



Collaborative Enhancement Project 2022/2023



## Optionality in Assessment: Case Studies

### Case Study 3

**Author:** Cathy Elliot

**Institution:** University College London

**Discipline/Field of Study:** Politics

**Type of Assessment:** Portfolio

**Credits:** 15

**Level:** 6

**Unit Type:** Optional unit available across a range of programmes

**Type of Optionality:** Submission format, intended learning outcome alignment to assessment type, negotiated assessment task/question and choice of assessment criteria to be applied to the piece of work.

## **Assessment Details:**

This e-portfolio assessment for a Level 6 optional Politics module gives students the opportunity to work continuously across the term and meet the assessment criteria in whatever way makes sense to them, according to what and how they want to learn. They are given lots of scaffolding and suggestions but are also encouraged to 'go wild and be creative'.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Explain and critically evaluate different ways of thinking about the relationship between humans and non-human nature;
- Describe the historical and human context of the natural world around us;
- Identify and explain some of the numerous ways in which politics shapes and is shaped by the non-human world;
- Critically evaluate your own relationship with the natural world including the ideas you have about non-humans and the emotions that they evoke;
- Develop, and argue for, your own personal positions on how non-human nature should be governed and/or cared for, by whom and in what ways;
- Identify how different discourses about non-human nature imply, and are produced by, different approaches to designing policies and projects;
- Write for a range of audiences to communicate what you have learned. This might include (depending on your preferences) interpretation boards for galleries or gardens, recommendations to politicians or policymakers, story-telling, or narrative non-fiction;
- Critically evaluate and assess your own work and make an argument for its merits; Give useful and respectful feedback to others.

### **a. Instructions for completing the assessment**

#### **Politics of Nature: Weekly prompts for Portfolio**

##### *Week 1: Learning about the Politics of Nature*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What are your emotions as you start out on this module? Can you reflect on them?
- Why are you taking this module? What do you hope to learn?

- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or both readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- What was your 'ecotype'? Did anything in your results surprise you? Do you know if your ecotype is similar to or different from your friends/family/fellow students? What does your ecotype say about you?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?
- What has been the role of grades in your life? How would it feel if we abolished grades?

### *Week 2: Bodies in/of nature*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- Where is 'wild' for you? What is your relationship with the 'wild'? Is it changing as you study for this module?
- Have you ever been tempted by the image of the 'lone enchanted male'? Or put off by it? What do you think about those ideas now?
- Have you ever been tempted by the ideas we noticed in 'The Good Reset' cartoon by Bob Moran? How do you feel about that now?
- Would you like to make a policy recommendation on the basis of this week's work? Try to write in a way that would persuade a specific audience (eg policy-makers/politicians/general public)
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

### *Week 3: Queer ecologies*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post

text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What was the experience of learning in a garden like for you? How was it different from a classroom? What did you learn?
- Write one or more informative labels that could be useful for visitors to the Chelsea Physic Garden.
- Have you ever felt under pressure to conform to what is 'natural'? Have this week's materials made you feel differently about that? How and why?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

#### *Week 4: Timing Nature*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- How has non-human nature affected the way that your life is timed this week?
- Do you think time is a 'natural' phenomenon? In what ways?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

#### *Week 5: Nature and Art*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post

text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What was the experience of learning in the object-based learning lab like for you? How was it different from a classroom? What did you learn?
- Write informative labels for one or more of the artworks we have looked at this week that a gallery visitor would find useful.
- Do you have an artistic practice relating to nature? Has it been informed by conventional ideas about nature? How will it evolve from now on? (Include examples from your work, if you like.)
- Thinking about the Porter reading, did you recognise or empathise with the feeling of wanting to scribble all over a piece of art? How come you have felt that way? What does that feeling tell us about the relationship between art, politics and nature?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

### *Week 6: Colonial Botany*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What was the experience of learning in a garden and glasshouse like for you? How was it different from a classroom? What did you learn?
- Write one or more informative labels that could be useful for visitors to Kew Gardens.
- Do you have a favourite garden? How did all the plants in that garden get there? Are they 'native' or 'non-native' plants?
- What is the difference between a 'native plant' and a 'weed'?
- How have you been taught to feel about the difference between 'native' and 'non-native' wildlife? (For example, if you are British, do you like red squirrels better than greys? Or feel free to write about an example from your own country.) And how do you feel now?

