

Environmental Studies 295: Birding to Change the World



Spring Semester 2020 (4 Credits)

Mondays, 8-10:45am, Perkins 200, Wednesday Lab: 1:30-5:30pm at Flynn Elementary School/
Hunt Middle School or in Marsh Life 107

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Teatime: Thursdays, 1-3:00pm, Bittersweet

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Be the change: “Birding to Change the World” is a community-based course to meet a public health need to get kids outside. This course pairs UVM students as enviro-mentors with children at Flynn Elementary School and Hunt Middle School in Burlington’s New North End, five miles from campus. The class requires humility, patience, persistence, flexibility, long underwear (over half the course is taught outside), and a sense of humor. In this course, birds and schoolchildren will become your teachers. Birds are master teachers of sustainability and a portal to the natural world. As builders, artists, musicians, inventors, comedians, acrobats and actors, birds are also a constant source of wonder. They make tools. They learn and compose songs. They build complex green homes from sustainable materials. And they travel thousands of miles to their many homes with the sun and stars as their guides. One of the most visible and accessible wild beings, they grace our daily lives with flashes of color and beauty, and songs that pour from leafy treetops and hedges. For urban children, birds are the nature that they can see and hear every day without having to be driven to a zoo or a distant wilderness area. One of the only animals on Earth that lives on all continents and can survive in almost any climate, birds are vital indicators of our planet’s ecological health.

As an enviro-mentor to a child, you will learn how to identify Vermont's most common birds by sight and sound, then share these skills with your elementary- or middle-school co-explorer. By participating in after-school birding- and nature study clubs for kids, as a UVM student you are helping to lay the foundation for a university pipeline program; many Flynn and Hunt students will be first-generation college students. Flynn Elementary has the largest after-school program in the Burlington school district with students from 33 different countries. Just a five-minute walk from Lake Champlain and surrounded by woods, parks and community gardens, Flynn is an ideal setting for an environmental education program for children. Based on the theoretical framework of environmental justice--that the environment is where we live, work and play—our class helps connect kids (and you) to Burlington's urban wilds.

To prepare for the program, you will participate in indoor/outdoor lectures every Monday at UVM on birding, nature study, environmental justice, social justice and public education. Then our class meets every Wednesday afternoon from 1:30-5:30pm during a service-learning lab at Flynn Elementary or Hunt Middle School to work with the children. We spend every Wednesday afternoon together exploring the neighborhoods surrounding these schools to learn what the parks, woods, Lake Champlain, the Winooski River, Ethan Allen Park and all the wild residents have to teach us, and what we have to teach each other. As UVM mentors you will also help your child "co-explorer" develop academic and social skills.

Course Structure

Course structure is based on learning through relationships and learning through daily and weekly practices.

Learning through relationships: This is an opportunity to learn with and from a child, the birds, a place (the Winooski Delta and its non-human residents or Ethan Allan Park, and the New North End, a neighborhood outside the university bubble), Burlington school staff, and with and from each other. I call this relationship-based teaching "co-exploring." It means that we are not teachers, mentors and students—we are all co-explorers. Co-exploring is based on a series of reciprocal relationships.

Learning through practices: There are three weekly practices: 1) birding; 2) nature-study and public research with our Flynn and Hunt co-explorers; and 3) reflective reading and writing.

1. **Birding:** Every week, you will spend at least one hour birding with a class "bird buddy." Together you will list all birds observed during this session. You may do this on campus or wherever convenient--the birds are everywhere. Every Monday we will share stories from our birding journals and you will turn in your journal for a grade that day in class.
2. **Nature Study and Public Research:** Every Wednesday afternoon when you meet with your Flynn co-explorers, they may ask questions about the wildlife and vegetation in Burlington, or questions about science in general. Each week you will answer **two** of these questions. Your Flynn explorer is assigning you this "homework." You will answer these questions in writing using university websites and then turn in a hard copy to your Flynn co-explorer the following Wednesday (email your questions and answers to the professor every week). If your co-explorers do not have questions, ask them what they are curious about and develop your own questions for them. Whether or not they are

interested in this assignment, it is your job to either answer their questions or think of questions and give them the answers. We are trying to meet the school's need to get kids interested in science. **These two weekly research questions are worth 10% of your grade.**

