

## **Fish Farming in the Salish Sea: Five Perspectives**

Discussion Activity: *What is the future of salmon in the Salish Sea? How does fish farming impact the sustainability of Salish Sea salmon stocks? A discussion from five different perspectives*

Dear future instructor,

My name is Anita Harker. I teach sociology at Whatcom Community College (WCC).

I grew up on the west coast of Canada but have lived in the United States for several years and am lucky to hold dual citizenship. I cross the border regularly, with family and “chosen family” on both sides. I am a mother of three. Parenting has deeply impacted my approach to teaching, and as my children grow they continue to teach me about how to connect with and learn from my students. More and more I’m realizing that relationships are integral to teaching. This was reinforced to me while working collaboratively with colleagues at both WCC and Western Washington University to teach about the Salish Sea. Co-teaching has provided an incredible opportunity to learn from and alongside other instructors that I admire.

My training is as a sociologist, though I completed a postdoctoral fellowship at a Center for Women & Gender Studies. I have additionally taught within the human services field. I favor an approach to teaching that is interdisciplinary, experiential, and place based.

I created this learning activity during the spring of 2021 for use in an Introduction to the Salish Sea course.

This activity has potential to be modified for use in classes of a minimum of 10 students, and could be adapted to different modalities. I will be explaining how it can be used in an in-person classroom, with modification suggestions to follow. The learning environment needed for this activity includes enough space for students to move around into groups, printed copies of transcripts (or access to digital versions) as well as pens or highlighters for marking them up.

The disciplines and areas of study activated by this activity include sociology, environmental science, political science, and geography.

By the end of this learning activity, students should be able to:

- Learning Domain 1: Develop skills for expressing information and sharing stories about the Salish Sea

- Learning Domain 2: Examine complex layers of human history and experience in the Salish Sea
- Learning Domain 3: Analyze systems of power and governance between sovereign Indigenous nations; British Columbia, Canada; and Washington, United States

This activity will require students to summarize information, and then to take an informed stance after examining five different voices in this debate. This activity is designed to explore the following large overarching question:

*What is the future of salmon in the Salish Sea?*

A more specific question for this project is: *What is the impact of fish farming on the sustainability of Salish Sea salmon stocks?*

#### STEP ONE:

Provide a short introductory lecture that gives definitions of and context for salmon farming practices in the Salish Sea. Explain that there are different perspectives on whether fish farming is a sustainable practice for the health of Salish Sea salmon stocks, and across the different stakeholders there can be compelling arguments made on behalf of fish farming and against it.

Briefly introduce the five individuals whose interview excerpts will be examined.

It can be helpful at this point to additionally provide a brief overview of qualitative research methods.

#### STEP TWO:

Divide students into 5 groups to represent the 5 stakeholders.

Group 1: Drew Cherry	Group 2: Kurt Grinnell	Group 3: Jeanne McKnight	Group 4: Jim Parsons	Group 5: Alexandra Morton
3-5 Students	3-5 Students	3-5 Students	3-5 Students	3-5 Students

Instruct them to read carefully on their own and use a pen or highlighter to mark up the paper, highlighting golden lines and/or themes that they notice. This should be done first on their own, and then as a group share these themes and impactful lines to see where they overlap. Explain that this is a key component of qualitative research.

Encourage students to also use their phones to do some brief research on the background of the interviewee. Have them identify how their particular work/roles might impact their perspectives and biases.

#### **STEP THREE:**

Once the key points are agreed upon, send students out into newly formed groups where each a representative from each interviewee is present. Each group should have at least one person from each of the five original groups (\*note that it's unlikely to have the exact correct number of students, so flexibility will be needed. For instance, it's best to err on the side of two representatives from Group 1 in the new discussion pod rather than none).

Students will be asked to present the arguments made by the interviewee they were assigned. Underscore that it is their job to represent the interviewee as accurately as possible, regardless of their own personal views.

#### **STEP FOUR:**

After hearing the perspectives of each interviewee, students will return to their original group to report back and share their thoughts with one another.

#### **STEP FIVE:**

Finally, students will be asked to individually respond to the following prompts in a low stakes short written reflection:

What gives you hope? What causes concern? What should we be paying attention to?  
After hearing these different perspectives, what would you say is the future of salmon farming in the Salish Sea?

#### **LEARNING ASSESSMENT:**

Students will be assessed by their participation in the discussion groups, as well as through the low stakes written reflection at the end of the activity.

Below is a handout I created for this activity, including brief introductions and condensed transcripts of interviews with five the stakeholders. The list of interview questions used for the entire interview is also included to provide context.

I encourage you to try this with your students as it encourages critical thinking, assessment of arguments, and perspective taking. It furthermore helps build empathy for different positions, and allows students to see the complexity of the question. This is likewise excellent practice in terms of engaging in qualitative research methods.

Some things I encourage you to keep in mind include the fact that there may be confusion about the different types of salmon farming. This activity could also easily be adapted to use in an online course modality. This activity could be modified to provide an opportunity for more extensive qualitative coding, but would likely require transcription of the entire interview (another skill that can be useful to practice). This would be appropriate for a course that seeks to explore research methods at a deeper level, and/or is engaged in undergraduate research experiences. Copies of complete audio interviews may be available upon request from Anita Harker, at [aharker@whatcom.edu](mailto:aharker@whatcom.edu)

I would like to thank each of my interview subjects, as well as my colleagues Ian Stacy, Anna Booker, Kaatje Kraft, Jennifer Zovar, Natalie Baloy and Marco Hatch - each of them have helped shape this activity.

If you have questions about this activity, or if you would like access to the full audio versions of the interviews, please contact me at [aharker@whatcom.edu](mailto:aharker@whatcom.edu)

Best wishes,

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