

Ecological Wisdom and Its Ideological and Political Education Value in the Course *History of Chinese and Foreign Gardens*

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Abstract In accordance with the requirements of curriculum ideological and political education and ecological civilization education, this paper took the course *History of Chinese and Foreign Gardens* as the research basis to sort out the traditional ecological wisdom accumulated in Chinese and foreign gardens and analyze its educational value for ideological and political cultivation. Drawing on frontline teaching practice, it explored the integration path of ecological wisdom and ideological-political elements from 4 dimensions: classroom design, teaching methods, extracurricular practice and assessment evaluation. The implementation strategies proposed in this paper provided practical references for the construction of curriculum ideological and political education in similar professional history and theory courses.

Keywords *History of Chinese and Foreign Gardens*, Ecological wisdom, Curriculum ideological and political education, Teaching practice

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Against the backdrop of the new era, fostering virtue through education has constituted the fundamental task of higher education, and curriculum ideological and political education has been fully incorporated into all specialized courses. Meanwhile, in response to ecological civilization construction, colleges and universities have had to carry out regular green education tailored to their disciplinary characteristics and improve students' literacy in ecological civilization. As a compulsory foundational course for majors such as landscape architecture and gardening, *History of Chinese and Foreign Gardens* systematically elaborates on the developmental trajectories, gardening styles and cultural connotations of gardens at home and abroad. Boasting abundant teaching resources and diverse entry points for ideological and political elements, the course possesses inherent advantages in talent cultivation.

Most teachers focus on historical stages, garden forms, artistic styles and construction techniques, laying excessive emphasis on knowledge transmission while neglecting the ecological thoughts and humanistic connotations behind gardens. Ideological and political content is mostly added as an attachment rather than deeply integrated into knowledge points, leading to a disconnect between professional teaching and ideological and political education. In fact, Chinese and foreign gardens have developed a complete set of human settlement construction concepts over their long-term evolution, and the ecological wisdom contained therein is highly consistent with modern ecological civilization concepts. On this basis, combined with practical

teaching experience, this paper summarized the ecological wisdom of Chinese and foreign gardens, explored their value in curriculum ideological and political education, and put forward corresponding teaching implementation strategies to support all-round education in the course.

1 Interpretation of relevant concepts and internal logic of their integration

1.1 Ecological wisdom of traditional gardens

The garden ecological wisdom discussed in this paper differs from systematic modern ecological theories and engineering technologies. It refers to construction ideas, spatial layout methods and resource utilization models summed up by garden craftsmen of successive dynasties through long-term practice. Its core essence lies in respecting the laws of natural operation, relying on the original landform of the site, rationally developing and utilizing local resources to build ecologically stable spaces suitable for living and sightseeing, and consistently pursuing harmonious coexistence between human and nature. Rooted in the natural environments and regional cultures of various regions, such construction experience integrates practicality and ideological connotation, and also constitutes an important part of China's traditional human settlement culture.

1.2 Connotation of curriculum ideological and political education in the history of Chinese and foreign gardens

The curriculum ideological and political

education of this course does not mean adding separate ideological education content beyond professional teaching. Instead, it realizes all-round education based on the development history of gardens, traditional gardening culture and classic garden cases. In accordance with the requirements of the *Guidelines for the Construction of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education in Institutions of Higher Education* issued by the Ministry of Education, besides cultivating students' devotion to their country and hometown, cultural confidence and the craftsmanship spirit of striving for excellence, the course shall combine its disciplinary characteristics to guide students to establish sound ecological ethics, professional norms for the industry and an inclusive international vision. It helps students form scientific design thinking, cognition of nature and development concepts, so as to achieve in-depth integration of knowledge teaching and moral education.

1.3 Internal logic of integrating ecological wisdom with curriculum ideological and political education

Essentially, the ecological wisdom embodied in gardens is a direct reflection of ancient people's values. The ideas of conforming to nature, conserving resources and pursuing the coexistence of all living things in traditional garden-making are highly consistent with the contemporary ecological civilization philosophy of "respecting nature, conforming to nature and protecting nature". Integrating ecological construction knowledge into classroom teaching enables ideological and political education to move beyond empty preaching and exert a subtle

influence on students through professional knowledge as the carrier. Meanwhile, interpreting ecological construction concepts shaped by different civilizations can broaden students' horizons and cultivate their dialectical thinking toward diverse cultures, which fully aligns with the educational orientation of this course. There exists solid theoretical and practical foundations for the integration of the two.

