

**Carleton University\***  
**Literary Ecological Fieldwork**  
**ENGL 3920 [0.5 credit]**  
**Professor Brenda Vellino**  
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**\*Located on Unceded and Un-surrendered Algonquin Anishinaabe territory**

### **Course Description**

This interdisciplinary, experiential fieldwork course brings together literary, cultural, ecological, and decolonial studies through a hybrid model of learning in both the classroom and local urban habitats on unceded Algonquin Anishinaabe territories where Ottawa is situated. We will engage local habitats such as watersheds, wetlands, rivers, urban forests, flora and fauna in dialogue with drama, stop-motion animation, poetry, visual art storywork, essays, and creative non-fiction that convey forms of fieldwork as method and practice. Together we will investigate literary, scientific, and Indigenous ecological responses to themed areas of birds, insects, water, plants, and trees. Time will be devoted to exploratory short field work excursions in the Ottawa region. Student encounters with the more-than-human world will be supported by guidance from local Indigenous knowledge keepers, field naturalists and biologists. These excursions will also be complemented by discussions of the creative and scholarly texts. Course readings/viewings will be selected from creative writers, artists, knowledge keepers, and scholars who mentor “the arts of attentive noticing” and engagement with elements of the multi-species world. The experiential component of the course will invite students to create their own forms of creative nonfiction fieldwork narratives through writing, sketching, photo, and audio documentation. We focus on local habitats to test the bio-regionalist claim that humans will be more likely compelled to address ecological challenges like climate disruptions, species extinctions, and ecosystem degradation, by direct engagement with watersheds, land, plants, trees, and more-than-human creatures where we live. This course will also engage tensions between (settler) bio-regional, place-based environmental studies and decolonial land and territory focused Indigenous perspectives. Place-based education has often side-lined Indigenous presence and teachings on particular lands and territories claimed by settler scholars as spaces of re-inhabitation. This course then takes up the question of whether and how place-based cultivation of the arts of attentive noticing can be undertaken in respectful engagement with Algonquin and Anishinaabe rights to lands and territories, as well as learning from Indigenous art practices and teachings on relational responsibilities to the more-than-human world.

Presented in a “**blended**” **synchronous and asynchronous format**, meaning that we will meet for up to 1 ½ hours weekly during our assigned class period for a combination of short intro lectures, zoom discussions of the readings, and guest speaker sessions with local field naturalists and knowledge keepers. These will be complemented by interactive fieldwork exercises and journal entry work, as well as discussion forum posts.

**Fieldwork Journaling Materials/Equipment:**

- Dressing right for all kinds of weather (layers, rain gear etc.)
- 3 x 5 blank page flip notebook for quick jot notes and sketches in field
- 5 x 7 bound blank page notebook for developed fieldwork journals
- retractable lead pencil
- #2B lead pencil
- fine tip black felt pen
- Eraser
- Optional: Coloured pencils or Watercolour Pencils (for those who want to play with colour)
- Optional: Binoculars

**Fieldwork Practice: Two – Four Hours per Week (on location observation, plus writing and sketching)****Course Readings**

Most course reading materials will be drawn from E-books in the Carleton library or scanned articles.

**Students will need to buy four books:**

- Clare Walker Leslie. *The Curious Nature Guide*. (2015): e-book: \$10.69: a lovely intro to fieldwork nature journaling.
- Rita Wong and Fred Wah (a map poem): *Beholden: A Poem as Long as a River* (2018): literary fieldwork engagement with the Columbia River watershed, beginning in BC through poetic and visual collaboration: \$21.10
- Rita Wong and Cindy Mochizuki – *Perpetual* (2015): a graphic poem about eco-activism, water stories, Indigenous allyship, and the Tar Sands: \$17.06
- Drew Hayden Taylor – *Cottagers and Indians* (2019): a play about the tensions between a settler cottager’s views of lakeshore property and Anishinaabe practices of traditional sustainable cultivation and harvesting of wild rice beds in Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe First Nations Territories, also known as the Kawartha Lakes region of Southern Ontario.

