

Building Connections Curriculum – Instructional Guide

Introduction and Acknowledgements.....	2
Interdisciplinary Education.....	3
Sustainable Development Goals	4-5
Key Terms and Definitions.....	6-7
BC Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes.....	8
Understanding by Design Context.....	9-13
Understanding by Design Course Template.....	12-13
Examples of Interdisciplinary Course Descriptions.....	14-17
Additional Resources.....	18

Appendices

- Example of BC Syllabi with the Writing Attribute
- General Education Course Syllabus Template
- General Education Course Approval Form
- General Education Course Approval Rubric

Introduction

The Building Connections curriculum is focused on multi-perspective taking. It is more important than ever to facilitate an understanding of the world from various points of view. This facilitates more effective communication, empathy, understanding, and willingness to work together to solve problems (of which we have plenty).

In Building Connections courses, students will explore the unique contributions of knowledge, skills, methodologies, values and perspectives from varied disciplines and social positions. In addition, they will practice higher-order learning activities such as conceptual thinking, problem solving, innovative design, critical analysis, evaluation of ideas, and creation of knowledge/products.

Building Connections is inspired by a broad and inclusive conception of interdisciplinarity. It is intended to afford flexibility and inspire innovation/creativity that can be accomplished by single instructors or teams. This guide will hopefully provide context and tools that will be helpful during course design or re-design.

Acknowledgements

This manual has been produced as part of the General Education Refresh initiative at the University of Arizona (UA). It builds off the hard work and contributions of various UA faculty and students, particularly those involved in the design and creation of the *Building Connections* component of the curriculum (Jessica Kapp, John Pollard, Kathleen Prudic, and Megan Baker).

This manual was developed by:

Megan Baker is a PhD student in the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona and Graduate Research Associate for UA Honors College. She works alongside Dr. John Pollard on the CUES funded project *The Future of Gen Ed: Big Ideas, Interdisciplinary Thinking, and Informed Decision Making*. Email: meganb1@arizona.edu

Matthew Ostermeyer, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Practice in the Teaching, Learning and Sociocultural Studies Department at the University of Arizona and Program Coordinator for the *Recreation and Sport in Communities, Parks and Schools* minor. Email: ostermeyer@arizona.edu

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Framework

Interdisciplinary educational experiences are characterized by their emphasis on what students should be able to *do* rather than what they should *know*, and this is reflected in the learning outcomes and pedagogy associated with interdisciplinary instruction.

Key Features of IDS Learning Outcomes:

- Emphasis on skill development and cognitive processes over the acquisition of specific content knowledge (e.g. specific theories, concepts, facts, models)
- Emphasis on development of higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking, integration, perspective-taking
- Emphasis on development of skills that enable collaboration, discussion, and reflection

A particularly useful conceptualization of interdisciplinary learning outcomes is in Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger’s student textbook, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, as it pulls from their own research as well as others in the field to distinguish between the intellectual capacities, values, traits and skills fostered through interdisciplinary curricular opportunities. These four subsets of instructional outcomes are described as the “cognitive toolkit” of interdisciplinary studies.

The Interdisciplinary Studies “Cognitive Toolkit”

Intellectual Capacities <i>What should students with these skills, traits, and values be able to do?</i>	Skills <i>What should students be able to do?</i>	Traits <i>What are distinguishing characteristics of students who engage in this work?</i>	Values <i>What are guiding principles, mindsets or attitudes?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perspective-taking ● Integration ● Critical thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Abstract thinking ● Creative thinking ● Metacognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Entrepreneurship ● Love of learning ● Self-reflection ● Intellectual courage ● Patience ● Tolerance for ambiguity ● Enjoy a challenge ● Open minded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empathy ● Ethical consciousness ● Humility ● Appreciation of diversity ● Tolerance of ambiguity ● Open-minded and values the perspectives of others

Source: Created from Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger (2017, p. 91-104)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

The [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG's) represent today's most pressing global sustainable development challenges including ending poverty and hunger, ensuring inclusive quality education, providing clean water and sanitation, and promoting decent work and economic growth. The most pressing issues of our times, as embodied in the SDG's, cannot be fully addressed through a single disciplinary or cultural perspective. Insights from the natural and social sciences, the arts, engineering and the humanities must be brought together in order to produce explanations, ask new questions, create products, and advance solutions that adequately address the complexity of these problems and forge viable policy responses.

The Role of Higher Education in Advancing the SDG's

A recent report on the social commitment of universities (Global University Network for Innovation, 2017) describes the critical role that universities play in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). A new generation of learners is needed that is equipped with the necessary understanding, skills, competencies and knowledge to tackle these complex challenges, and to ensure successful implementation while embracing a continuous improvement approach. Now, more than ever, higher education is challenged to educate students to see beyond the limits of their own discipline to come up with innovative integrated solutions to our contemporary problems. If higher education is to play a role in preparing graduates to be effective citizens and scholars in an increasingly interconnected world it will require curricular transformation that provides opportunities for students to access, integrate, and value multiple perspectives.

How do BC Courses Support this Aim?

In BC courses students are encouraged to employ, evaluate, and select from among differing perspectives that bear on a problem in order to develop more comprehensive understandings of complex problems. By exposing students (as well as faculty) to multiple perspectives, and providing them with opportunities to intentionally explore and integrate alternative views of the world within the classroom, we encourage:

- respect for multiple ways of knowing and value for listening to different perspectives
- an appreciation for interdisciplinary collaboration essential to solving complex and multifaceted 21st century problems
- new ways of seeing issues

Informed by the OECD's target dimensions of global competence (OECD, 2018) we believe that through purposefully designed learning experiences we can:

- encourage students to understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, and interact successfully and respectfully with other;
- develop the capacity and disposition to take constructive action towards sustainable development and collective well-being;
- develop the capacity to examine issues and situations of local, global and cultural significance; and,
- develop the capacity to understand and appreciate different perspectives (e.g. disciplinary, worldviews, situational)

Sources

OECD (2018). Preparing our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World: The OECD PISA global competence framework. <https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

Grau, F. X., Goddard, J., Hall, B. L., Hazelkorn, E., & Tandon, R. (2017). Higher education in the world. Towards a socially responsible university: Balancing the global with the local. *GUNi: Global University Network for Innovation*. http://www.guninetwork.org/files/download_full_report.pdf

Key Terms & Definitions

Interdisciplinary Education:

“A mode of curriculum design and instruction in which individual faculty or teams identify, evaluate, and integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of knowledge to advance students’ capacity to understand issues, address problems, appraise explanations, and create new approaches and solutions that extend beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of instruction.” (Rhoten et al., 2006, p. 3)

Interdisciplinary Instruction:

Interdisciplinary instruction entails the use and integration of methods and analytical frameworks from more than one academic discipline to examine a theme, issue, question or topic. Interdisciplinary education makes use of disciplinary approaches to examine topics, but pushes beyond by: taking insights from a variety of relevant disciplines, synthesizing their contribution to understanding, and then integrating these ideas into a more complete, and hopefully coherent, framework of analysis. (Carleton College, 2020)

Interdisciplinary Learning:

“The process by which students come to understand bodies of knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more disciplines and integrate their insights to create a new understanding” (De Greef et al., 2017, p. 106).