2 Analysis of typical ecological wisdom in the history of Chinese and foreign gardens

2.1 Ecological wisdom of Chinese classical gardens

Chinese classical gardens occupy an important position in the global history of garden art. Their unique views of nature, values and world outlook have exerted a profound influence on the construction and stylistic features of modern Western landscape architecture^[1]. The philosophy of "harmony between man and nature" served as the core guiding ideology of Chinese classical gardens^[2]. Taking natural mountains and rivers as the prototype for garden-making, ecological concepts run through the whole process including site selection, overall layout, water system construction and plant collocation, gradually forming a distinctive and complete construction system.

Ancient garden-makers always adhered to the principles of learning from nature and arranging spaces in accordance with terrain trends. The maxim "Though crafted by humans, it looks as if created by heaven" stood as the fundamental guideline followed by garden builders throughout dynasties^[3]. Representative northern imperial gardens such as the Summer Palace and Chengde Mountain Resort were all planned and constructed based on the original mountain and water patterns of the sites, without deliberate reshaping of the existing landforms. Most private Jiangnan gardens are nestled within urban alleys. They recreate the artistic conception of natural mountains and rivers within limited spaces, with artificial scenery always serving the overall natural atmosphere and minimizing disturbances to the original ecological environment. This mindset fully embodies reverence for nature's original appearance.

In site construction, ancient craftsmen stressed adapting to regional characteristics and adopting local materials. China boasts a vast territory, and gardens in different regions form unique styles tailored to local climatic

conditions, topographical features and natural resources. The Lingnan region features hot and humid weather, so local gardens generally adopt open, transparent layouts, paired with shade-tolerant, moisture-resistant native plants and stone materials. The Sichuan-Chongqing area is dominated by mountains and hills; garden buildings and landscapes are staggered along undulating terrain, drastically cutting earth excavation work. Local bamboo, wood, rock and stone are prioritized as garden construction materials, which not only controls construction costs but also achieves better compatibility with the local ecological environment, demonstrating a resource-conserving construction philosophy.

Water bodies are an indispensable component of classical gardens. Ancient garden builders created interconnected water systems where ponds, streams, mountain brooks and lakes linked together to form a natural rainwater storage and regulation system. Relying on aquatic plants and microorganisms, garden water bodies realize natural purification. Meanwhile, they perform multiple functions including landscape appreciation, plant irrigation and flood storage during rainy seasons, enabling the recycling of water resources and forming a small-scale benign ecological water network.

In terms of plant configuration, classical gardens rarely feature large-area single-species plantings. Instead, they take native plants as the main body and adopt a layered combination of arbors, shrubs and herbs to replicate wild natural plant communities. Such vegetation communities boast stable structures with lower later maintenance costs. They can also present varied scenery across four seasons, balancing ecological functions and visual aesthetics.

2.2 Ecological wisdom of Western classical gardens

Many people hold a one-sided view that Western classical gardens overemphasize artificial regularity while ignoring natural ecology. A review of their complete developmental history revealed that gardens in different eras of the West also generated numerous practical and advanced ecological construction ideas, whose ecological concepts kept evolving with the passage of time^[4].

The noble manors of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, as well as monastic gardens in medieval Europe, prioritized practical functions above all else. The gardens were divided into fruit and vegetable planting zones, medicinal plant cultivation zones and leisure activity zones. They integrated agricultural production, daily

recreation and ecological construction, making full use of land and light resources, and served as outstanding models for the construction of early human settlement ecological spaces. The modern urban park movement marked a major turning point in the development of Western gardens. Urban parks broke the barriers of private gardens and opened green spaces to all people, establishing the development concept that public green land belongs to all citizens. They not only improved urban living environments, but also laid a solid foundation for the construction of modern urban ecological systems.

