

**CONNECT Sustainability Conference – 12/2/11**  
**Arts & Humanities Discussion**

**Teaching Sustainability through the Freshman Research Project: English Composition**  
**Cape Cod Community College – Sara Moon**

Food used as jumping off point for broader topic of sustainability.

Class activities:

- *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, by Michael Pollan, read by class
- Visit to organic farm
- Each student chose research topic focused on food. Topics selected included poultry factory framing, hunting, high fructose corn syrup, vegetarianism
- Watched selected scenes from *Food, Inc.*
- Organic vs. non-organic taste test

Student responses to research:

- Created new awareness that led to change in behavior
- Reaffirmed/reignited existing knowledge
- Ambivalence

Conclusion: Ethos of sustainability needs to be thoroughly established throughout the semester; 4-week unit not sufficient

Resources/suggestions for other possible areas of focus:

- *Water: A Natural History*, by Alice Outwater
- *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Matter*, by E.F. Schumacher

**Using Sustainable Gardens in Introductory Writing**  
**Massasoit Community College - Palma Cortese**

Massasoit has installed several native gardens around campus using sustainable landscaping techniques and native plants, providing visible learning opportunity.

Assignment structure:

- Used gardens as focus of descriptive writing assignment
- Incorporated into midyear exam to highlight importance of topic and assignment
- List of vocabulary words provided for reference
- Students completed sensory observation charts to record senses and feelings
- Students wrote descriptive essays to complete assignment

Benefits:

- Using the gardens as focus produced much better student engagement and written essays.
- Students were introduced to topics (sustainability and gardening with native, indigenous plants) with which they were previously unfamiliar
- Increased attention for and appreciation of sustainable landscaping