Interdisciplinary Understanding:

“The capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking in two or more disciplines or established areas of expertise to produce a cognitive advancement—such as explaining a phenomenon, solving a problem, or creating a product in ways that would have been impossible or unlikely through single disciplinary means” (Mansilla & Duraising, 2007, p. 219)

Interdisciplinary Perspective-Taking:

“The intellectual capacity to view a problem or subject or artifact from alternative viewpoints, including disciplinary ones, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of it” (Repko et al., 2017, p. 92)

Perspective taking, acknowledged as central to engaging in interdisciplinary work, involves “viewing a particular issue, problem, object, behavior, or phenomenon from a particular standpoint other than your own” (Repko et al., 2017, p. 165). These are the cognitive and social skills individuals require to understand how other people think and feel and are essential in appreciating and taking on conflicting points of view. When applied to interdisciplinary collaboration and research, perspective-taking typically involves analyzing a problem from the perspective of each involved discipline and being able to identify the similarities and differences

between them. It enables individuals to recognize, understand, and ultimately integrate multiple ways of knowing or investigating. Through perspective-taking practice individuals can increase their ability to understand the differences between disciplines, become more aware of academic and personal biases, and engage in the type of role-playing that allows us to appreciate and recognize the contributions of alternate perspectives (Repko et al., 2017).

Integration (as a learning competency):

“The cognitive process of critically evaluating disciplinary insights and creating common ground among them to construct a more comprehensive understanding” (Repko et al., 2017, p. 21).

References

- Carleton College. (2020, June 17). *How to teach with an interdisciplinary approach*. Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College. <https://serc.carleton.edu/48979.1921>
- De Greef, L., Vink, C., Post, G., & Wenting, L. (2017). *Designing interdisciplinary education: practical handbook for university teachers*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Mansilla, V. B., & Duraising, E. D. (2007). Targeted assessment of students' interdisciplinary work: An empirically grounded framework proposed. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 78(2), 215-237.
- Repko, A. F., Szostak, R., & Buchberger, M. P. (2017). *Introduction to interdisciplinary studies*. Sage Publications.
- Rhoten, D., Boix Mansilla, V., Chun, M., & Klein, J. T. (2006). *Interdisciplinary education at liberal arts institutions* [White paper]. Teagle Foundation.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Course objectives typically describe what a faculty member will cover in a course and how they will do so, while **learning outcomes** offer a detailed description of what a student will be able to do after successfully completing a course.

All Building Connections courses must include the **learning outcome listed below**. Courses may have additional outcomes associated with major/minor requirements, if applicable.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to utilize multiple perspectives and make meaningful connections across disciplines and social positions, think conceptually and critically, and solve problems.

Each course will have unique **course objectives** that incorporate specific contexts, content, and activities. These should still map onto and facilitate the standardized learning outcome but will be individually tailored to the course. For example:

During this course students will:

1. Communicate and justify how interdisciplinary approaches contribute to understanding _____.
2. Defend the strengths and consequences of approaching _____ from various disciplinary lenses.
3. Use core values, concepts, theories, and methods from [specific disciplinary traditions or social positions] to _____.
4. Connect and compare/contrast multiple perspectives to develop deeper understandings of _____.
5. Discuss the role and importance of _____ from various perspectives.
6. Engage in critical and conceptual thinking about _____.
7. Create _____ through synthesis of perspectives and content.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list and creativity is encouraged. You might include things like guest speakers, field trips, films, and other instructional strategies central to your course.

Understanding by Design Framework

The [Understanding by Design \(UbD\)](#) framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) proposes that instructional designers incorporate a backward design approach that starts with determining the learning goals, determining how they will be assessed, and then designing the course around intentionally developing these understandings.

Here the UbD framework has been used to provide examples of how a Building Connection course might consider learning outcomes and assessment relevant to 6 different facets of understanding, and what a course design template could look like. This was created solely for the purpose of sharing new ideas and inspiration for the design of new BC courses, and therefore intentionally broad and not contextualized for a specific topic or course. It is not required nor expected that you use this framework. If you are interested to learn more the following resources are available to you:

- Bowen, R. S., (2017). [Understanding by Design](#). Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). [Understanding by Design \(expanded 2nd edition\)](#). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2011). [The Understanding by Design guide to creating high-quality units](#). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Facet of Understanding	A student who understands is able to...	An assessment for understanding requires something like...
Facet 1. Can explain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Communicate and justify how interdisciplinary approaches contribute to understanding complex, multi-faceted problems · Defend the strengths and consequences of approaching a question or problem from a single disciplinary lens · Use core concepts, theories, and methods from more than one disciplinary tradition to develop understandings and/or solutions · Demonstrate familiarity with the concepts, theories, and methodologies central to relevant disciplines used to approach class theme · Critically assess the relationships between relevant disciplinary perspectives on a particular topic · Avoid superficial or simplistic understandings/solutions by avoiding overly simplistic, hackneyed, or siloed insights 	<p>Work in teams of 3-4 to develop a concept map to demonstrate how multiple disciplinary insights and tools can inform our understanding of a contemporary question or issue. Accompany this with an individual written assessment that explains why members selected the relevant disciplines, possible areas of overlap/conflict, and the strengths and drawbacks of pursuing interdisciplinary investigation</p>

Facet of Understanding	A student who understands is able to...	An assessment for understanding requires something like...
Facet 2. Can interpret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Interpret how a text or solution is informed by distinct disciplinary traditions (e.g. central concepts, theories, and methods) · Critically assess the relationships between relevant disciplinary perspectives on a topic (as well as discrepancies or conflicts) · Synthesize insights from various points of view · Illuminate existing gaps in understanding/knowledge · Systematically reduce a problem into smaller components and collect relevant information for addressing these sub-problems while maintaining an awareness of the intricate relations among the components of the problem 	<p>Student describes how an existing research study or text (e.g. journal article, novel, news article) has been informed by disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary ways of knowing</p>
Facet 3. Can apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Employ multiple disciplinary tools/frameworks (e.g. methodologies, theories, paradigm concepts) to explore a contemporary grand challenge or question · Make a meaningful and creative connection between relevant insights and to produce a more comprehensive understanding or solution · Offer an illuminating account or solution informed by the integration of multiple disciplinary insights · Employ effective group work strategies 	<p>Student engages in a group project to investigate a contemporary (authentic) issue or challenge using the integration of multiple disciplinary insights and presents findings to a specific audience. Student works in a dynamic setting in which a “right” answer is unlikely to exist</p>

