

Environmental Studies 600

CAPSTONE SEMINAR

Last Child in the Park: How Kids and Birds Can Save the Planet

Fall Semester 2013 (3 Credits)

Wednesdays 7:30-9:30am, Wednesdays 2:00-5:00pm

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Course Description:

This class is a capstone experience for the Environmental Studies Certificate Program and a seminar for other undergraduates in environmental fields. It is a place-based course in which UW students explore nature once a week in Madison’s largest urban park with a child from Sherman Middle School. Sherman Middle School educates many students from Madison’s underserved Northside community where a high percentage of this school’s ethnically-diverse student population lives in poverty. According to census data, residents on this side of the city earn less on average than most Madisonians: 13% of children live in poverty compared to four percent citywide. In three of the four public elementary schools, 60% of the children are from low-income families. Many of these children live in apartment blocks on the park’s northern border. Here the minority population is 39 percent, the median income is \$28,542, and 10% of residents have a college degree. On the park’s southern border in the community of Maple Bluffs, the minority population is two percent, the median household income is \$151,875, and 82% of residents have a college degree.

Sherman teachers and administrators are making herculean efforts to meet student needs by providing after-school programming. Our class helps the school meet those needs by pairing our students as after-school mentors or “co-explorers” with Sherman students. Collectively, and in pairs, we spend every Wednesday afternoon exploring nearby Warner Park to learn what the park and its landscape and wild creatures have to teach us, and what we all have to teach each other. UW participants help their Sherman counterparts develop academic and social skills while building an awareness of and appreciation for the natural resources of Warner Park.

The course also has a lab component: seminar participants meet every Wednesday morning for an introduction to basic field ornithology in the Lakeshore Preserve. This lab teaches UW

students how to identify Wisconsin's most common birds; bird identification is a concrete skill that the UW student then teaches to their Sherman co-explorer. Birds are vital indicators of the planet's overall ecological health. For lower-income urban children, birds are also the nature that children can see and hear every day without having to be driven to a zoo or a distant wilderness area. As builders, artists, musicians, inventors, comedians, acrobats and actors, birds are a constant source of wonder. They make tools. They learn and compose songs. They travel thousands of miles to their many homes with the sun and stars as their guides, and they build complex structures. One of the most visible and accessible forms of wildlife, they grace our daily lives with flashes of color from dull city hedges and songs that pour from leafy treetops.

Course Objectives:

This course's main objective is to infuse UW students with a sense of wonder towards all wildlife, and for them to share that wonder with Sherman Middle School students. The program also has an environmental justice focus. In addition to exploring Warner Park, UW students also explore how race and class influence how we all perceive and experience nature. For some Northside residents, Warner Park is an invaluable refuge for urban wildlife and a green island of peace in the midst of urban sprawl. For others, it is an overgrown, scruffy menace where drug dealers purportedly hide and children are endangered. For still others, an under-utilized land area that could spur economic growth in a lower-income neighborhood. Throughout the course, UW students learn from their Sherman co-explorer what Warner Park's nature specifically means to that child.

In this course you will:

- Explore how race and class affect how we perceive nature;
- Learn to find and identify 45 Wisconsin birds by sight and sound;
- Teach a middle school student how to do the same;
- Explore Madison's largest urban park with a child and discover the wonders of nature;
- Answer that child's questions about the nature she encounters through your own weekly research;
- Develop and use outdoor teaching techniques;
- Play a lot of fun nature games;
- Keep a reflection journal;
- Learn about local decision-making processes that affect urban green spaces;
- Share your experiences with other members of the class.

Course Structure and Logistics:

This course has two components: a Wednesday morning Bird Lab and a Wednesday afternoon outdoor classroom program at Warner Park. For the morning Bird Lab, we meet from 7:30am until 9:30am at different locations depending on the weather. **Please check your email regularly for updates on Bird Lab locations.** During the morning lab we alternate between working outside on bird identification in the Lakeshore Nature Preserve or holding class discussions inside on the assigned readings. We will also take several class field trips to some of Madison's best birding hot spots. Again, it is imperative that you check your email regularly for field trip updates as our morning lab schedule is weather-dependent.