**Further Resources:**

Clare Walker Leslie. *Keeping a Nature Journal* (2003).

Get the free **I-Naturalist AP** on your phone: a wonderful Ap that helps with plant, tree, insect, bird identifications

C. Walker Leslie. “Guide to Tree Sketching” PDF:

[http://www.lessonsforhope.org/pdf/Guide\\_To\\_Tree\\_Sketching\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.lessonsforhope.org/pdf/Guide_To_Tree_Sketching_PDF.pdf)

John Muirs Laws, *Opening the World Through Nature Journaling* (2012):

[http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS\\_NatureJournaling\\_JMuirLaws\\_96p\\_2012.pdf](http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS_NatureJournaling_JMuirLaws_96p_2012.pdf)

### Assignments

- **5 Fieldwork Practice Exercises** (5 marks each): 25%
- **Participation Grade:** **Total:** 30%
  - **3 weeks of Engaged Reading Questions** 10%  
Posted in **Reading Questions Forum** on CU-learn on alternate weeks, starting in week 3 by members of Group A or Group B.
  - Class discussions, discussion forum engagement 10%
  - Peer response to two neighborhood maps, two final projects: 10%
  
- **Autumn Transformations Local Habitat Final Project:** **Total:** 45%
  - All segments to be posted as components of **cuPortfolio Collection**
  - **Local Habitat Journal 1: Tab 1** 5%
  - **Part One:** Local Habitat Fieldwork Journals 15%  
**Journals 2-5: cuPortfolio: Tab 2**
  - **Proposal: cuPortfolio: Tab 3** 5%  
**Part Two: Research & Fieldwork Creative Showcase** 20%  
**cuPortfolio: Tab 4**
  - Combine fieldwork insights with research; choose a creative format to showcase your discoveries:  
Consider a **Podcast** with scripted text and companion images/sounds drawn from autumn fieldwork journal & research (10-15 min.); **or** multi-media **Zine** (12 pages) with text/images drawn from autumn fieldwork journal & research; **or mixed media web presentation** (text, video, images, sound, based on above criteria)

### A Typical Week's Workload: 7-10 hours/week

- 1.5 hour synchronous in-class time
- 1.5-hour asynchronous participation time (discussion forum, reading questions)
- 2-4 hours of fieldwork exercises and journaling
- 2-3 hours reading

**Field Journal Sketching Practice:** This course invites you to take the sketching challenge. Don't let the "but I can't draw" gremlins get in the way.

### Why Sketching? (Cultivating the Arts of Attentive Noticing):

"When drawing a subject, **one looks again and again at the parts of the object that are least familiar** and beyond the gross contours or minimum features needed to identify it. Counterintuitively, this process is often most helpful when we are sketching what we think we already know! . . . We have all looked at poppies and robins, but how many of us have looked long enough and often enough to really know their structures or to have noticed the white pattern around the robin's eye? By drawing a poppy or a robin, you force yourself **to see it in minute detail.**" –John Muir Laws, *Opening the World Through Nature Journaling*

**It's not about the art:**

“The goal of fieldwork drawing is not to make pretty pictures, but to accurately observe and record data. If the goal is to make pretty drawings, the pressure for pretty can get in the way of documenting observations. One becomes hesitant to start a sketch as the views of an inner art critic surface.” Banish the inner art critic!!

**Schedule of Classes****Week 1: Grounding Eco-Literary Fieldwork: Cultivating Attentive Observation Through Writing & Drawing Practices in Local Habitats/Unceded Algonquin Territory**

- Anna Tsing, “Arts of Inclusion, or, How to Love a Mushroom.” *Australian Humanities Review* (2011): 5-21. [16 pages]
- Heather Swan, “Slow Seeing,” *Minding Nature*, 2018 [4 pages]: <https://www.humansandnature.org/slow-seeing>
- Clare Walker Leslie, *Curious Nature Guide*, “Keeping an Observation Journal”: p. 122
- C. Walker Leslie, “Begin Where you Are; “Learning to See in a Different Way”; “Time for a Ramble,” (*CNG*): p. 12, p. 16, p. 24-25. [5 pages]
- Lynn Gehl, (Algonquin, Pikwakanagan): “Algonquin Anishinaabe Land Acknowledgement”: <https://www.lynngehl.com/black-face-blogging/algonquin-anishinaabe-land-acknowledgement>