Facet of Understanding	A student who understands is able to...	An assessment for understanding requires something like...
Facet 4. Sees in perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Consider how disciplinary scholars and fields outside one's own might approach inquiry/investigation · Infer the assumptions upon which an existing understanding or solution is based · See the incompleteness of an existing understanding or solution (e.g. how it is biased, partisan, or ideological) · Critique the strengths and limits of their chosen approach to understanding and solution 	Students describes the strengths and limitations of the solution their group proposes, and explains how further study and/or action could help to develop a more comprehensive approach
Facet 5. Demonstrates empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Display a willingness to see through the eyes of other disciplines · Recognize and appreciate the points of view/insights of disciplinary traditions outside their own · Watch and listen sensitively to the ideas and contributions of classmates · See at least a "kernel of truth' or value to others' insights · Recognize that incomplete and flawed views are plausible across all disciplinary traditions 	Students reflects on how one's own academic and personal experiences have shaped their understanding of a problem, and how the contributions of other fields or individuals might have informed (or did inform) current understanding
Facet 6. Reveals self-knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Demonstrate reflective practice · Reflect on the meaning of one's own interdisciplinary learning process · Reflect on personal prejudices (disciplinary, cultural, other) and how they color one's understanding and approach · Reflect on when interdisciplinary approaches are appropriate for investigating or approaching a question · Reflect on the contributions they and/or their field bring to a collaborative project · Reflect on and evaluate their own thinking and the thinking of others in relation to an issue or problem 	Students reflects on the interdisciplinary learning process through a regular learning journal (or e-portfolio). Describes 'aha' moments, learning breakthrough, areas of concern or misunderstandings.

Understanding by Design Course Development Template

Stage 1 - Desired Results	
<p>Establish Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justify how employing an interdisciplinary approach contributes to understanding a particular issue or issues • Demonstrate an understanding of how core concepts, theories, and methods from select disciplinary traditions help to develop comprehensive understanding of the issue(s) • Apply select methodological tools to investigate the issue(s) • Offer an account or solution informed by the integration of multiple disciplinary insights • Reflect on the interdisciplinary learning process 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Understandings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary approaches can contribute to more comprehensive understandings and/or solutions to complex issues (but not without drawbacks) • Scholars from different disciplinary fields/traditions use different tools and insights to approach a question/issue • Employing core concepts, theories, and methods from more than one disciplinary tradition can allow us to develop a more complex understanding and/or attempted solution 	<p style="text-align: center;">Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to use an interdisciplinary approach when investigating a problem/question? • Are some questions/issues more aligned with interdisciplinary approaches than others? • How can we avoid superficial or simplistic understandings/solutions to complex problems?
<p style="text-align: center;">Students will know...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select disciplinary methods, theories, and concepts relevant to approaching the topic(s) <p style="text-align: center;">Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ multiple disciplinary tools/frameworks (e.g. methodologies, theories, paradigm concepts) to explore a contemporary challenge or question • Make connections between relevant insights to produce a more comprehensive understanding, solution, policy response, etc. • Offer an illuminating solution informed by the integration of multiple disciplinary insights and express findings orally • Employ effective group work strategies 	

Understanding by Design Course Development Template (continued)

Stage 2 - Assessment Evidence	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Performance Tasks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a cognitive map (in team of 3-4) that illustrates how insights and tools from more than three disciplines can contribute to an understanding of the issue(s). Accompany with individual written piece defends/describes the value of engaging with multiple disciplinary insights.• Collaborative group project to investigate the issue(s) using the application of methodological tools and insights learned in the course (from more than one disciplinary tradition). Propose and present a solution informed by these findings.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Other Evidence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignments, assessment, reflective activities, etc.
Stage 3 - Learning Plan	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Learning Activities</u></p> <p>Students work (with instructor guidance) to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read a peer-reviewed article that examines the issue/phenomenon of interest and participate in small-group discussion to identify the key methods and concepts employed in the study, and how they inform conclusions. Followed by guided reflection on which viewpoints are present and/or missing in the text.• Locate a peer-reviewed article that examines course issue(s) from the lens of a specific discipline/perspective. Identifies key methods and concepts employed. Shares summary with peers orally.• Participate in collaborative Jigsaw discussion to share their knowledge and expertise and learn from their peers (i.e. share what they know and how they came to that understanding). Work with peers to create a cognitive map around the issue(s).	

Examples of Interdisciplinary Course Descriptions

It is important that instructors have the flexibility to determine the share of the course that is interdisciplinary, and insert into their course the level of interdisciplinarity that is ideal for them given their experience with this form of teaching and the nature of the course they are leading. As such, courses in the BC section will embody a full range of interdisciplinary scope. Many BC classes will be instructed using a standard single instructor approach and implement specific activities designed to encourage multi-perspective taking. Other classes may engage a collaborative team-teaching model bring together faculty from different departments to co-facilitate all lectures and promote a high level of interdisciplinary engagement.

The following examples were selected to share examples of past courses (from the University of Arizona as well as peer universities pursuing interdisciplinary curricula) that explicitly promote integrative learning aims similar to those underpinning the Building Connections component of the curriculum. These examples reflect a range of approaches and levels of integration.

Big Ideas, Interdisciplinary Thinking (University of Arizona, Honors College)

The following three courses were developed by Honors College faculty Kate Alexander, Jennie McStotts, and Joost Van Haren as part of a [CUES](#) grant to develop interdisciplinary learning experiences at UA:

Our world is filled with challenges that test our ingenuity, resourcefulness, and collaboration. In this course you will not only explore some of these big challenges, but gain the skills in interdisciplinary reasoning, methods, and frameworks to address these challenges. Because these questions are too large for a single discipline to answer, this course takes a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach. Three parallel courses will meet together several times throughout the semester to fully explore these questions from multiple disciplinary perspectives: working with students in the other classes, you will conduct collaborative research, participate in activities, and practice integrating your diverse perspectives.

1. HNRS 150B1 guides students from a social scientific perspective, grounded in the practice and methods of anthropology, sound studies, and gender theory.
2. HNRS 160D1 guides students from a humanistic perspective, grounded in the practice and methods of photography, art history, and the study of place.
3. HNRS 170A1 guides students from a natural science perspective, grounded in the practice and methods of science: testing hypotheses through experimentation and observation and systems thinking.

Kid's Stuff: Toys and Modern American Society (Miami University)

Examines the development and cultural significance of modern American toys (an issue related to human society). Uses a variety of approaches in the humanities to consider how toys represent, and help influence, who we are and how we react to others. Course broken into 3 thematic units: Toys, Play, and the Invention of Childhood; Boy Culture, Aggression, and Toys; and “Bah Humbug”: Unwrapping Christmas. Boy Culture, Aggression, and Toys, Students

guided to explore courses themes using sociology, developmental psychology, art criticism, and history, as well as perspectives on gender and power. Students attend two seminar sessions and a one-hour lecture each week. The instructor rarely lectures, instead using a variety of instructional approaches—primarily discussion and active learning—in the seminar sessions. Students view films about toys and play, visited the university’s Child Studies Center to observe children, simulated play, and explored the impact of merchandizing on perceptions of toys through optional field trips to toy stores and shows. The main assignment, accounting for 60% of a student’s grade, consisted of an in-depth study of a toy, person, or toy-related phenomenon.

