, and social equity. Through its associations with fighting climate change and preserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural resources, sustainability literacy promotes social cohesion and solidarity across space and generations (*Green Événements*). When interwoven throughout any course of this kind, these principles provide ground for discussions focused on the ACTFL standards, including comparisons of living, economic, and environmental conditions, and encourage students to demonstrate their understanding of cultures and their ability to make interdisciplinary connections.

The layering of multiple visual and written texts offers opportunities to appreciate the relation between humans and nature and develops sustainability knowledge through a process of mutual reinforcement. Although environmental issues are not always instantly noticeable, the more students analyze such texts, the more these ecological problems become apparent. With repeated exposure to materials that span the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, students have abundant opportunities to compare past conditions to the present and consider future implications. As they study global cultures, they reflect on how our access to material resources is affected by socioeconomic divisions and consider what changes might lead to greater social justice and equity. For all issues, I challenge students to question the goals, values, and needs that are at stake for people living in each of these various environments. Problems relating to the availability of energy, resources, food, and water are studied along with their effects on populations inhabiting specific regions.

A pivotal text for exploring these issues is Jean-Marie Le Clézio's novel *Désert*, which offers rich material for developing *environmental awareness*, an understanding of the fragility of our environment and the importance of its protection. *Désert* alternates between two narratives set in different time periods: the early 1900s, when nomadic tribes flee across the Moroccan desert to escape French troops, and the 1970s, when descendants of the nomads live in shacks outside an urban Moroccan city and eventually immigrate to Marseilles. In this early-twentieth-century narrative, nomads trek across the desert under conditions of extreme heat, thirst, starvation, and exhaustion only to find dried up streams and little food. Their experi-

ences remind us just how dependent we are on healthy natural ecosystems for our survival (Edwards 7). Living in extreme climatic conditions, the nomads are constantly forced by natural and political conditions to be on the move. When students compare the psychological effects and physical consequences of violence and war depicted in *Désert* to current events, they notice similarities between the novel and the plight of millions of displaced people fleeing war-torn landscapes in the twenty-first century. Study of the novel encourages similar explorations of human migration, food security, the dispossessed, material possessions, and consumerism, which are all essential to the discussion of sustainability. Moreover, *Désert* introduces traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which is “an understanding of ecosystems and their interrelationships,” used by indigenous peoples (Edwards 7). The novel exemplifies TEK through descriptions of constellations and dune formations used by the nomads to cross deserts. This form of place-based knowledge contrasts sharply with today’s education dominated by fact-based learning, memorizing, technological skills, and professional preparation. *Désert* describes the psychological effects of poverty, war, exile, immigration, and unemployment on health, food, water, education, living conditions, and the environment.

Although for skilled readers Le Clézio’s vivid descriptions help them imagine the desert settings, for today’s visually oriented students who are still developing interpretive skills, documentaries and short clips are valuable enhancements whose introduction often sparks discussions about how to “read” both images and texts. According to Eva Brumberger, although students are constantly exposed to visual material, they are not necessarily visually literate and need to learn both visual and verbal literacy (46). Frequent juxtapositions and comparisons between the textual and the visual and between past and present urban conditions prompt students to make comparisons with their own urban environments.

Because students often find rural or wilderness environments less accessible, we view *Women of the Sand*. Filmed at an oasis in the Mauritanian desert, this documentary shows the strength of nomadic women and the preservation of traditional cultural values. Stunning settings aside, desert life is far from idyllic. The film depicts the daily threat of desertification that women combat by building branch walls to hold back the sand in temporary efforts to protect fertile soil for planting vegetables during the rainy season. Seeing the quotidian struggle faced by people across the globe encourages

students to draw connections with the living conditions of underprivileged people in rural and urban environments in their own countries of origin. This intercultural exposure reinforces students' development of critical thinking skills that require higher order thinking and ethical reasoning.

Living in a Material World

It is one thing to read a factual description about food and water scarcity but another to visualize how people live. In this class, analysis of global conditions is enhanced by close examination of images from Peter Menzel's *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*. Photographs on this Web site depict what an average family eats in a week, which raises awareness about how different cultures, environments, and economic circumstances influence the cost of food when students are asked to work in small groups to describe and discuss the images. Gwendolyn Barnes-Karol and Maggie A. Broner, in their insightful essay on the use of images to teach cultural perspectives, encourage foreign language teachers to reach beyond the traditional description of food and cultural practices to address the significance of controversial food issues such as obesity, malnutrition, and mechanized agriculture in this globalized era (430). Such images help students understand the complex relations between culture, food, and social inequities.