3. **Reading, reflecting and writing:** Every week before we go to Flynn or Hunt, you will read, analyze and discuss readings to prepare to work with your co-explorers. Flynn Elementary and the New North End provide a learning laboratory in which you can immediately test and apply ideas and concepts from class readings. **Every Friday by noon, you will deliver a two-page, single-spaced written reflection on your Flynn or Hunt experience and on the readings, to the instructor (slide hard copy under my office door at Aiken 312B.) Do not email papers unless you have made a prior arrangement with the professor.** This is an extremely important monitoring mechanism in accordance with the Burlington school district to meet our community partner's needs. You are working with minors; UVM and Flynn Elementary staff have a legal obligation to closely monitor these relationships. If you do not turn in these reports on time, your grade will be seriously affected (late papers receive half-credit); I may ask you to drop the class. This weekly report is also your chance to think about what you and your co-explorer have learned together, and to relate these wondrous revelations to class readings.

Course Objectives

This course's main objective is to connect you with the marvelous feathered teachers all around us, to fill you with a sense of wonder, and for you to share this sense of connection and wonder with a child. The course also has an environmental justice focus. In addition to exploring Burlington's socially and ethnically diverse New North End, you will also examine how privilege—class, gender, ethnicity, culture, religious and urban/rural background—influences how we all perceive and experience nature. You will become familiar with current debates over education budgets and how these affect Burlington's children. Throughout the course, you will learn what Burlington's wild spaces and creatures mean to our young co-explorers.

In this course you will:

- Learn to find and identify 50 Vermont birds by sight and sound;
- Share this knowledge with a child;
- Explore the New North End's lakeshore, woods, wetlands and delta region with a child;
- Develop your own practice of scientific inquiry by doing weekly research to answer that child's questions about nature;
- Analyze how privilege affects how we perceive and/or enjoy nature;
- Develop and use outdoor teaching techniques, particularly the Nature Study method;
- Learn to sing like a bird;
- Play a lot of fun nature games;
- Keep a weekly reflection journal;
- Learn how local decision-making processes affect public education;
- Share your experiences with the class and become part of a human flock.

Course Logistics

This course has two components: 1) Monday lectures and birding sessions at UVM, many of which will be taught in Centennial Woods and Derway in the New North End; and 2) the Wednesday lab session at Flynn Elementary and Hunt Middle School. **Please check email regularly for updates on Monday lectures: outdoor lectures and bird-walks are weather-dependent.**

On Wednesdays, we leave UVM as a group at 1:30pm and ride in UVM vans to Flynn Elementary or Hunt Middle School. As long as the temperature is above 10 degrees Fahrenheit, we work outside with the children. On bad weather days we will plan indoor activities. We leave Flynn and Hunt together at 5:00pm to return to UVM. University transportation is free.

Attendance Policy

This is not just a class—this is a community program. A child is depending on **you** to show up, on time, every week. Please do not let that child down, and do not let my neighborhood and UVM down. You are UVM's ambassador in the New North End.

1. **Monday lectures and birding sessions:** Monday sessions will prepare us for Wednesday sessions with the kids. On Mondays we strategize, problem-solve, plan activities, discuss the readings, and learn about birds. These are also flock-building sessions where we learn about each other. **Mondays are not optional:** don't duck out during midterms or because you have a thesis deadline. Everyone gets one free absence (I don't need a written excuse—just take the absence when you need to). Additional absences from class sessions will seriously impact your participation grade which is worth 35%. In extreme circumstances, see me and I will refer you to our Dean of Students, Marie Vea-Fagnant: Marie.Vea-Fagnant@uvm.edu.
2. **Wednesday Labs:** Consider this a **job** for the semester. You will sign a contract and submit a resume to the Burlington after-school program. You must submit weekly reports. You will earn thirty-five percent of your grade by showing up on time, being professional, and participating to the best of your ability. If you must miss a class lab with the kids because of an extremely urgent matter such as illness or family emergency, contact instructor **before** the Wednesday afternoon session by email or phone (no texts); I will have to assign another mentor to your co-explorer for that day. However, **if you miss more than two Flynn or Hunt sessions, you are “fired,” you have failed the class, and you must withdraw, immediately.**

Security while working with the kids:

- Use common sense. Think like a bird. If you feel or smell danger, make noise and fly away;
- **Co-explorers should stay together. You are responsible for your Flynn or Hunt student; keep them within sight at all times. If they run away, you run after them.**
- Keep kids off the frozen lake and river. **This is a direct order from Flynn staff.**
- Please do not stray too far from the group.