*This course was examined/described in the work of Lattuca, Voigt & Fath (2004).

The 2020 Election ([UC Berkeley Big Ideas Class](#))

During the fall 2020 semester we will have the quadrennial opportunity to study American politics during a presidential campaign. Combining real-time analysis of the election, an in-depth study of the relevant historical and sociological trends that are shaping this moment, and a lively roster of guest speakers from across the Berkeley campus and community, this class will provide students with a comprehensive and interdisciplinary introduction to American politics in a time of unprecedented crisis and possibility. Designed with a dual purpose of providing a history of the present moment while serving as an active laboratory for generating new knowledge about how students engage with US electoral politics, this class is both highly innovative and urgently needed. By design, this class will discuss the day to day flow of the 2020 campaign, taking on everything from polling data and social media coverage to the presidential debates and the final vote tallies. While the presidential election will hold center stage, we will also focus on local and California politics with its many races and ballot measures. Lectures will range across historical, political, economic, media, technological and cultural questions and disciplines.

Games and Gaming Cultures ([Carleton College](#))

Uses games (both by studying them and by playing them) as a lens through which to explore questions. How do the games we play shape our culture and our communities? What makes a game fun, engaging, addictive, boring, brutal, or banal? How can games encourage certain kinds of behavior, even after we’ve stopped playing them? Draws on readings from multiple genres and employs a variety of research methods to analyze games from social, textual, and design perspectives. Course includes a weekly 2-hr lab session

Perspectives in Public Health (semester 1) & Public Health in Practice (semester 2) ([Carleton College](#))

Perspectives in Public Health : Explores the many dimensions of public health within the United States and provides an introduction to community based work and research. PAddress local public health issues through the lenses of social, biological, and physical determinants of health.

In addition to readings and discussions, the course incorporates the expertise of visiting public health practitioners and includes site visits to local public health agencies. Students work collaboratively with a community partner on a public health-related civic engagement project selected during the semester and continued during break

Public Health in Practice: Over winter break students spend two weeks exploring a variety of public health organizations both locally and nationally. Students complete their final public health-related civic engagement project in collaboration with a community partner, set their individual project back into the wider context of public health, and prepare to present their experience to a broader audience.

Color! ([Carleton College](#))

If you had to explain to a blind person the nature of color, how would you describe it? Is it a property of objects, oscillations of an electric field, a feature of how the eye generates electrochemical signals to send to the brain, or a perhaps a property of the experiences themselves? This team-taught course takes a multidisciplinary approach to color, drawing from physics, psychology, and philosophy. Explores topics such as the nature of light, visual anatomy, the process by which light is converted to a neural code, color mixing, linguistic differences in color processing, and how color leads us to confront the tension that sometimes exists between appearance and reality.

Additional Resources on IDS Classroom Approaches:

In addition, the journal *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies* published by the Association of Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) has published several studies documenting undergraduate and graduate classroom approaches to thematic IDS courses which help to provide general advice as well as specific advice about a particular theme:

- [Augsburg, Chitewere & Gagnon \(2013\)](#) describe 5-step model used in a first-year undergraduate course to prepare students for integrative learning
- [Barbara Cosens and colleagues \(2011\)](#) describe a graduate-level course on water resources.
- [Robert Pecorella \(2016\)](#) develops a course on the urban immigrant experience
- [Marilyn Tayler \(2014\)](#) describes a course on Arab citizens of Israel
- [William Abbott and Kathryn Nantz \(2012\)](#) describe a team-taught course blending economics and history
- [Jennifer Manthei and Jonathan Isler \(2011\)](#) describe a team-taught course that blends anthropology and sociology

Sources

- Augsburg, T., Chitewere, T., & Gagnon, P. (2013). Starting with worldviews: A five-step preparatory approach to integrative interdisciplinary learning. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, 31(1), 174-191.
- Abbott, W., Nantz, K., Newell, W. H., & Schulz, G. (2012). Building Students' Integrative Thinking Capacities: A Case Study in Economics and History. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*.
- Cosens, B., Fiedler, F., Boll, J., Higgins, L., Johnson, B. K., Strand, E., ... & Repko, A. (2011). Interdisciplinary methods in water resources. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*.
- Lattuca, L. R., Voigt, L. J., & Fath, K. Q. (2004). Does interdisciplinarity promote learning? Theoretical support and researchable questions. *The Review of Higher Education*, 28(1), 23-48.
- Manthei, J., Isler, J., Szostak, R., & Repko, A. (2011). Co-teaching social research methods in a joint Sociology/Anthropology Department. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*.
- Pecorella, R. F. (2016). From Michel Foucault to Mario Puzo: Using an Interdisciplinary Approach to Understand Urban Immigration Then and Now. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, 34, 52-78.
- Taylor, M. R. (2014). The Transformation from Multidisciplinarity to Interdisciplinarity: A Case Study of a Course Involving the Status of Arab Citizens of Israel. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, 32, 28-52.

Additional Resources

Designing Interdisciplinary Courses:

- [Carleton College Science Education Resource Center](#)
- [Interdisciplinary Curriculum Design](#) (Repko, 2007)
- [Database of peer reviewed syllabi](#): includes sample interdisciplinary syllabi and other course materials. Intended for faculty and administrators who are new to interdisciplinary studies as well as to experienced interdisciplinarians.
- [Association of Interdisciplinary Studies](#) (AIS): Variety of resources relevant to interdisciplinary instruction in higher education
- Dezure, D. (2017). Interdisciplinary pedagogies in higher education. In R. Frodeman, J. T. Klein, & R. C. Pacheco (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of interdisciplinarity* (2nd ed., pp. 558–572). Oxford University Press.

Assessing Interdisciplinary Learning Outcomes:

- [Assessing Interdisciplinary Learning Outcomes](#) (Repko, 2008)
- [Assessing Interdisciplinary Learning](#) (Field, Lee & Field, 1994)
- [Targeted Assessment of Students' Interdisciplinary Work](#) (Boix Mansilla & Duraising, 2007):

Helpful Books on Interdisciplinary Instruction and Course Design

- De Greef, L., Vink, C., Post, G., & Wenting, L. (2017). *Designing interdisciplinary education: A practical handbook for university teachers*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Holley, K. A. (2009). *Understanding interdisciplinary challenges and opportunities in higher education*. *ASHE Higher Education Report*. Association for Study of Higher Education 35(2), 1-131.
- Repko, A., Szostak, R. & Buchberger, M.P. (2017). *Introduction to interdisciplinary Studies*. 2nd ed. Sage Publications.
- Plank, K. (2011). *Team teaching across the disciplines, across the academy* (1st ed., New pedagogies and practices for teaching in higher education series). Stylus Pub.