In the 18th century, English landscape gardens gradually rose to prominence, completely abandoning the traditional geometric and regular gardening styles in favor of imitating the natural scenery of countryside. Garden makers retained the original landforms, vegetation and water systems of the sites, and strived to create a wild and natural landscape atmosphere. This philosophy echoes the idea of "learning from nature" in Chinese classical gardens across regions and civilizations, and reflects humanity's shared pursuit of the authentic state of nature.

2.3 Similarities and differences of ecological wisdom between Chinese and foreign gardens

Chinese and foreign gardens originated from different civilizations, yet they share many commonalities in ecological construction concepts. Garden makers in both regions attach importance to the rational utilization of natural resources including land, water bodies and plants, and strive for coordinated development between human living spaces and the natural environment. Their differences are mainly reflected in expressive forms. Chinese gardens convey ecological thoughts through humanistic mountains and rivers, with relevant concepts integrated into freehand artistic conception of gardens. By contrast, western gardens have undergone a transformation from highlighting artificial order to returning to authentic nature, and their ecological ideas are mostly embodied in practical functions and public services. Comparing their similarities and differences in classroom teaching can guide students to form dialectical thinking and gain a proper understanding of the diversity of global garden cultures.

3 Curriculum ideological and political education value embodied by ecological wisdom of Chinese and foreign gardens

In-depth exploration of garden ecological

wisdom in class and its integration with ideological and political education can realize educational objectives from multiple dimensions including ecological cognition, cultural identity, professional literacy and international vision, which bears remarkable educational value.

3.1 Consolidate cognition of ecological civilization and establish a scientific view of nature

Combining thousands of years of garden-making cases at home and abroad enables students to intuitively understand that “respecting nature and conforming to nature” is the basic principle for the construction of human settlements. By linking with practical problems nowadays such as urban waterlogging, degradation of ecological functions of green spaces and excessive artificialization of landscapes, teachers can guide students to reflect on common misunderstandings in modern landscape design, abandon the one-sided mindset that only emphasizes visual effects while ignoring ecological functions, and embed the concepts of green, low-carbon and sustainable development deep into their minds.

3.2 Strengthen cultural identity and inherit traditional ecological culture

The ecological wisdom embedded in Chinese classical gardens constitutes a vital component of China’s fine traditional culture. The natural philosophy of “harmony between man and nature”, construction techniques tailored to local conditions, and resource-saving design ideas embody unique national spirit. Interpreting these contents in class allows students to clearly recognize the contemporary value of traditional garden-making culture, boost their cultural confidence, and voluntarily take responsibility for inheriting and disseminating traditional ecological culture.

3.3 Reinforce professional responsibility and abide by basic industry norms

Landscape architecture majors will engage in landscape design, garden construction, green space maintenance and other related work in the future. Their design proposals and completed projects exert a direct impact on the overall urban ecological environment. The concepts of preserving original site features, using local materials and strictly controlling resource consumption derived from traditional gardens can become students’ professional bottom line. Teachers should guide students to comprehensively balance landscape aesthetics, practical functions and ecological benefits in

future careers, stick to professional ethics, and avoid unreasonable design practices such as excessive landscaping and resource waste.

3.4 Broaden international vision and foster awareness of mutual learning among civilizations

By sorting out and comparing the development processes and expressive forms of ecological concepts in Chinese and Western gardens, students can understand that all civilizations have continuously explored ways to achieve harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. During teaching, teachers guide students to view Chinese and foreign garden cultures objectively—without blind admiration or subjective rejection—and actively absorb outstanding ecological construction experience from all over the world, cultivating an open, inclusive, rational and objective academic vision.

3.5 Cultivate the spirit of craftsmanship and develop a rigorous and pragmatic academic attitude

Chinese classical gardens pursue excellence in every detail including mountain-water layout, water system connection and plant collocation. Every design balances partial effects and the overall landscape, fully embodying the meticulous spirit of ancient craftsmen. Taking this as an entry point, teachers guide students to stay down-to-earth and pursue perfection in professional studies, abandon impetuous mindsets, and form sound study and work habits.