For the Wednesday afternoon sessions, we meet at Sherman Middle School at 2:40pm. We walk to Warner Park as a group, explore the park until 4:30pm, and then return on foot to Sherman Middle School by 4:50pm. Since this is a service learning class, UW students are eligible for free transportation from campus to Sherman Middle School via cab, funded by UW's Morgridge Center (details provided during orientation).

Attendance:

Since this course involves mentoring and community service, attendance is imperative. Students leave the Red Gym at 2:00 to travel by taxi to Sherman Middle School. We leave Sherman to walk to Warner Park at 2:40 pm whether or not you are there; tardiness will not be tolerated. If you must miss a class because of an extremely urgent matter (illness or family emergency), contact instructors before the afternoon session; we will have to assign another mentor to your Sherman co-explorer. A child is depending on you to show up, on time, every week. Please do not let that child down.

Reflection Journal:

After working with your Sherman co-explorer each Wednesday, you will write a two page, single-spaced reflection. The reflection journal is worth 30% of your total grade. This weekly assignment is your chance to think about your discoveries with your co-explorer and to relate these discoveries to the class readings. In the first page of the reflection you will write about your experience in Warner Park that week. In the second page you will reflect on the week's assigned readings and answer the reading discussion questions. Since the morning session focuses on teaching birding identification skills outside, we do not have extensive time for weekly class discussions of the readings (although we will have a few sessions). The weekly reflection is how you will show that you are doing the readings and engaging with the course material. This writing exercise is also a space for you to critique this community-based learning program and help us improve it. What works? What does not work? Please share any magic moments with your Sherman co-explorer or flashes of insight. **The deadline for weekly reflections is every Friday at 12:00 noon; email it to both Kloppenburg and O'Kane. Late papers receive half-credit. No exceptions. If you are seriously ill, contact the instructors to arrange a make-up assignment.**

The final reflection "Learning to Fly," is also your final paper for the course. You will have two weeks to complete this assignment.

Homework Assignments:

Homework assignments should give you immediate working knowledge to share with your co-explorer. They will also teach you concrete research skills for lifelong learning. There are two types of weekly assignments:

1. **Birding:** Every week, you will spend at least one hour birding either alone or with other students from the class. You will make a list of the birds observed during this session. You may do this on campus or wherever convenient--the birds are everywhere. Every Wednesday morning, you will turn in your fieldbook for a grade.
2. **Public Research:** Every Wednesday afternoon when you meet with your Sherman co-explorers, they may ask you questions about the wildlife and vegetation in Warner Park or science in general. Each week you will answer **two** of these questions. If your co-explorers do not have questions, ask them what they are curious about or develop your own questions. Please write the questions of the week at the bottom of your reflection, research the answers during the following week using university websites, **then turn in the questions and answers at Wednesday morning Bird Lab.** We use the questions and answers in class to educate each other. Please post your questions and answers weekly on the class Facebook page so everyone can share their credible scientific web resources. **No late assignments accepted.**

Course Grading:

Participation: attendance, mentoring,
class discussions 35%

Reflection Journal:

Sherman experience 15%
Reading discussion journal 15%
Final Paper (worth 2 weekly reflections)

Two Bird ID Quizzes and Final Exam: 15%

Weekly Homework:

Weekly Birding Field Practice 10%
Weekly Public Research 10%

100%

Security in the Park:

- Use common sense. Think like a bird. If you feel or smell danger, make a lot of noise and fly out of there.
- **Co-explorers should always stay together. You are responsible for your Sherman student; keep them within view at all times. If your co-explorer needs to use the restroom, wait outside for**

him/her.