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Instructor: Matt Ostermeyer, Ph.D.

Email: ostermeyer@email.arizona.edu

Office Location: College of Education – Room 815 / <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/99340012641>

Office Hours: TBA

Course / Catalogue Description

Picture a majestic sunset view from the rim of the Grand Canyon. Now, imagine the sounds of laughter and splashing water at a local community pool. Both scenes capture the potential of parks as places of relaxation, inspiration, exercise, connection, learning, and conservation. This course explores how environmental and climate change scientists, public health experts and medical doctors, educators, artists, as well as social justice advocates, understand the importance of parks (and related recreation programs). Assigned readings will be paired with news stories, multimedia and guest speakers to foster dynamic and timely discussions about the role of parks in contemporary society. Importantly, students will visit several parks and use personal reflection as critical context throughout the semester.

Course Objectives:

During this course students will:

1. Communicate and justify how interdisciplinary approaches contribute to understanding parks.
2. Defend the strengths and consequences of approaching parks through the lens of leisure scholars, environmental and climate change scientists, public health experts and medical doctors, educators, city planners and landscape architects, artists, as well as social justice advocates.
3. Connect and compare/contrast multiple perspectives to develop deeper understandings of nature's physical and psychosocial effect on humans, as well as humans' impact on the natural world.
4. Discuss the role and importance of public parks and recreation with professionals/experts working in a wide variety of relevant positions.
5. Reflect on personal experiences in parks through memories and site visits during the semester.
6. Create a culminating "Power of Parks" Adobe Spark webpage with personal photos/videos and testimonials, as well as highlighted written perspectives and synthesized information from the semester.
7. Develop and improve writing skills through regular practice with multiple purposes, intended audiences and modalities.

Learning Outcomes

- Learning outcomes highlighted in **BLUE** are associated with the *Recreation and Sport in Communities, Parks, and Schools* minor.
- Those in **YELLOW** are required as a part of the *Building Connections* curriculum.
- The **GREEN** learning outcomes are those required by the *Writing Attribute*.

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify the benefits of, and threats to, public parks and recreation programs.
2. Connect current trends and events, including politics, with implications for public parks and recreation funding, support, and preservation.
3. Communicate the “Power of Parks” using digital, visual representations that include scientific data, academic research, personal reflection, current events and photographs/video.
5. Demonstrate the ability to utilize multiple perspectives and make meaningful connections across disciplines and social positions, think conceptually and critically, and solve problems.
4. Demonstrate rhetorical awareness and writing proficiency by writing for a variety of contexts and executing disciplinary genre conventions of organization, design, style, mechanics, and citation format while reflecting on their writing development.

Required Texts

Williams, Florence. (2017) *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. [\$6.99 new / \$4 used on Amazon]

Manning, R., Diamant, R., Mitchell, N. & Harmon, D. (2016) *A Thinking Person’s Guide to America’s National Parks*. New York, NY: George Braziller Publishers. [\$15 new / \$6.29 used on Amazon]

Louv, Richard. (2008) *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. [\$16.69 new / \$5.17 used on Amazon]

Other Readings: Other articles and resources will be available on D2L.

Required or Special Materials: None

Required Examinations and Papers: While there are no exams, there will be various forms of writing assigned each week. See assessment details provided on page four.

Required Extracurricular Activities: You will be asked to visit **three** different parks over the course of this semester (spending a minimum of one hour at each). They can be city, county, state, and/or national parks.

Final Examination or Project: There will not be a final exam. Your final project will be a culminating Adobe Spark page, which will be due the last week of the term.

Grading Scale and Grade Policies: Your grade will be determined using a simple point system. The assessment items and point breakdown are provided in syllabus and D2L.

A = 89.5% or higher

C = 69.5-79.7%

E = 59.4% or below

B = 79.5%-89.4%

D = 59.5-69.4%

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Late work will not be accepted unless accommodations are made prior to the due date/time OR documentation is provided for a medical incident or University-approved excused absence.

Absence and Class Participation Policies

It is expected that you will be present and engaged in the course material, as well as with your fellow learners (including the instructor)! There will be course activities throughout the term where you will be prompted to participate through written response (like worksheets), discussions, short group tasks, Voice Thread recordings, etc. You will be assessed on the quality, accuracy, and thoughtfulness of these activities. Late work will not be accepted, unless accommodations are made prior to the due date/time OR documentation is provided for a medical incident or University-approved excused absence like:

- Absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance, or practice will be accommodated where reasonable: policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy.
- Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or dean's designee) will be honored.

Classroom Behavior Policy

The basic expectation is that we all behave like reasonable, respectful adults. I welcome the use of technology in our classroom, but please remember to silence your cell phones, tablets, and laptops before class. I also ask that you save your personal texting, emails, social media, and shopping for another time, so as not to distract others.

Anyone behaving in a way that is disruptive to our class will be asked to leave immediately. However, do not hesitate to ask questions and participate when prompted to do so! This classroom will be a safe space where students and instructors feel comfortable sharing ideas. ***Any disparaging or threatening comments will not be tolerated.***

Threatening Behavior Policy

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one's self. See: <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>

Academic Integrity Policy

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policies-and-codes/code-academic-integrity>

Any issues with cheating, fabrication, dishonesty and plagiarism will be formally reported to the Dean of Students. Written work submitted must be your own and should be submitted for this course only. Any representation of other's work as your own, will not be tolerated. Work submitted under your name and suspected of plagiarism will be immediately reported. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive an "E" in the class, have the violation recorded on their student record, and may be expelled from the University. ***All written assignments will be analyzed using Turn-It-In software.***

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy

The University of Arizona prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community: <https://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, <https://drc.arizona.edu/>) to establish reasonable accommodations.

If our class meets at a campus location: Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.

If you have reasonable accommodations, please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Subject to Change Statement

The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Estimated Weekly Time on Tasks:

7-Week Version of the Course: 18 contact hours per week (3 credit hours)

<i>Task</i>	<i>Estimated Time to Complete:</i>
Reading	7 hours
Written Assignments	3 hours
Watching Videos	3 hours
“Participation” Activities	2 hours
Park visits (+ transportation)	2 hours
Interviews	1 hour

Signature Assignment Details:

You will be creating an Adobe Spark page that captures your interpretation of the “Power of Parks” through photos, videos, written narrative, and links. You will utilize, synthesize, and creatively arrange the work you have already done in (1) reading responses, (2) park visits and personal reflection, (3) interviews, (4) current events and (5) guest speaker reflections to create a personalized capstone. You will be expected to incorporate multiple disciplinary perspectives into this project and asked to reflect on the value of taking multiple perspectives in approaching the “Power of Parks” concept. This will be included in your general education e-Portfolio. The final product should be developed as a public-facing tool that could be used to advocate for public park funding and preservation. This assignment will be worth 40 points. The initial submission will be worth 30 points. 10 additional points are possible based on revisions completed after instructor feedback is given.

