Environmental Studies 195 N (96276)

What Does the Fox Say: Sustainability from a Non-Human Perspective

Fall Semester 2015 (3 Credits)
Mondays 8:00-9:15am, Wednesdays 8:00-9:15am
Classroom: Terrill Home-EC 308

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Office Hours: TBD and by appointment (call 802-656-4055).

Course Description:

ENVS 195 N is an urban ecology and wildlife observation course that puts students in charge of finding urban wildlife around campus, and in Burlington, and studying how these animals survive. The type of energy sources we use, the food we eat, the waste we produce, the way we move from one place to another, the types of structures we build, and the noise we make, greatly affect non-human species. This course explores these impacts through weekly walking lectures and field outings on campus, where we will study how a red fox survives in Centennial Woods and why a tiny migrating bird that winters in Latin America spends the summer on the edge of the UVM campus. In this course we will walk together, observe together, learn together and teach each other. Half the lectures will be held outside in Centennial Woods or other urban wild areas. Guest speakers range from exterminators to wildlife rehabilitators. The disciplines of urban ecology and urban design for the biophilic city provide the conceptual framework for this course. Readings are drawn from both the environmental humanities and environmental sciences. You will read books from the disciplines of wildlife biology, urban ecology and environmental history, as well as short articles. Readings will also help you see urban nature from the viewpoint of wildlife biologists, fanatical birders, an artist-turtle detective and the perspective of the urban animals, themselves.

Course Objectives:

There are three main goals in this course:

1) To get you outside;

2) To connect you with this place and our non-human neighbors; and

3) To use urban animals as teachers of sustainability.
These are some of the research questions we will explore in this course:

- Who (non-human) lives here? Who do we share this campus and city with?
- Who passes through and feeds here (migratory birds)? What are the food sources for them in an urban setting?
- How do the ways that we live and work affect the animal residents?
- What can we learn from our non-human neighbors about energy efficiency, sustainability and recycling waste? What can urban wildlife teach us about adaptability and resilience in the face of climate change?
- Should wildlife be allowed to live in urban areas? Should you have to share your space with house sparrows, skunks, crows, squirrels, red-tailed hawks, rats, mice and other creatures?

These are some of the skills you will learn and practice in this course:

- How to find and identify animal signs: tracks in the snow, scat, dens, etc.
- How to identify bird species.
- How to observe wildlife and record phenological fieldnotes.
- How to analyze these fieldnotes and synthesize research findings to share with the public.
- How to cultivate a practice of lifelong learning by doing weekly research.

Course Structure:

“Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.”

John Dewey, education reformer.

This course is based on Dewey’s philosophy of learning by doing. During this semester you will learn by walking, sitting still, watching, listening, smelling, thinking, recording data, drawing, questioning, analyzing, sharing, and researching.

Lectures: This is an indoor/outdoor course divided between a weekly indoor lecture and a weekly outdoor walking lecture on campus or in surrounding areas (there may be a night walk, as well). For indoor lectures we meet in Terrill Home-EC 308. For outdoor walking lectures we meet at different campus locations depending on the weather. Please check your email regularly for updates on outdoor walking-lecture locations. Locations and lecture topics may change.
**Research practices and exercises:** The course structure is based on a series of reflective practices and exercises. **The heart of this course is a daily nature observation and research practice.** It is also a daily mindfulness practice. You are going to spend 30 minutes a day, five days a week in a “territory” of your choice, simply observing. You will keep a careful field journal of all observations. Journals will be turned in to the instructor every Monday during the morning session for grading. Field journal entries should include a species list, a soundscape list, a list of possible animal signs, personal reflections, possible research questions and drawings of animal tracks. You are expected to employ research methods from the readings during your field observation practice. Field journal entries will be shared during some class sessions. You may also decide to publish a column or oped based on your field journal. **Please bring your field journal to every class. The field journal and observation exercise is worth 50% of the course grade.**

At the end of each week, you will also **formulate two research questions** about your territory based on your field journal entries. Students will answer these questions using scientific sources and post them weekly on Blackboard. Research questions and answers should be posted every Monday. The goal of this practice is to teach you how to become a lifelong learner.

In addition to the research questions, you will be assigned five short **fun exercises** throughout the semester to help improve your field observation skills. These activities are designed to help build our class community. You will work together on at least two of these activities that include a mapping exercise, a tour, an interview, and a find-an-expert hunt. Please check Blackboard weekly for tips and updates on these exercises and your field journaling.