⇒ **Fieldwork Exercise 1:** Following CW Leslie’s example, create a Neighborhood Nature Map; then create a Sound Map following JM Laws’ instructions; write 1 paragraph, introducing yourself through your neighborhood, and 2 paragraphs summarizing what you observed/learned making your neighborhood nature and sound map). **See pages 10-11 below for further guidelines.**

- **Post Exercise 1 in Cu-learn Neighborhood Nature Map Discussion Forum by 9 p.m. before class day:**
- **Two Peer Response Forum Posts:** Please respond to two other student’s neighborhood map posts by 9 a.m. before class; offer brief responses in discussion forum comments (3-4 sentences) by raising one or two points of interest or questions; respond to specific aspects of neighborhood or sound maps where possible.

**Week 2: Indigenous Land-Based Decolonial Learning**

- **Preview before class: Indigenous Learning Bundle with Dr. Zoe Todd (Métis): “Indigenous Place-Based Learning”: the link will be on CU-learn for Week 2**
- Tuck, Eve and Marcia McKenzie. “Indigenous Methods of Critical Place Inquiry.” *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, Methods*. Routledge, 2015: 126-49. [23 pages]

- Suzanne Keptwo, “The Land Acknowledgement as Cultural Practice.” We All Go Back to the Land. Brush Education, 2021. [82-111]. [29 pages]
- Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi/Anishnaabe), “Skywoman Falling” (pages 3-10), “Asters and Goldenrod” (pages 39-47). In *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. (2013): [14 pages]

⇒ **Fieldwork Exercise 2: “Reflective Sit Spot” & Plant Sketching Practice** by the Rideau River (or other similar location near water - pond, creek, lake, different river)

- **See below for Reflective Sit Spot/Plant Sketching Practice Guidelines**
- **Post 9 pm in Brightspace assignment tab.**

### **Class 3: Wild Bees: Species at Risk**

⇒ **Sept. 28, 9 pm: Group A: Reading Questions 1 on Reading Questions Forum**

- **In-Class Guest Talk:** wild bee naturalist, Dr. Jessica Forrest (U of Ottawa biologist)
- Brigit Strawbridge Howard. from “Realisations”: xvii-xviii; “The Honey Trap”: 11-16; “Cabin by the Stream” (Sounds ->Species Loss): 97-101: in *Dancing with Bees*- See scanned copy, Brightspace
- C. Walker Leslie, *Keeping a Nature Journal*, “The Pollen Dance,” “Insect Beauty”: p. 57, 96-97
- **On Ontario’s wild bees:** <https://www.ontariowoodlot.com/publications-and-links/featured-articles-news/woodlots-a-refuge-for-ontario-s-native-bees>

⇒**Butterflies/Bees Fieldwork Practice Exercise 3:** Go to Fletcher Wildlife Garden for an observational walk if in Ottawa (or similar meadow near you): look for bees, butterflies, and other insects among the late-blooming flowers in the flower gardens and wildflower meadow. Find a place to stop, sit, observe, sketch. If you are not in Ottawa, find a backyard garden with late blooming flowers or a nearby meadow or even some wildflowers along a roadside or parking lot. Review and follow “Zoom In/Zoom Out” exercise instructions before going out.

- **Zoom In/Zoom Out Guidelines: JM Laws, *Opening the World*, “Zoom In/Zoom Out” Exercise** (p. 36): [http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS\\_NatureJournaling\\_JMuirLaws\\_96p\\_2012.pdf](http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS_NatureJournaling_JMuirLaws_96p_2012.pdf)
- Try this with a plant or clump of plants that have bee or butterfly visitors: Zoom In for close-up on plant/bees, butterfly, or other insect; Zoom Out to sketch some of the wider habitat for the plant/bees/butterflies. (You may need to photograph bees as a basis for sketching because they do not hold still very long!)