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Assessment Plan

More detailed assignment descriptions and scoring rubrics will be provided for each item below:

Type	Point Value	Notes
Participation	50	You will be asked to participate in frequent, relatively quick, low-stakes (1-5 point) activities that include things like: discussions (oral or written), worksheets, Voice Thread presentations, individual or group brainstorming, etc.
Reading Responses	35	<p>Every week (worth five points each) you will be asked to prepare concise (<i>three to five sentences</i>), thoughtful responses to <u>each</u> of the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you summarize the main take-aways from this reading? 2. What specific detail(s) or piece(s) of information stuck out as especially impacting? (<i>use quotes and citations</i>) 3. What did you like and connect with about the reading overall (and why)? On the flip side, what did you dislike or find challenging/deficient about the reading overall (and why)? 4. What perspective(s), discipline(s) and/or methodology(ies) does the author utilize and what do they seem to value? 5. What was unclear OR what question(s) do you have related to the topic(s) from this reading? <p>You will submit your short answers in a D2L assignment folder and they will be used to help foster class discussions each week. <i>Your first two will be revised and resubmitted for re-grading after the initial submissions.</i> Key concepts and terms specific to each week’s readings will be provided as a guide.</p>
Park Visits	30	<p>You will be asked to visit three different parks over the course of this semester. They can be city, county, state, and/or national parks. After your visit (for at least one hour) you will write a 750-word (minimum) reflection paper that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Basic details/information about the park itself ▪ When you visited and who you went with (if anyone) ▪ Overview of what you saw and experienced ▪ Anything you learned ▪ How you <i>felt</i> <p>You also need to include at least one "selfie" (or picture with you in it) and four additional photos (five total) that capture highlights of your experience. Each field trip report will be submitted in a <i>Discussion Board</i> on D2L and will be worth 10 points.</p>
Recorded Interviews	25	<p>You get to be a social science researcher! You will be conducting and recording <u>five</u> brief interviews (approx. 10 minutes) with individuals of your choice about their experiences with nature/parks and their personal interpretation of the “power of parks.” You should intentionally find folks who reflect as much diversity as possible across age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, etc., as well as people along a continuum from outdoor enthusiast and national park lovers to those with less affinity for nature. Each interview will be worth 5 points. A script will be provided to help guide conversations and to assist with note taking.</p>

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Assessment Plan (continued)

More detailed assignment descriptions and scoring rubrics will be provided for each item below.

Type	Point Value	Notes
Interviews Summary	25	After you have completed all five interviews, you will write a 1,000 word (minimum) paper that summarizes all your interviews with key take-aways and themes, compares and contrasts each of your interviewees, and incorporates some of your own reflections.
Sharing a Current Event	15	During one week of the semester, you will be responsible for finding and sharing a relevant news story, program or event you find especially interesting...which connects parks/nature with issues of conservation, education, personal and public health/wellness, politics and/or social justice.
Responding to Current Events	15	During 5 out of the 7 weeks, you will be required to provide a brief (3-5 sentence) response to one current event. Your response should include: (1) why the story matters, (2) how it connects to other course content/topics, and (3) your personal reaction.
Guest Speaker Reflections	15	After five of our guest speakers (of your choosing), you will write up a short 250-word (minimum) reflection in which you share what stuck out to you, what you learned, liked/disliked, etc. These will be submitted to D2L and be worth <u>3</u> points each.
Adobe Spark Page	40*	You will be creating an Adobe Spark page that captures your interpretation of the “Power of Parks” through photos, videos, written narrative and links. You will utilize, synthesize, and creatively arrange the work you have already done in the (1) reading responses, (2) park visits and personal reflection, (3) interviews, (4) current events and (5) guest speaker reflections to create a personalized capstone. This will be the signature assignment included in your general education e-portfolio. You will be expected to incorporate multiple disciplinary perspectives into this project. *10 points are reserved for revisions made after initial grading and feedback (out of 30 points).
Total	250	

Potential field trips for an in-person version of the course:

- Sabino Canyon - tram ride
- Reid Park Zoo - Behind the Scenes
- Gates Pass - sunset views
- Tumamoc Hill - night hike
- Mount Lemmon - UA narration with stop at Rose Canyon Lake
- Tucson Parks and Rec tour - Himmel, Udall, Santa Rita, De Anza, etc.
- Kartchner Caverns - cave tour
- Saguaro National Park - visitor center and short hike(s)

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Potential Guest Speakers (recorded or invited):

Name(s)	Organization	Title / Role	Email Address
Jim Cook and Caroline Lochner	Western National Park Association	Director and Regional Program Manager	jim.cook@wnpa.org caroline.lochner@wnpa.org
Dr. Brian Forist	Indiana University	Lecturer: Outdoor Rec & Environmental Interpretation	bforist@indiana.edu
Scott Pratt	Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources	Southern Field Operations Chief	pratts@michigan.gov
Dr. Sue Tygielsky	Reid Park Zoo - Tucson	Director of Zoo Operations	sue.tygielski@ tucsonaz.gov
Dr. Randy Gimblett	UA - Nat. Resources & the Environment	Professor	gimblett@arizona.edu
Dawn O'Neal	The Nature Conservancy	Director of Strategic Initiatives	dawn.oneal@tnc.org
Bret Muter (and staff)	Parks in Focus	Nature Photographers and Trip Leaders	muter@udall.gov
Kelly Cederberg	UA - Landscape Arch. & Planning	Adjunct Lecturer in Landscape Architecture	kellyv@arizona.edu
Melissa Meyer	Melissa Meyer Therapy	Licensed Professional Counselor	melissa@ melissameyertherapy.com
Bruce Johnson	University of Arizona	Dean of College of Education	brucej@arizona.edu
Colin Waite	Cooper Center for Env. Learning	Director	cwaite@arizona.edu
Andrew Huff	UA – Outdoor Rec	Assistant Director	andrewhuff@arizona.edu
TBD	Public Health & Medical Experts		

Running list of potentially pertinent, recent news articles (examples):

The Guardian: *US parks in minority neighborhoods half the size of those in white areas*

https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/05/us-parks-minority-neighborhoods-smaller-more-crowded?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR3fJk5IhHH2ZVf_r-vW2ljlavF6ZiYN-EfrbMiv_Ohy4sEfOkTuZWYhT58

Wilderness.org: *“Great American Outdoors Act” now heads to the President's desk with wide-spread bipartisan support behind it*

<https://www.wilderness.org/news/press-release/house-sends-full-permanent-funding-land-and-water-conservation-fund-be-signed-law?fbclid=IwAR236yK1f7xFVcYTCTIlyF66geYILzbAXnkbL4w4TCj8PqLnIIV18EbX8D0>

Medium: *Why Trump’s parks and public lands attack is harmful to all Americans — especially people of color*

<https://medium.com/@wilderness/why-trumps-parks-and-public-lands-attack-is-harmful-to-all-americans-704241b04ba0>

National Geographic: *Why the U.S. government is allowing bears, wolves to be hunted in their dens; The rollback of a rule banning controversial hunting methods in Alaska's national preserves has some worried the National Park Service is ceding control to states with less conservation-oriented goals.*

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2020/08/new-hunting-rules-alaska-national-preserves/>

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Seven-Week Online Schedule

Week 1

Guiding Questions

- What should we all expect in this course and how can I plan to succeed?
- How would I frame the “Power of Parks” based on my personal experiences and current knowledge?
- What does it mean to take a multi-perspective and interdisciplinary approach? And why might it be valuable in thinking about parks?
- What is the relationship between humans (children in particular) and nature? And how has it changed in modern history?
- What is “Nature Deficit Disorder?”