- Would you like to make a policy recommendation on the basis of this week's work? Try to write in a way that would persuade a specific audience (eg policy-makers/politicians/general public)
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

### *Week 7: National Landscapes*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What landscape most represents your own national identity (however you define it)? Post a picture or artistic response to that landscape, if you like. What does that landscape mean and what do we see/not see when we look at it?
- What do you think about Corinne Fowler's statement that the best response to a 'culture war' is not to fight it? What might we do instead?
- Would you like to make a policy recommendation on the basis of this week's work? Try to write in a way that would persuade a specific audience (eg policy-makers/politicians/general public)
- How important is it to understand the history of the landscapes we inhabit?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

### *Week 8: Food, farming and rewilding*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What have you been eating this week? Have the module materials made you feel differently about your food?
- Would you like to make a policy recommendation on the basis of this week's work? Try to write in a way that would persuade a specific audience (eg policy-makers/politicians/general public)
- Do you have preconceptions about the landscape 'should' look like? Is your 'ideal' landscape farmed or wild or both? How come?
- Have you ever been tempted by ideas about 'purity' in food or landscape? How do you feel about that now?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

### *Week 9: The Politics of Hope*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What did it feel like to have your hands in the soil during classtime? What did you learn? How was it different from what you might learn in a classroom?
- Write one or more informative labels that might be useful to visitors to the IoE garden
- Do you have hope? What is hopeful for you? What are you hoping for?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

### *Week 10: Towards a more-than-human politics*

Try to spend at least 2 hours every week working on your portfolio so you have a record of how your thoughts have developed and you don't leave it all to the last minute. You can do one longer post a week or as many shorter ones as you like. **You don't have to respond to all the prompts – just one or two is fine!** You can post text, pictures, video, audio or anything else. Go wild, be daring and creative, and have fun!

Here are some ideas for this week, but please feel free to tweak them or invent your own:

- What practical alliances do you have with the non-human world?
- Would you like to make a policy recommendation on the basis of this week's work? Try to write in a way that would persuade a specific audience (eg policy-makers/politicians/general public)
- What do you think of the idea of non-human nature having 'rights'? Is this useful? Too anthropocentric? Does it challenge or reinforce the ways of thinking about the world that threaten non-human nature?
- What did this week's readings mean to you (write about one or more readings)? What did you agree or disagree with and why? What have they inspired for you?
- What have you been noticing in nature around you this week? In what ways do your interactions with nature link with the work we are doing on the module?
- Is there anything in the materials this week that you don't get?

## **b. Marking rubric**

### **POLS0099: Final Module Assessment<sup>1</sup>**

For your final assessment, please read this document and fill in your answers to all the questions below. Your submission on Moodle will be this document with a standard Political Science header sheet.

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<sup>1</sup> This assessment is heavily influenced by, and in large part reproduced from, the examples generously provided by Susan Blum in Susan D. Blum (2020) *Ungrading* West Virginia University Press: pp. 65–73

I would like to use your work anonymously in future as an example for other students. I would also like to use anonymous quotations to write up in presentations, reports or journal articles about the module or the assessment. Please tick below if you **do not** agree to this:

Please tick here if you **do not** agree for your work to be used as an anonymous example for future students

Please tick here if you **do not** agree for me to use anonymous quotations from your work in presentations, reports or journal articles

There are just a few rules for this assessment:

1. For any of the questions, you may create a page on [myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk](http://myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk), write your answer there and just post the link on this document or you may write directly into this template Word document. Most of you will do a bit of both, depending on the question and what you want to say.
2. The **word limit of 2,500 words** refers only to Question 19 which asks you to provide links to the portfolio pages that you would like me to read and assess.
3. The word limit for Question 19 includes all captions, spoken/recorded words and in-text references. It does not include bibliographies. (If your original entries were too long, make a copy before you edit it down if you want to keep hold of your original work.) MyPortfolio only allows you to share a link to a full page, not to a specific post. You can use the link to a full page and **tell me on this form if there are specific posts** on the page you are submitting for assessment. Or you can ask me to assess a full page. Or you can make a new page, put all the work you want to be assessed there, and submit that for assessment. So long as I know what to assess and you haven't gone over the word limit, no need to overthink it.
4. The other questions do not have a word limit and are just an aid to reflection and self-assessment. Please give your best reflection without overworking. I am excited to read what you have to say.
5. **Do not work on or edit your portfolio after the deadline (for most of you this will be 11 January, but you can keep working on it until your extended deadline if you have extensions or a SoRA).** I will be able to see when edits were made and any attempt to change your work after it has been submitted will be viewed as an assessment irregularity.
6. It is not possible to make your portfolio or the formative work we have done together over the term anonymous. UCL regulations state that if an assessment cannot be done anonymously then it does not have to be marked anonymously. However, if you would prefer to copy and paste the text from your portfolio entries into this (more, but possibly not completely, anonymous) document instead of submitting your portfolio links, you may do so. Unfortunately, this will lose the richness of the digital work you have done, so the vast majority of you will most probably choose to submit your portfolios non-anonymously for me to enjoy.