- **Write Reflection paragraph in Journal with prompt from JM Laws (p. 89):** Examine “Zoom In, Zoom Out” notes and drawings; write down the details you noticed while zooming in and out by making a simple chart and putting zoom in details on one side and zoom out details on the other. What kinds of things did you notice in each scale? What surprised you? What stood out? When might it be helpful to use zoom-in as a technique? When would it be helpful to use zoom out? When would it be a good idea to do both?

⇒ **Begin Autumn Transformations Habitat Fieldwork Journal:**

- **Intro Journal 1 Due: in cuPortfolio – Tab 1**
- Autumn Local Habitat Intro paragraphs, Pages, and Preliminary Species List. (See Assignment Guidelines Below).
- **cuPortfolio Intro:** <http://co-opcareercourse.ca/cuportfolio/culearn/story.html>

**Class 4: In-Class Guest Talk: Birds** - Ottawa Field Naturalists Birding Committee member: Dr. Nicholas von Maltzhan

⇒ **Group B: Reading Questions 1** on Reading Questions Forum, 9 p.m. before class

- “Nuisance Birds”/Pigeon stories, from Chapter 1, **Only pages 15-29**, Donna Haraway – *Staying with the Trouble* (2016): e-book in Carleton library
- Kateri Kosek. “The Cherry Birds.” *Creative Non-Fiction* 69 (Winter 2019): scanned copy posted to CU-learn
- Margaret Noodin (Anishinaabe). “Chickadee,” “Fierce Love,” and “Writing Images in Circles.” From *What the Chickadee Knows* (2020).
- Margaret Noodin video talk on Anishinaabe Poetry as Philosophy: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/weweni/weweni-2019-2020/gijigijigaaneshiinh-gikendaan-what-the-chickadee-knows-anishinaabe-philosophy-in-poetry.html>
- Walker Leslie, *Curious Nature Guide*: “On the Wing”: pages 88-91.

⇒ **Birding Fieldwork for Autumn Transformations Journal 2:**

- Note birding observations in your local Habitat: Sit quietly for 30 minutes and observe what common birds you can identify: crows, red winged blackbirds, jays, cardinals, chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, ducks, hawks, other? what can you observe about their behaviour, flight pattern, bird song; write up your observations in your field journal & pick one bird to try sketching in the field or from a photo.
- Laws, *Opening the World*, **Drawing Birds**: pages 24-27; Bird postures/gestures: p. 53; you will need to take photos of your focus bird and practice sketching, trying out Law’s exercises for your field journal.
  - **Bird identification:** Getting Started with Birds: <http://www.ofo.ca/site/page/view/articles.getting-started-with-birds>
  - Cornell U “All About Birds”: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>
  - Birds Canada: <https://www.birdscanada.org/apps/checklist/index.jsp>
  - Audubon Bird Guide, Free AP: <https://www.audubon.org/app>

## Class 5: Watersheds & Wetlands: Restoration & Sustainability

⇒ **Group A: Reading Questions 2** to Reading Questions Discussion Forum

- **Guest Talk/Q & A: Jennifer Lamoureux, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority**
- <https://www.rvca.ca/about-us/rvca-corporate-services/the-rideau-watershed>
- Brewer Pond Restoration: <https://www.rvca.ca/brewer-park-pond-restoration-project>
- Dorothy Christian (Secwepemc) and Rita Wong, “Untapping Watershed Mind” (pages 232-253) -*Thinking with Water* (2013): e-book in the Carleton library
- Barbara Hurd: Chapter 1: “Marginalia” (pages 1-14): *Stirring the Mud: On Swamps, Bogs, and Human Imagination* (2008) – scanned copy of essay in Brightspace
- **C. Walker Leslie**, *The Curious Nature Guide*, “Your Watershed” & “Water Cycle”: pages 108-110

⇒ **Wetlands Fieldwork Exercise 4:** Find a bog, swamp, marshy area, or wetland near you to walk alongside and observe the plant life, trees, creatures such as turtles, frogs, marsh birds (suggested spots: Brewer Pond in Brewer Park across from Carleton’s campus; Stoney Swamp, Mair Bleu Bog, Mud Lake/Britannia Conservation Area); Identify your bioregional address by the watersheds and wetlands that surround you. Learn the names of rivers, creeks, lakes, ponds, marshes.