Objectives

- Introduce students and instructor(s) to one another.
- Reflect on personal experiences with parks and nature.
- Discuss interdisciplinarity and multi-perspective taking.
- Explore the connection between children and nature.
- Define “Nature Deficit Disorder.”
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.

Reading List

- ***Last Child in the Woods*** parts 1 & 2 (chapters 1-8)
 - Part 1: The New Relationship Between Children and Nature
 - Ch. 1 – Gifts of Nature
 - Ch. 2 – The Third Frontier
 - Ch. 3 – The Criminalization of Play
 - Part 2: Why the Young (and the Rest of Us) Need Nature
 - Ch. 4 – Climbing the Tree of Health
 - Ch. 5 – A Life of the Senses: Nature vs. The Know-It-All State of Mind
 - Ch. 6 – The “Eighth Intelligence”
 - Ch. 7 – The Genius of Childhood: How Nature Nurtures Creativity
 - Ch. 8 – Nature-Deficit Disorder and the Restorative Environment

Media

- Video (2:48): “How Would You Describe the Most Beautiful Places in America?”
<https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/magazine/00000156-e207-dbd5-add6-fbe7acca0000>
- Video (8:02): “Mother Nature’s Child” film trailer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfUHpT4MXaw>

Guest Speakers (may fluctuate from semester to semester)

- Bruce Johnson (UA Dean of College of Education)
- Randy Gimblett (UA Professor in Natural Resources and the Environment)

Assessment Examples

- Voice Thread - Introduction + initial take on the “Power of Parks”
 - Response to a classmate

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

- Discussion board – Share a picture of the most beautiful (outdoor) place you have been to with a brief paragraph describing how you FEEL about it
 - Response to a classmate
- Open book syllabus/course overview online quiz
- Worksheet: What is interdisciplinarity?
- Reading response #1
- Recorded interview #1

Week 2

Guiding Questions

- What social, political and environmental changes have led to decreased time in nature, for children especially?
 - How might these trends be reversed?
- What role do different parenting styles play in how free time is structured?
 - What is the bogeyman syndrome and how do unfounded parental fears impact children’s development, especially as it relates to experiences outside?

Objectives

- Recognize the social, political and environmental reasons humans are less connected to nature now than at any other point in history.
- Identify structural, familial and personal strategies to reconnect youth (and everyone) with nature.
- Visit a park and reflect on the personal experience.
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.

Reading List

- ***Last Child in the Woods*** parts 3 & 4 (chapters 9-15)
 - Part 3: The Best of Intentions: Why Children Don’t Play Outside Anymore
 - Ch. 9 – Time and Fear
 - Ch. 10 – The Bogeyman Syndrome Redux
 - Ch. 11 - Don’t Know Much About Natural History: Education as Barrier
 - Ch. 12 – Where Will Future Stewards of Nature Come From?
 - Part 4: The Nature-Child Reunion
 - Ch. 13 – Bringing Nature Home
 - Ch. 14 – Scared Smart: Facing the Bogeyman
 - Ch. 15 – Telling Turtle Tales: Using Nature as a Moral Teacher

Media

- Video (36:00) *School's out: lessons from a forest kindergarten*
 - <http://docuseek2.com.ezproxy3.library.arizona.edu/cart/product/760>
- Video (5:55): *Unequal Childhoods* by Annette Lareau
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HN9ydNktAc>

Guest Speakers (may fluctuate from semester to semester)

- Scott Pratt (Michigan Department of Natural Resources)
- Jim Cook and Caroline Lochner (Western National Park Association)

Assessment Examples

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

- Voice Thread – Do you connect with and/or buy Richard Louv’s basic premise in the *Last Child in the Woods* so far? Do you think it still rings true? Why or why not? Which parts?
 - Response to a classmate
- Voice Thread – After watching the “School’s Out” documentary, would you send your 4-7 year old to a fully outdoor kindergarten like the one in Switzerland, if you had the option? Why or why not?
- Response to a classmate
- Reading response #2
- Recorded interview #2
- Guest speaker reflection #1
- Park visit reflection #1

Week 3

Guiding Questions

- How can we start to envision a world and reality where nature is more integrated into daily life? And what role might public parks play?
- Why is it important to recognize the interconnectedness of our natural environment and all its living species?

Objectives

- Identify structural, familial and personal strategies to reconnect youth (and everyone) with nature. (Continued from last week.)
- Define 1.) Ecoschool, 2.) the Zoopolis Movement, and 3.) Green Urbanism.
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.

Reading List

- ***Last Child in the Woods*** parts 5, 6 & 7 (chapters 16-23)
 - Part 5: The Jungle Blackboard
 - Ch. 16 – Natural School Reform
 - Ch. 17 – Camp Revival
 - Part 6: Wonder Land – Opening the Fourth Frontier
 - Ch. 18 – The Education of Judge Thatcher: Decriminalizing Natural Play
 - Ch. 19 – Cities Gone Wild
 - Ch. 20 – Where the Wild Things Will Be: A New Back-to-the-Land Movement
 - Part 7: To Be Amazed
 - Ch. 21 – The Spiritual Necessity of Nature for the Young
 - Ch. 22 – Fire and Fermentation: Building a Movement
 - Ch. 23 – While It Lasts

Media

- Podcast (49:09) – TED Radio Hour: *Everything is Connected*
 - <https://www.npr.org/2013/09/27/216098121/everything-is-connected>

Guest Speakers (may fluctuate from semester to semester)

- Dawn O’neal (The Nature Conservancy)
- Colin Waite (Cooper Center for Environmental Learning)

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Assessment Examples

- Voice Thread – How did you feel after listening to the Ted Radio Hour podcast? What was most: 1. interesting, 2. inspiring, and 3. worrying?
 - Response to a classmate
- Discussion board – Find an example of inspiring progress in youth programs, schools, housing, parks, etc. that prove some of Richard Louv’s aspirational visions right! (link provided with a paragraph summary)
 - Response to a classmate
- Reading response #3
- Recorded interview #3
- Guest speaker reflection #2
- Discussion board: Response to classmate’s park visit reflection #1

Week 4

Guiding Questions

- What positive effects does nature have on human brains and bodies, even after only brief exposure/encounters?
- How are public health experts and doctors considering the benefits of time outdoors in green space, nature, and parks?