- Get back on time so the rest of the group does not worry.

Classroom Etiquette

Cellphone use is not permitted in any UVM classroom, including this one. **Please turn your phone off when you enter my classroom.** It is very rude to continually check your phone while I or guest speakers are talking (I do notice and it will affect your attendance grade because you are not present). Laptop use is not permitted unless an individual has received special permission. **When we have a guest speaker, please be professional.** I bring members of the community to speak with you and share their knowledge. They are very busy and we are lucky that they are willing to teach us. During past presentations, I have watched students checking their phones, getting on social media, or leaving in the middle of presentations to go to the bathroom or whatever. **This is college. You are community mentors. Please conduct yourselves, accordingly.**

Communications: If you have had a serious problem with your co-explorer and need to talk to me for any reason, please call me at home, immediately, any time before 9:00pm (no texts): 802-497-0347. Also, drop into office hours or Teatimes (I love to see my students!). Otherwise, I will try to answer all email within 24-48 hours (offline on weekends).

Student Learning Accommodations (ACCESS): In keeping with university policy, any student with a documented disability interested in accommodations should contact ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on campus: ACCESS: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; access@uvm.edu; www.uvm.edu/access. ACCESS helps students and faculty to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations as early as possible each semester. Please contact me during the first two weeks of classes if you need an accommodation.

Department of Education and UVM's definition of a credit hour: This is a 4-credit course. The Department of Education defines a 4-credit course as averaging 4 hours of contact time (typically in class), and 8 hours of work outside of class per week. The University of Vermont follows this definition. I have designed this course such that your work outside of class (service learning, readings, writing reflections, birding) will average out to 8 hours per week (112 hours total) over the course of the semester in addition to our time in class.

Use of Student Work: This course may use course participation and documents created by students for educational purposes. In compliance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, works in all media produced by students as part of their course participation at UVM may be used for educational purposes. It is understood that registration for and continued enrollment in a course where such use of student works is announced constitutes permission by the student. After the course has been completed, any further use of student works will meet one of these conditions: 1) the work will be rendered anonymous through the removal of all personal identification of the work's creator (s); or 2) the creator's written permission will be secured.

Academic Honesty: Follow UVM's guidelines for academic honesty: <http://www.uvm.edu/~dledford/academicintegrity.pdf>. Plagiarism or cheating on an exam earns an automatic grade of "F" and I will expel you from the class. Cheaters cannot be mentors. I reserve the right to take the matter before UVM's committee on academic integrity, which may decide to suspend or expel you from UVM.

Grading System:

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| Participation: attendance, mentoring, class discussions | 35% |
| Co-Teaching | 5% |
| Weekly Reading and Writing Reflections: | 30% |
| Three Bird/Nature Study Identification Exams: | 5% |
| Homework: | |
| Weekly Birding Field Practice, Field Journal and Drawings | 15% |
| Weekly Public Research for Your Co-Explorer | 10% |

Course Texts and Readings:

Please make **VT Digger** your homepage this semester. You should be familiar with any news stories and editorials covering education issues, social justice and racism in Burlington, and particularly in the neighborhood where you are working, the New North End.

Please purchase the following texts in the UVM bookstore (or on Amazon):

An engineering fieldbook (waterproof or “Rite-in-the-Rain”). This fieldbook should be at least 7 inches by 4.5 inches. Please do not buy tiny notebooks. You will be drawing and writing in this book every week.

Haupt, Lyanda

2001 *Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds*. Sasquatch Books: Seattle, WA.