- **Laws**, *Opening the World*, Mapping Vegetation Edge Zones (at Water’s Edge), pages 42-43. (Review before going into the field)
- Based on your wetlands fieldwork & Laws mapping vegetation zone edges exercise; writing and sketching write 1 reflection paragraph on where this wetland fits into the broader regional watersheds you are located within.
- **Due: 9 pm:** Post to Assignment Tab, Brightspace.

## Week 6: River Relations: The Kiji Sibi/Ottawa River: Water Stories on Algonquin Terms

⇒ **Group B: Post Reading/Viewing Questions 2** to Reading Questions Discussion Forum

- **Guest talk:** Algonquin Anishnaabe Knowledge Keeper: Barbara Dumont Hill (Kitigan Zibi)
- Lynn Gehl (Algonquin Anishnaabe, Pikwakanagan First Nation): “Chaudière Falls: Creator’s First Pipe”: <https://www.lynngehl.com/black-face-blogging/chaudiere-falls-creators-sacred-pipe>
- Jenn Cole (mixed heritage Algonquin), “Shanty Songs and Echoing Rocks: Upsurges of Memory along Fault Lines of Extraction.” *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 2020): pages 9-15.

- Dr. Simon Brascoupe (Kitigan Zibi), visual art storywork, “Birch Bark Basket,” sculpture, Place Abinan, Gatineau:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiZPFudTB9U>
- Dr. Simon Brascoupe, “Màmawi: Together,” 100 Canoe Paddles, Pimisi Station, LeBreton Flatts: <https://paddles.simonbrascoupe.com/about/>

### ⇒ Kiji Sibi Fieldwork Exercise 5:

Follow the bike path from behind Parliament, walking West to Chaudière Falls (behind the Canadian War Museum) & Hydro Generating Station #2). Find a place to walk or sit and note your observations/question in writing and sketching. Later find out more about what cultural stories you can discover about the sacred site or the river at large? How does this river contribute to the regional watershed and ecosystem? What is its cultural and regional significance? What are some typical plants, trees, birds, fish, amphibians in or near the river? Are any endangered by human industrial changes?

Contrast the official Ottawa publicity for Chaudière Falls <https://chaudierefalls.com/> with what you learn from Elder Barbara, Dr. Gehl, Jenn Cole, and Dr. Brascoupe’s visual storywork. While you are downtown, consider crossing the river to visit with the “Birch Bark Basket” sculpture at Abinan Place and Pimisi Station Canoe Paddles installation. What does this convey about Algonquin present day presence along the Kiji Sibi?

⇒ After doing the above, attach 2 summary reflection paragraphs engaging what you learned and observed.

**Due: 9 pm:** Post to Assignment Tab, cuLearn.

**Reading Week:** keep up your Autumn Transformations local habitat fieldwork practice.

### Week 7: River Relations Continued

⇒ **9 pm: Group A: Reading Questions 3** to Reading Questions Discussion Forum

- Rita Wong and Fred Wah (map poem): *Beholden: A Poem as Long as a River* (you need to buy a print copy of this book)

## Week 8: Trees: Interconnected Roots

⇒ 9 pm: Group B: Reading/Viewing Questions 3 to Reading Questions Discussion Forum

- Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe) with Amanda Strong, “Biidaaban: The Dawn Comes.” (Stop Motion Animation video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWjnYKyUB8>
- Leanne Simpson with Amanda Strong, “How to Steal a Canoe”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp5oGZ1r60g>
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide.” *Braiding Sweetgrass*: pages 167-74. E-book, Carleton library
- Geniusz, Mary Siisip. (Anishinaabe): “My Grandmother Cedar: Nookomis-giizhik,” “My Grandfather Birch: Nimishoomis-wiigwaas.” from *Plants Have so Much to Give Us*. (2015): pages 37-44, 51-56.
- Dr. Suzanne Simard, “How Trees talk to One Another” (Ted Talk Short): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un2yBglAxYs>
- Identifying Trees: <https://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/tree-atlas/ontario-southeast/>
- Warren Cariou (Métis). “Territory: Land and Language in the Indigenous Short Story – Oral and Written.” *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* (2020): 1-10.

### ⇒ Autumn Transformations Journal 4: Trees:

Identify three different species of trees in your local habitat (identify at least one deciduous, one coniferous); sketch and explore the life story of one of them? Are they local species? Imported? Invasive? What do they contribute to the ecosystem?

**Drawing Trees:** C. Walker Leslie: *Curious Nature Guide*, “Who Lives in the Trees Around You?” (p. 82)

- **Tree Shapes: p. 68-69**
- **Tree Kinds: Deciduous: p. 70-71; Evergreens: 76-77**
- Also see C. Walker Leslie: [http://www.lessonsforhope.org/pdf/Guide To Tree Sketching PDF.pdf](http://www.lessonsforhope.org/pdf/Guide%20To%20Tree%20Sketching%20PDF.pdf)

## Week 9: Traditional Ecological Restoration and Harvesting Practices

Drew Haydon Taylor. *Cottagers and Indians* (2019).

Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Restoration and Reciprocity: The Contributions of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.” *Human Dimensions of Ecological Restoration: Integrating Science, Nature, and Culture*. (2011): pages 257-76.

⇒ **Autumn Transformations Fieldwork Practice Journal 5:**

**Your Personal Response:** How has spending time with one habitat affected you? What new things have you learned about the place, about spending quiet time in nature, about yourself? See “Solace and Connection,” Walker Leslie, *The Curious Nature Guide*, p. 130. Write a one-page journal personal reflection response to your habitat. Add a sketch of a seed pod, leaf, or branch from one of your field outings.

⇒: **Complete Autumn Transformations Journal 1-5 Due: Post to cuPortfolio: Tab 2**

⇒ **Autumn Transformations Local Habitat Research Proposals Due: cuPortfolio, Tab 3.**

**Week 10: Indigenous and Planetary Futurisms**

- **View before Class:** Christi Belcourt (Métis), Visual Art Storywork: “Uprising: The Power of Mother Earth,” Virtual Tour with Danielle Printup (Algonquin Anishnaabe) – Carleton U Art Gallery (CUAG) – the link is posted in Brightspace under Week 11
- Christi Belcourt, “Mapping Roots: Perspectives of Land and Water in Ontario.” Christibelcourt.com:  
<http://www.christibelcourt.com/Gallery/gallerySERIESmrPage1.html>
- Kyle Whyte (Potawatomi), “Our Ancestor’s Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene,” *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities* – e-book in Carleton library

**Week 11: Connections: writer-activists, water justice, and climate change:**

Rita Wong and Cindy Mochizuki. *perpetual* (visual poem, 2015) (You need to purchase this book.)

⇒ **Final Projects Due for “Gallery Tour” Review: 9 pm, cuPortfolio, Tab 4; Also upload to Final Projects Forum in Brightspace.**

⇒ **2 Peer Responses to Classmate’s Final Projects on Final Project Forum in Brightspace: 9 pm.**

**Week 12: Final Projects Discussion: responses to “Gallery Tour” of Final Projects**

**Fieldwork Exercises Guidelines:**

- Follow the writing/sketching exercises posted weekly in the class schedule.
- After your outdoor field observation, sketching and writing in your journal
- (1-3 pages), write two summative paragraphs about what you learned from each field encounter with plants, insects, birds, trees, wetlands, and rivers. (you may choose to write these in a creative form such as a poem or short fiction piece)

- Post to Brightspace Assignment Tab by taking a photo or screenshot of your journal pages and turn them into JPEG files.