Objectives

- Identify recent research findings that show positive physical and mental effects from exposure to nature.
- Visit a park and reflect on the personal experience.
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.

Reading List

- ***The Nature Fix*** parts 1 & 2 (chapters 1-5)
 - Part 1: Looking for Nature Neurons
 - Ch. 1 – The Biophilia Effect
 - Ch. 2 – How Many Neuroscientists Does It Take to Find a Stinking Mikvetch?
 - Part 2: Nearby Nature: The First Five Minutes
 - Ch. 3 – The Smell of Survival
 - Ch. 4 – Birdbrain
 - Ch. 5 – Box of Rain

Media

- Video (58:00) Florence Williams interview
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4J6MV7boUQ>

Guest Speakers (may fluctuate from semester to semester)

- Melissa Meyer (Licensed Professional Counselor)
- Sue Tygielski (Reid Park Zoo)
- Public health expert and medical doctor - TBA

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Assessment Examples

- Voice Thread – What is your initial response to Florence William’s *The Nature Fix*? How about compared to *Last Child in The Woods*? Does it feel complimentary? More current and research-based?
 - Response to a classmate
- Reading response #4
- Recorded interview #4
- Guest speaker reflection #3
- Park visit reflection #2

Week 5

Guiding Questions

- What effect does (more sustained and immersive) nature have on human brains and bodies?
- How can urban planning and landscape designers maximize the positive effects of nature exposure in the daily life of cities?

Objectives

- Identify recent research findings that show positive physical and mental effects from exposure to nature (continued from last week).
- Detail personal ways to incorporate more exposure to nature into your life (daily, weekly, monthly and annually).
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.

Reading List

- ***The Nature Fix*** parts 3-5 (chapters 6-12)
 - Part Three: Five Hours A Month
 - Ch. 6 – You May Squat Down and Feel a Plant
 - Ch. 7 – Garden of Hedon
 - Ch. 8 – Rambling On
 - Part Four: Backcountry Brain
 - Ch. 9 – Get Over Yourself: Wilderness, Creativity and the Power of Awe
 - Ch. 10 – Water on the Brain
 - Ch. 11 – Please Pass the Hacksaw
 - Part Five: The City in a Garden
 - Nature for the Rest of Us

Media

- Website - The Nature Pyramid
<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2012/08/07/exploring-the-nature-pyramid/>

Guest Speakers (may fluctuate from semester to semester)

- Kelley Cederberg (Landscape Architect)
- Andrew Huff (UA Outdoor Recreation)

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

Assessment Examples

- Voice Thread – How successful do you think you are in incorporating the Nature Pyramid into your life? What changes might you make in your own life, based on this knowledge, and after reading *The Nature Fix* book overall?
 - Response to a classmate
- Reading response #5
- Recorded interview #5
- Guest speaker reflection #4
- Discussion board: Response to classmate’s park visit reflection #1

Week 6

Guiding Questions

- Why is the “public” part of parks so important?
- What makes U.S. National Parks special?
- How do National Parks contribute to our sense of place and situate the efforts of conservationists?
- How can parks contribute to learning and potentially transform education?

Objectives

- Describe the evolution of national parks in the United States, from the Yosemite Grant of 1864 to the present, including the tension between public “enjoyment” and ecological “preservation.”
- Identify how parks have acted as sites of pivotal moments in American conservation history and how science is used and disseminated in the U.S. National Park Service.
- Visit a park and reflect on the personal experience.
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.

Reading List

- ***A Thinking Person’s Guide to America’s National Parks*** chapters 1-5 & 8
 - Ch. 1 - From National Parks to a National Park System
 - Ch. 2 - Sense of Place
 - Ch. 3 - Campaign for Conservation
 - Ch. 4 - Places to Play In
 - Ch. 5 - Lifelong Learning
 - Ch. 8 - Reservoirs of Knowledge
- ***The Treasure of Yosemite*** – John Muir excerpt (PDF)

Media

- NPS & Climate Change - <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/index.htm>
- Drawing Connections: Yosemite and Global Warming (3:24)
<https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm?id=78378CE4-AFFF-B500-DD278C0AD960223A>

Guest Speakers (may fluctuate from semester to semester)

- Dr. Brian Forist (Indiana University – Outdoor Recreation & Environmental Interpretation)
- Bret Muter (Nature Photographer and Trip Leader)

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (*updated 2/4/21*)

Assessment Examples

- Voice Thread – After exploring the NPS sites related to Climate Change and watching the one example of an educational video about Yosemite winters, how and why do you think National Parks can be effective in teaching folks about global warming? How might they be limited in their reach/advocacy?
 - Response to a classmate
- Reading response #6
- Interview Summary Paper
- Guest speaker reflection #5
- Park visit reflection #3
- *The last sharing of a current event will happen in Week 6, but students will be assigned staggered due dates starting in Week 2.*

Week 7

Guiding Questions

- Why should Native American perspectives, interpretations and knowledge be valued by the National Park Service (NPS)?
- How is access to the benefits of parks and nature unequal, especially for marginalized and traditionally underrepresented populations?
- How is the NPS encouraging diversity as a practical and moral imperative? And specifically getting people of color interested in, and feeling welcome at, national parks?
- How have my ideas about the “Power of Parks” evolved since the start of the semester?

Objectives

- Discuss how social justice principles can and should be incorporated into park/nature planning, programs and initiatives.
- Expand perspective by hearing about other’s relationships with parks/nature.
- Synthesize and organize an updated multimedia representation of the “Power of Parks.”

Reading List

- *A Thinking Person’s Guide to America’s National Parks* chapters 10-12, 22 & 23
 - Ch. 10 - Indigenous Voices
 - Ch. 11 - Civic Engagement
 - Ch. 12 - From Civil War to Civil Rights
 - Ch. 22 - Deep Engagement
 - Ch. 23 - A National Park System for the 21st Century

Media

- <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/social-equity-and-parks-and-recreation/>
- <https://outdoorafro.com/>
- Video (3:20) Outdoor Afro is a Love Story
 - <https://youtu.be/sLSp1zpc7x0>
- <https://latinooutdoors.org/>

Building Connections Example Course Information – The Power of Parks (updated 2/4/21)

- Report: All In! Accessibility in the National Park Service
 - https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/All_In_Accessibility_in_the_NPS_2015-2020_FINAL.pdf

Assessment Examples

- Voice Thread – What do you think about the NPS efforts to equitably serve citizens (of different socioeconomic classes, races, genders, sexualities, religions, abilities, etc.)? How could they be even more intentional? You should refer to the assigned readings, websites, video and report for this week in your response.
 - Response to a classmate
- Reading response #7
- Discussion board: Response to classmate’s park visit reflection #1
- **Final Spark Page**
- Discussion board: response to a classmate’s final Spark page