- Stay away from the railroad tracks.
- Please do not stray too far from the group.
- Get back on time so the rest of the group does not worry.
- Teach your bird buddy how to be outside, have fun, and stay safe.

Course Texts and Readings:

There is a course reader available for purchase on the first floor of the Social Science building. You also need to purchase the following texts:

An orange engineering fieldbook (waterproof): available at the UW Bookstore, main floor.

Leopold, Aldo

A Sand County Almanac

Tekiela, Stan

2004 *Birds of Wisconsin: Field Guide* (Note: If you already own a bird field guide you do not need to purchase Tekiela.)

We will use the following books in this class. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase them for future reference. However, purchase is *not* required as excerpts are in the course reader.

Crossley, Richard

2011 *The Crossley ID Guide, Eastern Birds*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Carroll, David

Self-Portrait with Turtles.

Haupt, Lyanda

Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds.

Louv, Richard

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder.

Robinson, John C.

Birding for Everyone: Encouraging People of Color to Become Birdwatchers.

Stutchbury, Bridget

Silence of the Songbirds.

Thompson, Bill

Wisconsin Bird Watching: A Year-Round Guide.

Class Discussion and Reading Schedule

Week 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION I: "BIRDS AS THE PORTAL"

Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2013

Bhanoo, Sindya N.

2010 "Crows put tools to use to access nutritious diet." *The New York Times* (October 16).

Clark, Robert

2012 "Miracle of miracles." *Audubon* magazine (January-February).

Crossley, Richard

2011 "How to be a better birder." Pp. 25-35 in *The Crossley Guide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pearson, Gilbert T.

1936 "Preface," "Introduction," and "Outdoor Bird-Study." Pp. ix-xxx in *Birds of America*. Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc.

READING QUESTIONS:

1. What functions do feathers serve?
2. List five Crossley tips for identifying birds.
3. How do the Pearson readings reflect attitudes towards birds and nature during that time period? Compare and contrast those attitudes with attitudes today.

Week 2: ORIENTATION II: "WHAT IS NATURE STUDY?"

Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2013

Comstock, Anna

2009 "The teaching of Nature Study." Pp.1-23, 27-70 in *The Handbook of Nature Study*. Oxford, UK: Benediction Classics.

Tierney, John

2011 "Grasping risk in life's classroom." *The New York Times* (July 19): D1.

READING QUESTIONS:

1. Develop three mini-lessons to utilize in Warner Park based on the Comstock reading.
2. How have playgrounds and parks changed according to Tierney and what forces are driving these changes?

Week 3: THE PLACE, THE PEOPLE, THE ISSUES

Wednesday, Sept. 18, 2013

Carey, Benedict

2013 "Diagnosis: Battered but vibrant." *The New York Times* (January 7).

Cullen, Sandy

2012 "Man charged with attempted homicide in May incident on North Side." *The Capital Times* (September 27).

Madison School District

"Top ten things to remember when working with middleschoolers."

O'Kane, Trish

2007 "The flow of the water: an environmental history of Warner Park." Unpublished

environmental history paper.

O'Kane, Trish

2012 "The eye of the beholder." *The Northside News* (April-May):37.

O'Kane, Trish

2011 "Bird buddies get a red-tailed valentine." *The Northside News* (April-May):25.

Schneider, Pat

2012 "Brentwood neighbors lead successful effort for kids--will others join in?" *The Capital Times* (June 8).

Wisconsin State Journal editorial board

2012 "Talking around race won't work." *Wisconsin State Journal* (August 31).

READING QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn about the history of Warner Park that surprised you?
2. What did you learn about the history of the Brentwood neighborhood that surprised you, especially after your first walk through the neighborhood?
3. Discuss Chatham, Chicago, and how this neighborhood dealt with a crime wave. What does the term "ecological advantage" mean in the context of Chatham?

Week 4: WHY ARE OUR CHILDREN GROWING UP INSIDE?

Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2013

Louv, Richard

2008 "Introduction," "Chapter 1: Gifts of Nature," "Chapter 2: the Third Frontier," and "Chapter 3: The Criminalization of Natural Play" in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Sobel, David

2012 "Look, Don't Touch: The problem with environmental education" in *Orion Magazine* (July-August):65-71.

READING QUESTIONS:

1. Describe the problems Richard Louv outlines in these chapters. How does he think childhood has changed?
2. Do you agree or disagree with Louv?
3. Do you see any of Louv's ideas, particularly regarding the criminalization of play, reflected in our discussions on Warner Park and Brentwood?
4. According to Sobel, how did some of the world's most famous naturalists and biologists learn about nature? Can our co-explorers learn in this same way in Warner Park or other public spaces?

Week 5: BUTTERFLIES AS TEACHERS

Wednesday, October 2, 2013

Louv, Richard

2008 "Chapter 6: The Eighth Intelligence" and "Chapter 13: Bringing Nature Home" in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.

Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

READING QUESTIONS:

1. What does "butterfly as teacher" mean? What does it have to do with what Louv calls "the eighth intelligence?"
2. What ideas in Chap. 13 that you could use with your co-explorers in Warner Park?
3. Richard Louv, David Sobel and Anna Comstock are having a beer in the Rathskellar (never mind that she lived a century ago). You're sitting at a table next to them, eavesdropping. They are having a lively debate about current environmental education practices. Do they agree with each other? Why or why not?

Week 6: HOW BIRDS CREATE COMMUNITY AND BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013

O'Kane, Trish

2011 "Warner Park: Playground of a Red-tailed Hawk." *The Northside News*.

Winn, Marie

1999 "Scenes" pgs. 7-19, "The Regulars" pgs. 27-39, "Enter Pale Male" pg. 43-49, "New Romance," pg. 71-79, "Buteo Jamaicensis," pgs. 80-83, "Watching the Action," pgs. 84-89, "The End of Doubt" pgs. 179-186, and "Fear of Flying," pgs. 196-209 in *Redtails in Love: A wildlife drama in Central Park*. NY, NY: Random House Inc.

READING QUESTIONS:

1. Who are the regulars?
2. How does a hawk create a human community in New York?
3. What surprised you about this hawk and this book?
4. See the reading assigned in the syllabus from the Birds of North America online database. To access this database, go to the UW-Madison website, hit Libraries, then Databases and type "Birds of North America" into the search engine. This is the best scientific source on birds online. It summarizes the scientific literature. Please read the main hawk articles in the Species Account: Introduction, Distinguishing Characteristics, Migration, Habitat, Food Habits, Sounds, Behavior, Breeding, Conservation and Management, Appearance, Priorities for Future Research. In these readings, find three great red-tailed factoids to share with your co-explorers.

Also, here is an article about one of the characters in Red-tails in Love:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/nyregion/starr-saphir-bird-watching-guide-in-central-park-dies-at-73.html>

Week 7: EXPLORING THE SOUNDSCAPE, A NEW ECOLOGICAL REALM

Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2013

Leopold, Aldo

1966 Read "Foreword" and pgs. 44-98 in *A Sand County Almanac*. New York, NY: Random

- House.
O'Kane, Trish
2009 "Adventures in Wild Warner: Red is the color of my true love's hair" *Northside News*.
Robbins, Jim
2012 "Why trees matter." *The New York Times* (April 11).
Tingley, Kim
2012 "Whisper of the wild." *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* (March 18): 44-47.

READING QUESTIONS:

1. As you read Aldo Leopold, try to see Warner Park through his eyes. Do you see any parallels between what we do weekly in Warner Park and Leopold's work at "the Shack?" Pretend that you get to take a private walk with him through Warner Park. What would you show him? What would he say and would he compare any places in Warner Park to his project in Sand County? Would he think Warner Park is a place worth protecting and keeping wild? Why or why not?
2. After you read the soundscape article, step outside (at home or on campus), close your eyes, and listen to your own soundscape for ten minutes (time it). Immediately afterwards, make a list of the sounds you heard. Then answer these questions:

- a. What is your daily soundscape? Are you surprised?
- b. Why is the soundscape important ecologically? How is our species changing it according to Betchkal?