4 Teaching implementation paths of integrating ecological wisdom into curriculum ideological and political education

Combined with the class schedule, teaching content and students’ learning characteristics of the course *History of Chinese and Foreign Gardens*, a complete implementation system is constructed from 4 dimensions: classroom design, teaching methods, extracurricular practice and assessment evaluation, so as to fully integrate ecological wisdom and ideological and political elements into all links of teaching.

4.1 Optimize classroom teaching design to realize embedded integration of knowledge points and ideological and political elements

The disjointed teaching mode separating knowledge instruction and ideological and political education should be transformed, and special modules of “ecological interpretation + ideological and political guidance” within the existing teaching framework added. When

explaining various garden styles and classic garden cases, teachers will analyze the ecological construction techniques of the sites, introduce historical backgrounds and artistic features, and set enlightening questions to inspire students’ thinking. For instance, when illustrating the water management art of Jiangnan gardens, teachers will simultaneously interpret the ecological principles of water circulation and self-purification of water bodies, and put forward discussion topics: what references can the water management concepts of classical gardens provide for the current construction of sponge cities? This method integrates professional knowledge, ecological concepts, practical applications and ideological guidance into an organic whole, exerting subtle influence on students imperceptibly.

4.2 Enrich teaching methods to improve the practical effect of classroom education

Diversified teaching approaches shall be adopted in accordance with the characteristics of the course. First of all, case-based teaching should be fully utilized. With the help of real-scene photos, documentaries, aerial videos of gardens and other materials, the landforms, water systems and plant layout patterns of gardens can be displayed intuitively, enabling students to truly perceive the ecological construction wisdom of ancient times. Secondly, comparative teaching should be implemented. Horizontal comparisons are made between similar Chinese and foreign gardens as well as gardens in different regions of China. Differences in design philosophies are analyzed through such comparisons to cultivate students’ awareness of mutual learning among civilizations^[5]. In addition, classroom discussion topics centered on hot industry issues are assigned to organize group discussions, stimulating their initiative of independent thinking and further deepening their understanding.

4.3 Expand extracurricular practical sessions to integrate knowledge and practice

History and theory courses should not be confined to theoretical lectures in classrooms, and extracurricular practice should serve as an effective way to consolidate knowledge and deepen ideological and political education. Teachers can assign field research tasks based on local garden resources, arranging students to visit well-known local classical gardens and urban parks. Students observe site layout, plant collocation and water system design on site,

(To be continued in P35)

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compose research reflections, and analyze the ecological techniques and cultural connotations therein. Institutions with adequate conditions may organize small-scale outdoor research tours, where teachers deliver on-site explanations, answer questions in real time and carry out immersive teaching. Field experiences beyond textbooks allow students to truly perceive the practical value of traditional ecological wisdom and further strengthen their awareness of ecological protection.

4.4 Reform the curriculum assessment system to highlight educational orientation

The previous single assessment model centered on memorizing knowledge points shall be replaced with a diversified comprehensive assessment system. Regular performance evaluation includes classroom speeches, group seminars, field research reports and course learning reflections, focusing on assessing students' comprehension of ecological concepts and cultural connotations. Apart from examining basic historical knowledge points in final examinations, open-ended essay questions are added, requiring students to elaborate their understanding of modern garden design

combined with the ecological wisdom of traditional gardens. Through adjustments to assessment methods, students are guided to shift from simply memorizing knowledge points to understanding ideological connotations and practicing professional concepts^[6].

5 Conclusion

Chinese and foreign gardens have bequeathed to us not only diverse garden forms and exquisite construction techniques, but also a complete set of ecological concepts and humanistic thoughts that conform to the laws of nature. As an introductory course for landscape architecture majors, *History of Chinese and Foreign Gardens* must fully explore and utilize these high-quality teaching resources, which represents an inevitable choice to fulfill the requirements of curriculum ideological and political education and deliver ecological civilization education. In teaching practice, the in-depth integration of traditional ecological wisdom and ideological and political education can not only enrich classroom content and deepen teaching connotation, but also guide students to establish correct views of nature, design and values. It helps cultivate interdisciplinary garden talents with solid

professional capabilities, outstanding ecological literacy, profound cultural sentiments and a strong sense of professional responsibility for the industry.

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