We have been on a long and involved (though also too short) journey through the politics of nature with our human and more-than-human peers and teachers this term and we have encountered nature in all sorts of places. We have been inside and

outside. We have visited gardens and works of art. We have noticed nature in our own lives. We have thought about how power and politics shapes the natural world that we inhabit every day. We have had our hands in soil and on keyboards. We have spent time writing and reflecting on our work together in the class portfolios. We have tried to be creative and daring, to make something wonderful. We have received feedback and given feedback to others.

This activity is designed to help you review and reflect on what you have learned and done this term, as well as presenting your best work for assessment and asking you to make an honest argument for its merits and areas for improvement.

**Start** by having a good look at your portfolio from the term. Improve any parts of it that you want to keep working on.

Now grab yourself a coffee, tea or other beverage of your choice and answer the questions below. Just write what you want to. **You can skip any questions *apart from* Questions 19, 20 and 21.**

- 1. What have you learned that you didn't know/understand last September?**
- 2. Was the module challenging? Was it fun? Was it useful? What didn't seem useful?**
- 3. Did you learn anything unexpected? Was there anything you expected to learn that we didn't cover?**
- 4. What are you wondering about now? What questions are you carrying with you from the module? What will you do with those questions in future?**
- 5. Did you ever talk about this module outside of class with Cathy or anyone else? Explain further if you like.**
- 6. What was your favourite reading or other learning material? What did you like about it? What did you learn from it? What would you say to its author/creator?**
- 7. Was there a reading or piece of learning material you didn't like? How come? What would you say to its author/creator?**
- 8. Is there something you still don't get? What is it? Do you know why you don't get it?**
- 9. Did this class connect with any of your other modules? In what ways?**
- 10. Did you make any new friends through the class? Or did you deepen friendships you have already?**
- 11. Who did you get feedback from in this module, how and when? How was the feedback useful? How have you acted on it? Were there instances**

where you ignored feedback and trusted your own judgement? How come? How did it work out?

12. Did you give any feedback during the module in any shape or form? How was that experience?

13. What was your initial reaction to the way this module is assessed? And how are you feeling about it now?

14. What do you think you will remember about the class in five years?

15. What skills have you developed on the module? How might you describe them to a future employer?

16. How much of the reading did you do for this class? How much did you participate in the Moodle exercises?

17. In what ways have you participated in the class? How do you feel about your participation? If you are someone who wishes they had participated more or in different ways, what would have helped you with that?

18. How many of the portfolio tasks have you done? How do you feel about your level of effort and engagement with the portfolio? If you are someone who wishes they had engaged more, what would have helped you with that?

19. Please post links to your favourite portfolio pages. Please do not include more than 2,500 words for me to read from your portfolio in this section. If you only want me to look at selected posts on your page so you stay within the word limit, say so here and give the full title so I know what to look at.

20. Below is a table with some suggested assessment criteria. Please explain how well your work in Q19 above meets these assessment criteria and how. If you do not think your work should be assessed by that criterion, please explain why. If you think your work should be assessed by another criterion or more, please add it/them and explain why, as well as how your work meets the new criteria.

<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>How my work meets it/why it does not apply</b>
Depth of understanding of how politics and power are shaped by, and shape, the natural world	
Ability to weave together ideas from the module into your own coherent text	

Depth and originality of critical evaluation of your own relationship with the natural world	
Ability to argue for your perspective on how nature should be governed or cared for, by whom and in what ways, including use of reasons and evidence	
Appropriate selection of multimedia on the portfolio	
Ability to write appropriately for a particular audience (please specify: eg visitors to an exhibition, policy-makers, everyday readers of narrative non-fiction)	
Creativity of your work on the portfolio	
Evidence of learning and development over time in the module	
Depth of critical engagement with the module materials and readings	
Extent of additional research and further reading	
Craft of writing, including readability, spelling and grammar	
Accuracy of bibliographic materials	

**Additional assessment criteria (if applicable):**

<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Why I want my work to be assessed according to this criterion</b>	<b>How my work meets it</b>