**Exams:** In lieu of a midterm and final exam, you will write four take-home book reviews on the course texts. These books reviews are the exams: readings are extremely important. The reviews are worth 20% of your grade. These readings will also help you improve field journaling skills. If you publish a column or oped based on your field journal, that published work can count for one of the book reviews.

**Grading System:**

Field Observation and Journal Practice (25/25): 50%

Weekly Research Questions: 10%

Four Book Reviews: 20%

Class Exercises and Participation: 20%

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100%
Course Readings:

The following texts are required and can be purchased in the UVM bookstore:

A fieldbook (hardcover, waterproof engineering fieldbooks work best—ask where they are located).


I will also post very short supplemental readings and weblinks on Blackboard. Please check weekly class folders on Blackboard for these materials.

Course Policies:

**Attendance:** If you must miss a class because of an extremely urgent matter (illness or family emergency), please email the instructor. This is a place-based course; over half of the sessions are held outside and there are several guest speakers. There are no make-up assignments except in cases of serious illness or tragedy. **No late papers accepted.**

**Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to follow the UVM guidelines for academic honesty. If you plagiarize you may fail this course, be suspended from UVM, and expelled. Please see UVM policy on academic honesty at: [http://www.uvm.edu/~dledford/academicintegrity.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~dledford/academicintegrity.pdf)
ENVS 195 N Spring 2015 Weekly Course Schedule
(Subject to change)

15 weeks
27 sessions (half are held outside, weather permitting)

Week 1

Monday, August 31

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for syllabus review.

Homework:

1. Start walking 30 minutes every day, five days this week, to search for your territory. Explore your neighborhood or campus. Invite a friend to come with you. After your walk, jot down your discoveries. These first fieldnotes are free-form. In a few weeks we will have a special class session on how to take biological fieldnotes. In the meantime, just have fun with this. See how many new things and creatures you can find.

2. Start reading Carroll. This book will help you with the first writing assignment.

Wednesday, September 2

Location and Class Activity: Class meets at entrance to Centennial Woods for first class nature-study walk.

Homework:


2. Continue reading Carroll. Think about your own childhood and experiences with nature as you read his personal story.

Week 2

Monday, September 7

NO CLASS
Wednesday, September 9

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for orientation lecture I: Personal Environmental History.

Homework:

1. Continue daily walking and journaling practice. By next week, you will have to decide on a territory and explain that decision to the class.

2. Finish reading Carroll. Your first writing assignment—a personal environmental history and review of Carroll—is due on Monday, September 14 (See Blackboard for assignment sheet). Write that paper.

Week 3

Monday, September 14

Location and Class Activity: Meet at Centennial Woods for class walk.

Homework:

1. Keep walking and journaling. You will begin turning in your journals for a grade starting next Monday. You will receive grade points for your journaling during these first three weeks.

2. Decide on your territory. You will share this decision with the class during Wednesday’s discussion.

Wednesday, September 16

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for lecture on how to record phenological fieldnotes. All students will also describe their respective territories.

Assignments Due:

1. Your personal environmental history and Carroll review (“A Self-Portrait with ____________”) is due today in class (hard copy). See assignment sheet for instructions.

Homework:

1. Begin sitting and observation practice in your territory. Begin keeping phenological fieldnotes using the methods explained in the class lecture.
2. Based on your field journal, come up with two research questions for the week. See Blackboard “Research Questions” folder for instructions on how to write up these questions. You will post the questions and answers every Monday on the class discussion board to share with your colleagues.

Week 4

Monday, September 21

Location and Class Activity: Meet at Centennial for class walk.

Assignments Due:

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.
2. Start reading Winn’s “Red-tails in Love.” Pay special attention to the map of ‘The Ramble’ at the very beginning of the book. Think about this map as you walk through your new territory.

Wednesday, September 23

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for lecture on amazing avians and fall bird migration.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.
2. Continue reading Winn.

Week 5

Monday, September 28

Location and Class Activity: Class walk in Centennial Woods or one of your territories.
Assignments Due:

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling.
2. Continue reading Winn.
3. Fun Exercise #1: Mapping your territory

Pair up with a classmate. Give your colleague a world-class tour of your new territory. Show off your baby. Get their help drawing a map of your territory and creating place-names like Winn’s map of Central Park’s Ramble. Then, reverse roles and do the same for them in their territory. Write about this experience in one of this week’s five journal entries. In that journal entry answer this question: What did you learn from each other? See exercise sheet in Blackboard “Fun Exercises” folder for further instructions on what should be on your territory map.

Wednesday, September 30

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for guest lecture.

Homework:


Week 6

Monday, October 5

Location and Class Activity: Class meets to walk in Centennial or one of your territories.

Assignments Due:

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.
Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling.