3. Here's an article about Aldo Leopold's soundscape: <http://www.news.wisc.edu/21058>

Week 8: WHAT MAKES AN ANIMAL WILD?

Wednesday, October 23, 2013

Heinrich, Bernd

1987 "Preface" and pgs. 1-50 in *One Man's Owl*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Also, please read *Bubo virginianus* articles in Birds of North America database (access through UW-Madison library website): "Introduction," "Distinguishing Characteristics," "Migration," "Habitat," "Food Habits," "Sounds," "Behavior," "Breeding," "Conservation and Management," "Appearance," and "Priorities for Future Research."

READING QUESTIONS:

1. This week you had to read two accounts on the species *Bubo virginianus*. Please compare and contrast these two quite different studies of this same species. Discuss scientific methods used, language, and findings. Which account did you enjoy more--Heinrich or BNA? Why? What surprised you about this bird?
2. Do you agree with Heinrich's "experiment?"

Week 9: BIRDING WHILE BLACK

Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2013

Lanham, Drew

2011 "Hope and feathers: A crisis in birder identification." *Orion* magazine. (January-February).

Lewis-Charp, Heather

2003 "Breaking the silence: white students' perspectives on race in multiracial schools." *Phi Delta Kappan* (December) 85:4:279-285.

Navarro, Mireya

2010 "National Parks reach out to Blacks who aren't visiting." *The New York Times*. (Nov. 3): A16.

O'Kane, Trish

2011 "A very special teacher in Wild Warner." *The Northside News*.

Robinson, John C.

2008 Chapters 1-3, 9 in *Birding for Everyone: Encouraging People of Color to Become Birdwatchers*. Marysville, OH: Wings-on-Disk.

Week 10: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND THE FLOW OF THE WATER

Wednesday, November 6, 2013

Spirn, Anne Whiston

2005 "Restoring Mill Creek: Landscape literacy, environmental justice and city planning and design." *Landscape Research* (July) 30:3:395-413.

Week 11: WE ARE SURROUNDED BY FEATHERED BEAUTY

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

Haupt, Lyanda

2001 "Introduction," "First Bird," "An Invasion of Owls," "Winter Wren," "Postcards from the Mayan Ruins," and "Crow Stories" in *Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds*. Seattle, W: Sasquatch Books.

Week 12: EXPLORING THE SUBNIVIAN

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

Heinrich, Bernd

2003 Chapters: 2, 5, 9, 12, and 24 in *Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Week 13: THANKSGIVING BREAK WEEK

Wednesday, November 27, 2013

Hardick, Marlene

- 2012 "The wonders of Warner Park." *The Northside News*. (June-July).
 O'Kane, Trish
 2009 "A tale of silk and perfume in Wild Warner meadow." *The Northside News*.
 O'Kane, Trish
 2010 "How many humans does it take to raise a bluebird?" *The Northside News*. (Oct.-
 Nov.)
 Stutchbury, Bridget
 2007 Chapters 2 and 7 in *Silence of the Songbirds*. New York, NY: Walker and Company.

Web Sites for Research Assignments and Weekly Bird Identification:

Cornell Lab of Ornithology	http://www.allaboutbirds.org
Wild Warner Park	http://wildwarnerpark.org
The Birds of North America	http://www.wisc.edu (free access with student ID on library website, search for "Birds of North America.")
Northside Planning Council	http:// www.NorthsideMadison.org
Together Green	http://www.togethergreen.org
Madison Audubon Society	http://wisconsinaudubon.org/audubon/
We Love Birds	http://www.welovebirds.org/
Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas	http://www.uwgb.edu/birds/wbba/aboutsite.htm
Encyclopedia of Life	http://eol.org/