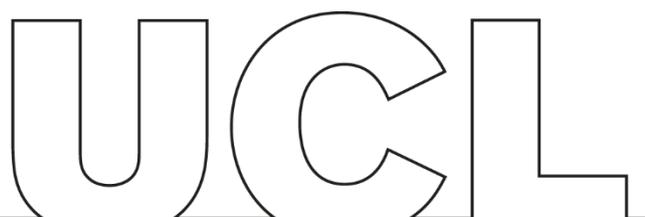
**21. Bearing in mind *all* the questions you have answered above and particularly Questions 19 and 20, what numerical mark do you give yourself for this class (please use a number between 1 and 85 where anything above 70 is excellent).<sup>2</sup> You can give an explanation:**

**22. Is there anything else you would like to say?**

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### c. Teaching materials: Feedback Form

UCL DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY



Please fill in this form to request feedback on your work on [myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk](https://myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk) and email it to [cathy.elliott@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cathy.elliott@ucl.ac.uk).

Some points to bear in mind:

1. Please try to send me your best work. Otherwise, you will probably end up getting feedback that you already could have guessed and we will both waste our time. You cannot ask for feedback from me on the same work twice.
2. Please fill in this form in full answering all the relevant questions. I will not be able to provide good feedback if you do not answer question 5.
3. I will get back to you within a maximum of **10 working days not including the UCL closure days at Christmas**. I will be quicker if I can.
4. Everyone is automatically entitled to feedback on one portfolio page. (Shorter portfolio posts are probably better, but 2,500 words is the most I can realistically read.)
5. You can also ask for feedback from your fellow students. To do so, please share your work to the group or to a specific individual (who has agreed) on [myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk](https://myportfolio.ucl.ac.uk).
6. If you give feedback to someone else, this means you are entitled to ask me for feedback on one more portfolio post for each piece of feedback you give. (Academics work on systems of favours and 'paying it back/forward'; this is true in many walks of life.) If the feedback you give is thorough and thoughtful, you can expect the same from me in return (even if I didn't agree with it – see point 7 below.)
7. Sometimes you will get contradictory feedback from different people. This is normal even for academics at the most senior levels and for people in other walks of life. My recommendation is to be curious and thoughtful about why the feedback from different people is contradictory and what you can learn from this. It is ultimately up to you to decide which feedback you want to pay attention to and why.
8. Please note that formative feedback at UCL is not anonymous.
9. You will have a choice between written feedback in MyPortfolio (this is private between you and me) or a discussion in [office hours](#). If you choose written feedback, you can still discuss it with me in office hours after you have read it.

**Question 1:** What is your name and email address? (This is so I can return the feedback to you)

**Question 2:** What is the link to the work you would like me to provide feedback on? (Please paste it below). Please tell me here if you only want me to look at one part of the page and give me the title of the post.

**Question 3:** Is this the first piece of work you have asked for feedback on? (If yes, proceed to Question 5. If no, please answer Question 4 first.)

**Question 4:** Have you provided feedback on another student's work in the myportfolio group? Please provide the link to piece you commented on (if it is shared to the group) or give me a brief summary of your remarks

**Question 5:** What aspects of your work would you like feedback on? (Please refer to the assessment criteria. If you think your work should be assessed by different criteria, please tell me what they are.)

**Question 6:** Is there any aspect of the work you do **not** want feedback on? (For example, if you know that you need to go back and check some of the references or add some photographs, you can tell me that here.)

**Question 7:** Is there anything else you would like to tell me before I read your work?

**Question 8:** Would you prefer written feedback as a private comment on MyPortfolio or a conversation in office hours? (If you prefer written feedback, you will get an email once I have written it on MyPortfolio. If you prefer a conversation, I will email you once I have read the work to set up an appointment.)

#### **d. Other links or pertinent information**

Students taking this module have a wide range of choice in how they respond to the module materials, according to their own interests and the skills they want to develop. They get lots of scaffolding to help them think through what sorts of skills they would like to develop and what successful work would look like for a range of different outputs. Students really rose to this challenge and produced all sorts of materials, including podcasts, letters to Directors of public bodies, newspaper articles, exhibition catalogues, personal reflections, blogs for a student audience, artworks, poetry, signage for public spaces and more. This enabled them to think carefully about how to communicate with different audiences and asked them to relate the module materials to practical problems that mattered to them, bringing their engagement to life. All students met the marking criteria, but did so in a range of different ways. Module feedback was excellent and I enjoyed the marking very much(!)