2. Finish your territory map to **share with the class on Wednesday, October 7**. Also, pick your favorite journal entry to read aloud to the class on Wednesday.

**Wednesday, October 7**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 to share maps and journal entries. Pick your favorite journal excerpt to read aloud to the class.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.

2. Finish writing book review due on **Monday, Oct. 12. You do not have to do the research questions assignment this week because of the book review.**

**Week 7**

**Monday, October 12**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class meets to walk in Centennial or one of your territories.

**Assignments Due:**

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Turn in Winn book review.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.

**Wednesday, October 14**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for guest lecture.

Homework:

2. Start Fun Exercise #2 “Find an Expert.” See Blackboard for assignment sheet and instructions in “Fun Exercises” folder.

**Week 8**

**Monday, October 19**

**Location and Class Activity:** We will celebrate John Dewey’s birthday on October 20 with a special John-Dewey-on-campus lecture-walk.

**Assignments Due:**

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.

**Homework:**

1. Continue observation and journaling practice. Make sure to write one journal entry about your walk with an expert for exercise #2.

**Wednesday, October 21**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for framework lecture I: The Great Geese Wars and Notes on Evil House Sparrows and Beatific Bluebirds.

**Homework:**

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.

2. Begin reading Haskell.

**Week 9**

**Monday, October 26**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class meets in Centennial Woods for fall walk.
Assignments Due:

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.
2. Fun Exercise #3 “Be an Ant, Be a Hawk, Be a Fox.” Use Haskell’s methods for monitoring your territory and discovering greater biodiversity. See Fun Exercises folder in Blackboard for instructions.

Wednesday, October 28

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill Home-EC 308 for research seminar. Sharing session of weekly research questions, answers and best sources.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.
2. Continue reading Haskell.

Week 10

Monday, November 2

Location and Class Activity: Walk in Centennial Woods or one of your territories.

Assignments Due:

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.
2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.

Homework:

1. Continue observation and journaling practice.
2. Continue reading Haskell.

Wednesday, November 4
Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill Home-Ec 308 for guest lecture.

Homework:


4. Continue reading Haskell.

Week 11

Monday, November 9

Location and Class Activity: Class walk in Centennial Woods or one of your territories.

Assignments Due:

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.

2. Make sure to post your two research questions and answers to Blackboard.

Homework:


2. Continue reading Haskell.

Wednesday, November 11

Location and Class Activity: Meet in Terrill 308 for discussion and preparation for Fun Exercise #4: The History Detective. Possible guest lecturer to help with this exercise.

Homework:


2. Start Fun Exercise #4. See assignment sheet on Blackboard for instructions.

3. Research questions assignment is over for the semester. Focus on Exercise #4.

4. Continue reading Haskell. Book review is due on Nov. 18.
**Week 12**

**Monday, November 16**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class fall walk in Centennial Woods or one of your territories.

**Assignments Due:**

1. Turn in field journals at the end of class.

**Homework:**

2. Continue Fun Exercise #4.
3. Research questions assignment is over for the semester.
4. Prepare for reading discussion on Wednesday and finish Haskell review to turn in.

**Wednesday, November 18**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class meets in Terrill HOME-EC 308 for sharing session on Haskell and discussion comparing the first three course texts (Carroll, Winn and Haskell). This discussion is an important portion of your participation grade. Please be prepared.

**Assignments Due:** Turn in Haskell review.

**Homework:**

1. Start reading Heinrich’s “Winter World” over the break. No journaling homework. Enjoy the vacation.

**Week 13: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14**

**Monday, November 30**

**Location and Class Activity:** Class walk in Centennial or one of your territories.
Assignments Due:

1. No journals or questions due.

Homework:

1. Begin journaling assignment again for the last two weeks. Note the changes you are seeing as documented in Heinrich’s “Winter World.” Find signs of winter.

2. Keep reading Heinrich.

3. Keep working on history detective assignment.

Wednesday, December 2

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill 308 for guest lecture.

Homework:


Week 15

Monday, December 7

Location and Class Activity: Winter World walk in Centennial Woods.

Assignments Due:

1. Turn in journals for the last time.

Homework:

1. Prepare to share your history findings on Wednesday. You will turn in a summary of your findings.

Wednesday, December 9 (Last Class)

Location and Class Activity: Class meets in Terrill Home-EC 308 for final discussion of Heinrich and sharing session on history detective exercise.
Assignments Due:

1. Turn in Exercise #4, your History Detective summary.

Homework:

1. Write Heinrich review which is due on Monday, December 14, 2015. See Blackboard assignment sheet in “Book Reviews” folder.