Hanscom, Angela J.

2016 *Balanced and Barefoot*. New Harbinger Publications: Oakland, CA.

Lanham, J. Drew

2016 *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature*.
Milkweed Editions: Minneapolis, MN.

Winn, Marie

1999 *Red-tails in Love: A Wildlife Drama in Central Park*. Vintage Books. NY, NY.

Optional but highly recommended (especially if you are pursuing a career in environmental education):

Louv, Richard

2008 *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.
Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Web Sites for Research Assignments and Weekly Bird Identification:

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| Cornell Lab of Ornithology | http://www.allaboutbirds.org |
| Vermont E-Bird: subscribe to e-newsletter for news on birds in Vermont: | ebird.org/contact/vt/ |
| Burlington Geographic | http://www.uvm.edu/place/burlingtongeographic/ |
| The Birds of North America | http://www.wisc.edu (free access with student ID on library website, search for "Birds of North America" online.) |
| We Love Birds | http://www.welovebirds.org/ |
| Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas | val.vtcostudies.org/projects/Vermont-breeding-bird-atlas/ |
| Encyclopedia of Life | http://eol.org/ |

ENVS 295 Weekly Activities Schedule

Note: This class is weather- and child-dependent so schedule is subject to change. Always be prepared to go outside for a feathered adventure (that means dressed for the cold and binos in hand). Check email before class for any weather-related changes. **All reading reflection questions and assignments on this schedule are posted on BlackBoard.**

WEEKLY TASKS:

- Every Week:** Go birding for **at least one hour with your bird buddy**. Record your birding adventure in your journal and be ready to share during our class journal-sharing sessions.
- Every Monday:** Hand in birding journals along with assigned drawings.
- Every Wednesday:** Bring a hard copy of your two research questions and answers to Flynn Elementary to turn in to your co-explorer (email questions and answers to the professor every week).
- Every Friday:** Slide a hard copy of your Flynn/Hunt and reading reflection under my door by NOON, Aiken 312B.

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|------------------------|
| Week 1 | Intro to Our Feathered Teachers | |
| Wed. 1/15 | Orientation I: inside. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|--|
| Week 2 | The Weird and Wonderful World of Birding | |
| Mon. 1/20 | Holiday. No class. | |
| Wed. 1/22 | Orientation II. Fill out school district paperwork in class. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Two colored drawings of Vermont birds from the class list on BB. Read Singer's article "How Dinosaurs Shrank and Became Birds" and write about it in your journal) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|--|---|
| Week 3 | "The Child Should First See the Thing." Liberty Hyde Bailey, 1903 | |
| Mon. 1/27 | Orientation III to prepare for first Flynn visit on Wednesday. Possible training with Mandi Harris at Flynn. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 1/29 | Final orientation to prepare for Flynn and Hunt next week! Possible training with Mandi at Flynn or Gracie at Hunt. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! Find a bird doing some of the tasks you read about in "Birding for Beginners" and record it in your journals. | *Your Bird Buddy assignment on the first reading, "Birding for Beginners" (joint reflection) is due in class. |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Week 4 | Nature Study: our method | |
| Mon. 2/3 | Walking lecture outside on the Nature Study movement and Comstock readings for this week. Discussion of how-to-do weekly research questions practice which comes from the Nature Study movement. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 2/5 | First Flynn/Hunt Session: Meet at 1:25pm in the Aiken Solarium to ride in vans to Flynn. Start weekly research questions practice with your co-explorer. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Reflection due by Friday, NOON (Comstock, O’Kane dissertation chapters) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|---|
| Week 5 | Wild Bodies, Brilliant Brains | |
| Mon. 2/10 | Meet inside for first Bird ID exam. Class brainstorm (outside) on how to use your fabulous bird drawings to teach kids. Drawing and birding outside. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored) and one track. |
| Wed. 2/12 | Second Flynn Session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class and start practicing your bird song! | *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reflection due by Friday, NOON (Hanscom, Sobel and Tierney) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|---|
| Week 6 | Don’t Just Study the Bird-BE the Bird! | |
| Mon. 2/17 | HOLIDAY | *Remember to go birding even though it is a holiday! You can write a field journal entry wherever you are. I will |

