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**Ecofeminist discourse in higher medical education**

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The reflections I will present are based on my experience as a Professor of the Philosophy Department and Director of the Center for Gender Education (CGE) at the Medical University in Kharkiv. Since 2005, I have used the ecofeminist discourse in teaching Philosophy to students of the sanitary-hygienic faculty. It is important to emphasize that this discourse is not a usual academic discussion because of its great practical importance. Ecofeminist discourse involves studying the patriarchal understanding of power as well as establishing environmental justice. The evaluation of the curriculum conducted by CGE has shown that ecofeminist discourse is partially represented in mainstream disciplines of all other faculties of the university. The combination of the humanities and natural sciences gives an opportunity to deliver cross disciplinary learning sessions with an ecofeminist perspective. Besides, in cooperation with women’s NGOs, students take part in ecological actions. Trainings for representatives of NGOs are organized by CGE.

The likelihood of an engaging ecofeminist discourse is due to a change in the dominant theory on which it is based. For a long time, ecofeminism was criticized for excessive essentialism. The oppression of [women](http://people.howstuffworks.com/women.htm) was essentially linked to the oppression of nature. Presently, the ecofeminist discourse favours the constructivist approach. Ecofeminism asserts that the notion of power must be restructured; discrimination and oppression based on gender, race and class are directly related to the exploitation and destruction of the environment. Hence, collaborative relationships should be nurtured instead of a power dynamic. An emerging trend can be noticed. The constructivist approach to ecofeminist discourse resulted in an increasing number of male students becoming interested in research projects on ecofeminism. The most common topics are global feminist environmental justice, queer ecologies, gender and the environment. Medical students are interested in discussions on the contamination of the inner nature of man, interconnections between gender and new reproductive technologies, trans/post-human perspectives and others. It is important to integrate thoughts on gender and eco-justice into the curriculum as environmental and gender problems are at the forefront of global issues.

**Key words:** Ecofeminist discourse, medical education, essentialism, constructivism.

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