

MOLLOY UNIVERSITY
School of Education and Human Services
Department of Teacher Education

EDU 5900-33 Natural Forces in History: Fire, Water, Earth & Air
(3 credits)

Summer 2026

Instructor: Paul Zaratini

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Office hours: Monday - Friday 3:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Course Description:

In *Natural Forces in History: Fire, Water, Earth & Air*, students will explore how the four classical elements have shaped human civilizations, belief systems, and technological development throughout history. From volcanic eruptions and river valley settlements to wind-powered exploration and fire-based metallurgy, this course investigates the deep and ongoing interaction between nature's fundamental forces and the human story.

Through historical case studies, environmental analysis, and interdisciplinary lessons, educators will gain a broad understanding of how elemental forces have influenced migration, agriculture, city-building, spiritual systems, and disaster preparedness. Emphasis will be placed on integrating earth science, geography, and cultural history into dynamic classroom content.

This course is designed for K–12 educators, with adaptable content for diverse grade levels. All content aligns with SS.E.2.2: World History and NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards), supporting cross-curricular strategies in social studies, science, and environmental literacy.

Shared Vision

The Molloy University Teacher Education faculty has derived its vision for the exemplary teacher from the University's mission statement, the four pillars of the Dominican tradition, comments and input from the Professional Education Unit's Advisory Board and degree candidates as well as numerous faculty discussions rooted in the department's knowledge base which undergirds the initial and advanced programs' curriculum, pedagogy, and values

The teaching professionals who complete Molloy's teacher preparation programs are distinguished by their ability to exemplify and promote core values in their own teaching. These values include:

- Belief that all children can learn
- Learner-centered and value-centered curriculum and pedagogy
- Ethics and spirituality
- Intellectual curiosity
- Independence and risk-taking, while promoting collective identity and responsibility
- Diversity, multiculturalism, and pluralism, including divergent thinking
- Passion for teaching
- Commitment to students and their communities
- Civic responsibility through the promotion of social justice and interdependence
- Commitment to democracy

Course Objectives:

- Analyze the historical role of natural forces (fire, water, earth, air) in shaping civilizations.
- Investigate how human societies adapted to and harnessed elemental forces over time.
- Examine the spiritual and symbolic meanings of natural forces in global cultures.
- Evaluate the impact of natural forces on settlement, trade, technology, and war.
- Explore environmental changes and natural disasters in a historical context.
- Design interdisciplinary lesson plans that blend natural science and world history.
- Promote student inquiry around the interaction of nature and culture.
- Create classroom-ready content focused on elemental forces across geography and time.

Course Format:

This course will be offered online through Canvas, Molloy's learning management system. The course will open on the start date and close on the last day of class. This section is offered during the summer semester of 2026. There will be daily activities and discussions that must be completed at the end of each day. All work will be due on the last day of class.

Required Readings, Videos, and Other Materials:

All materials will be provided throughout the course.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Assignment	Topic	Points
Discussion #1	Nature as Teacher: Interpreting the Elements in Human History	5 pts
Module 1	Earth: Mountains, Soil, and Settlement – Geography as Destiny	10 pts
Module 2	Water: Rivers, Oceans, and Rain – Building Civilizations and Trade	10 pts
Module 3	Fire: Innovation, Destruction, and Spiritual Significance	10 pts
Discussion #2	Weather, Wind, and Belief: Cultural Interpretations of Air	5 pts
Module 4	Air: Winds, Weather, and the Age of Exploration	10 pts

Module 5	Case Study: A Civilization and Its Element (e.g., Egypt & the Nile)	10 pts
Module 6	Natural Forces & Natural Disasters in Historical Perspective	10 pts
Module 7	Teaching the Elements: Cross-Curricular Strategies for K–12	10 pts
Module 8	Final Project: Create a Lesson Plan on Natural Forces in History	20 pts

Molloy University and School of Education and Human Services Policies and Supports:

Expectations of Academic Integrity for All Students

[Honor Pledge and Academic Honesty Policy](#)

Course Withdrawals

View [Withdrawal Policy](#) for potential financial implications

View [the Academic Calendar](#) and/or the course syllabus for the last day to withdraw dates

Incompletes

[Incompletes Policy](#)

Health and Wellness

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Counseling Center \(SCC\)](#)

Center for Access and Disability (Access)

[Center for Access and Disability](#)

Technical Support

[Student Account, Technology and Canvas](#)

Ally for Canvas

[Supportive Tools and Resources/ Ally](#)

Use of Proctorio for Exams/Quizzes (if applicable)

[Proctorio Resources for Students](#)

Email Accounts

Students are to utilize their Molloy e-mail account or Canvas when communicating throughout the semester. Those who use a non-Molloy account may miss important messages. Students are responsible for responding to all methods of communication in

a timely fashion, relating to this course. Instructors will respond to emails from students within 24 hours. When/ if you email the instructor(s), please indicate what course you are in with the course number and section.

APA Manuscript Style

All manuscripts in the field of education are written in the style format of the American Psychological Association. Candidates in the Graduate Education Programs are required to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). (2010). American Psychological Association.

All papers written in every course must adhere to the manuscript prescriptions defined in this manual.