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| | | check the journals next Monday. |
| Wed. 2/21 | Third Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Drawing of one bird (colored) and one track. *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reflection due by Friday, NOON on O’Kane dissertation chapters and Freire reading, see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|--|
| Week 7 | Extraordinary Encounters with Ordinary Birds | |
| Mon. 2/24 | Class birdwalk or field trip to find first early migrants! | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored) and one track. |
| Wed. 2/26 | Flynn and Hunt are off. Important in-class session on teaching with birdsong and brainstorming session on mini-lesson plans. We will also do a pre-mid-semester check-in. Learning to make a loon call with A.D. Venture! Talk about O’Kane dissertation and what Paolo Freire has to do with our birding program. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Reflection due by Friday, NOON (Haupt and Birds of North America online, see BB). |

| Dates | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Week 8 | Our New American Flock in Burlington | |
| Mon. 3/2 | Birding session. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 3/5 | Fourth Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reflection due by Friday, NOON (readings on Somalia, Tibet, the Congo, Nepal and Bhutan). |

SPRING BREAK MARCH 9-13

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|--|
| Week 9 | Confederates and Rebels in Maplelandia | |
| Mon. 3/16 | Possible council fire in Secret Classroom for mid-semester check-in and discussion of New Americans reflections and readings. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 3/18 | Fifth Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reflection due by Friday, NOON (Start Lanham's book "The Home Place" and press articles on racism in Vermont (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|--|--|
| Week 10 | The Home Place | |
| Mon. 3/23 | Meet inside for second Bird ID Exam. Guest lecturer Gracie Harvey from the Hunt Middle School Club on diversity in the Discussion of “The Home Place” and racism in Vermont. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 3/25 | Sixth Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reading reflection due by Friday, NOON (Finish Lanham’s book “The Home Place”) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|---|
| Week 11 | Implicit Bias, Birds and Education | |
| Mon. 3/30 | Birding!! Time to find the spring migrators. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 4/3 | Seventh Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reading reflection due by Friday, NOON (Banaji and Harvard implicit bias tests) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Week 12 | Birding for Change as Activism: how to create new flocks | |
| Mon. 4/6 | Discussion of implicit bias readings either inside or outside. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 4/8 | Eighth Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | *Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reading reflection due by Friday, NOON (start Red-Tails in Love) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|--|
| Week 13 | Red-Tails: How Birds Create a Human Flock | |
| Mon. 4/13 | Class bird walk. Discussion of Red-tails in Love and context for this book on urban birding. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |
| Wed. 4/15 | Ninth Flynn session. Go birding with your new Bird Buddy before the next class! | * Final Two weekly research questions and answers handed to your co-explorer and emailed to Trish. *Reading reflection due by Friday, NOON (Red-Tails in Love) (see BB). |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|---|--|
| Week 14 | Co-Teaching and Flocking with ENV5002 | |
| Mon. 4/20 | Preparing for special co-teaching assignment this week in ENV5 002. | *Birding journal due. *Drawing of one bird (colored). |

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| Wed. 4/22 | No Flynn or Hunt sessions. Panel session in ENVS 002 with some mentors but we may not hold a regular class. TBA. | |
| Fri. 4/26 Morning | Do birding labs with ENVS 002 lab sections. This is your co-teaching assignment for the semester. | |

| Date | Themes and Class Activities | Assignments Due |
|------------------|--|---|
| Week 15 | Fledging | |
| Mon. 4/27 | Final Bird ID Exam. Planning for Wednesday campus tour. | *Birding journal due. *Special one-page reflection on your co-teaching experience in ENVS 002 last Friday. |
| Wed. 4/29 | Party at UVM with kids! | |

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| Wed. 5/6 | | Final Reflection due via email to instructor: pokane@uvm.edu by 5:00pm. |
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Key Dates:

Bird ID/Nature Study Exams:

First Exam: February 10, 2020

Second Exam: March 23, 2020

Third Exam: April 27, 2020

Campus Goodbye Party for Kids: April 29, 2020

Final paper due: May 6, 2020 via email.