Material examples of the problems associated with food security can also be examined using film, such as Agnès Varda's remarkable documentary *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse (The Gleaners and I)*, which investigates poverty, gleaning, recycling, consumerism, and wasteful throwaway societies. As Varda crosses the countryside, she discovers the beauty of heart-shaped potatoes discarded for their imperfections. She explores early morning Paris markets, meeting people of all ages picking up discarded herbs, fruits, and vegetables. Hence gleaning affords a perfect opportunity to discuss the billions of dollars of food wasted in the Western world and to share the ingenious advertising campaign "Inglorious Fruits and Vegetables." This campaign, started by Intermarché (the third-biggest grocer in France), encourages people to buy and consume imperfectly shaped fruits and vegetables ("Légumes moches"). Many of Western society's ideas and values are brought into question as students discuss Varda's film and Intermarché's campaign. By viewing other ways of living, students question their own beliefs and values, stretch abilities in tasks that exercise communicative competence, and demonstrate intercultural understanding and sustainability thinking.

Ultimately, the concept of cultural community must become the most fundamental aspect of sustainability literacy emphasized in such a class. Whereas some students quickly relate to poverty and social justice issues, others—raised in a culture devoted to individualism—more gradually discover the rewards of community engagement through participation in a microfinance activity. For this assignment, highlighting the interconnectedness of the global community, students view photographs and read stories on the Web site for Kiva, a nonprofit microfinance organization that helps alleviate poverty around the world through activism. As the initiator of the project, I ask that they weigh a number of factors before proposing a loan: geographic location, gender equality, economic sector, and green commitment. Reading Web sites in the target language that describe entrepreneurial groups, students put their language and intercultural skills to tangible use. In this way, the foreign language literature course centered on sustainability thinking becomes an opportunity to consider how what we consume as individuals and as a society affects the present and future of the global environment.

Teaching for living in a material world means that in a course where students read literary texts that give them a glimpse into historical events, they also come face-to-face with how present-day problems relate to personal choice. Discussion of personal choice brings sustainability issues closer to home, makes students aware of how other cultures confront similar issues, and contributes to developing more sustainable living models. As students inventory their multiple belongings (a linguistically manageable task recommended by Farrell), they can examine what it means to live sustainably, which requires more complex thinking. When they are challenged to think about cultural values, they reflect on their realistic needs to survive and thrive in an effort to contribute to slowing the decline of the world's resources, not only for themselves, but for future generations.

Knowledge about water resources, renewable energies, biodiversity, endangered species, desertification, deforestation, soil degradation, agriculture, food production, social justice, production and consumption of consumer goods, and human migrations effectively translates into sustainability thinking when students are given an opportunity to synthesize their learning through a final project. For this exercise, students choose a topic that has piqued their curiosity and, instead of writing a traditional research paper, transpose their research into a creative project that, according to

Tom Romano, “arises from research, experience, and imagination” (*Blending x*). This multigenre research project, which encourages divergent thinking, must contain an informational essay, a letter to the reader, and at least six other genres, including one visual element. Whether the student works on arctic biodiversity, tiny houses, green tourism, GMOs, environmental justice, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, or roof gardens, the topic must be researched, analyzed, and presented with possible solutions for a global context that takes into account human beings and our physical planet. By connecting themes explored over the semester, the multigenre project stimulates new collective discussions that enhance the journey towards sustainability literacy.

Although one class alone cannot come close to educating for sustainability literacy, it can, as the model described here shows, be designed to broaden students’ understanding of global perspectives and environmental awareness of cultures and bioregions. Through study and analysis of socioeconomic and ecological conditions across cultures, students become active learners who engage “with real life issues” (Stibbe 11). As we are faced with innumerable environmental and socioeconomic challenges, Edwards reminds us: “More significantly, *thriveability* embodies the innate qualities that define our humanity—our capacity for empathy, compassion, collaboration, playfulness, creativity, enthusiasm and love” (4; my emphasis). Environmental and sustainability education call for everyone to respect and preserve the natural world from further anthropogenic destruction (e.g., climate change, environmental destruction, species extinction). Because of our focus on global awareness, we as foreign-language educators must play a crucial role in nurturing the universal human qualities Edwards mentions, educating the citizens of tomorrow for sustainability literacy so that we can live to see the next generation thrive.

NOTES

1. The Danish Ministry of Education launched its educational strategy for sustainable development as part of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 (*Education for Sustainable Development: A Strategy*). In Scotland, there is a greater focus on an integrated and coherent approach to sustainable development (*Education for Sustainable Development [ESD]*). In France, a system of environmental education for sustainable development was introduced in all French schools K–12 (Ricard).
2. According to former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe: “Learning about our environment is a great way for children to understand important scientific concepts that will prepare them for the new [Virginia] economy” (“Governor”).

3. Although prepackaged curricula that are revised every five years cannot keep up with our rapidly changing world, several intermediate French textbooks contain chapters on the environment, including *Quant à moi*, by Jeannette D. Bragger and Donald B. Rice, and *À votre tour!*, by Jean-Paul Valette and Rebecca M. Valette.
4. *A Journey in the History of Water: Struggles, Energy, Myths, Conflicts* is a multilingual tracked documentary.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE SYLLABUS FOR
FROM SOLITARY REVERIES TO TREKS ACROSS DESERTS:
THE LANDSCAPES OF FRANCOPHONE CULTURES

Summary

What do you think of when you hear the word *nature*? What is the Earth to people in Africa, the Caribbean, or Asia? How is nature imagined, and what is humanity's relation to it? Premised on these questions, this class invites students to explore the relation between humans and their environment through the study of literature, nonfiction, and films. Using an interdisciplinary and global lens, students examine interactions between human beings and the complex natural world. Because so many topics, such as art, philosophy, painting, writing, music, sculpture, gardens, agriculture, food, health, science, economics, and political science, are intrinsically linked to nature, a class focused on this theme can draw from a large variety of materials.

Readings and Films

Readings

Le dit de Tian-yi, by François Cheng; *Désert*, by Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio; *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, by Simone Schwarz-Bart; *L'homme qui plantait les arbres*, by Jean Giono; *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Films

The Gleaners and I (Varda), *Food Beware: The French Organic Revolution* (Jaud), *The Last Trapper* (Vanier), *Women of the Sand* (Lobo), *Sugar Cane Alley* (Palcy), *HOME* (Arthus-Bertrand).

Assignments

"SENSE OF PLACE MAP." Students create an artistic portrayal of their relation to the world through locations in past, present, and future, considering both journeys and habitations. These maps invite students to explore how place helps construct identity and to investigate their personal relation to nature, landscapes, ecosystems and their inhabitants, and sacred spaces. For a detailed discussion of the "Sense of Place Map," see Thomashow (192–99).

REFLECTION JOURNAL. For each day's reading, film, or lecture, students write one page comprising questions for class discussion; a list of surprising or interesting things about the material; and a brief reflection on the interconnections between the reading, film, or talk and something from another class or setting. Students are encouraged to consider questions such as, What can we learn from the materials? Do they relate to sustainability? How might they change our thinking or worldview?

NATURE JOURNAL. Students use a recycled journal to write everything that comes to mind about nature. For ideas about keeping a nature journal, see Gisel.

MULTIGENRE RESEARCH PAPER. The multigenre research project is an interdisciplinary study of a particular aspect of nature and the global environment: philosophy, religion, ecofeminism, music, visual arts, food and agriculture, gardens and parks, and so on. For more information, see Romano (*Multigenre*); Langstraat.

FACILITATION OF CLASS DISCUSSIONS. When acting as facilitators, students study the readings thoroughly and prepare (1) a brief historical summary of the context and (2) a series of discussion questions or exercises to involve the group in exploring the material. They have the option to supplement the discussion with visual or oral materials to enhance understanding.

GROUP PRESENTATION. Students present a study of the geography and environmental conditions of a country related to the course materials.

LOCAL COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. Students examine their carbon footprint using an online calculator ("Carbon Footprint Calculator"), take a sustainability pledge ("Hollins University") and read the Earth Charter ("Earth Charter"), design and paint a recycling bin, work five hours with volunteers in a local community garden, and participate in cooking a community dinner made with locally sourced vegetables.

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