### Fieldwork Exercise 1 Guidelines

(“Wherever you are, look for nature around you.”)

- **Part 1:** C. Walker Leslie, *Curious Nature Guide*, “**Mapping your Neighborhood**”: p. 30-31: Draw a nature map of a small section of your neighborhood (2-3 square blocks) based on Walker Leslie’s map; noting natural spaces and elements like gardens, shrubs, trees, clumps of plants, weeds, birds, animals, birdfeeders, as well as houses, streets, other buildings etc.
- Remember rough sketching is fine; don’t listen to the “I can’t draw” gremlins!
- **Intro paragraph:** introduce your neighborhood and region to us. Tell us what town/city/region your neighborhood is in, what natural features are around and close by. What is your favourite natural spot in your neighborhood (a special tree, a garden, a walking path) and why?
- **Part 2:** John Muir Laws, *Opening the World* PDF: “**Creating a Visual Sound Map**” (p. 64-65):
- [http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS\\_NatureJournaling\\_JMuirLaws\\_96p\\_2012.pdf](http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS_NatureJournaling_JMuirLaws_96p_2012.pdf)
- Choose a place to sit within the area of your neighborhood map; close your eyes for 5 minutes and sit quietly, take in the sounds, jot down everything you hear for 10 minutes; create a “sound map” of this smaller section of your neighborhood using John Laws’ model on page 65.
- **Two Paragraph Summary:** What did you learn/discover from creating your neighborhood natural spaces and sound map?
- Post your neighborhood and sound maps (scanned), your intro and summary paragraphs to CU-learn Forum.
- Read and respond to two classmate’s Neighborhood/Sound Maps; For those that already have two responses, move on to another classmate’s map.

### Fieldwork Exercise 2: Reflective Sit Spot & Plant Sketching Guidelines

**Please review before going out/read to the bottom of this section:** First I invite you to try out a simple mindfulness practice of sitting in one spot outdoors for 15 minutes as a method of deepening your observation abilities as a foundation for developing your own fieldwork practice. You may experience an added benefit of finding this practice to be calming and stress relieving.

Find a comfortable spot near water or under a tree and sit down. You may want to bring a towel or small blanket to sit on. Try to put aside stress and worries for this period (just

tell them you will get back to them soon!). Spend at least 15 minutes quietly observing (It will help to turn your cell phone notifications off).

Close your eyes if you are comfortable to do so. Focus your attention on your in-breath and your out-breath. This may enable you to pay attention to the sounds around you more fully. Pay attention to ambient sound. You may hear nearby birds, wind, rushing water, and also city, industrial and human sounds nearby. It all belongs.

After 5 minutes, open your eyes. Pay attention to any insects or birds or other creatures in this environment. Pay particular attention to any plant and tree species. What do you notice about each of them? Use Laws' "I Notice/I Wonder" Exercise from *Opening the World* to get your writing started (p. 5). [http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS\\_NatureJournaling\\_JMuirLaws\\_96p\\_2012.pdf](http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS_NatureJournaling_JMuirLaws_96p_2012.pdf)

How do you feel after 15 minutes of quiet observation? What changes? What stays the same? After observing, jot down journal notes about what you saw and heard. Attentiveness to nature is the basis for scientific observation, as well as for connecting with the local ecosystems we live within.

Adapted from the following article: <https://www.deceptionpassfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Reflective-Sit-Spots.pdf>

**Plant Sketching Practice: Preview these prompts and examples before going out.**

After quiet observation and writing notes based on "I Notice/I Wonder," make several quick sketches in the field; Review the examples below again when you return, then try drawing again. This is to warm you up to sketching as a journal practice.

- C. Walker Leslie, See plant pencil sketch examples: "Weeds in a Vacant Lot"/"Grasses": p. 59-60
- Laws, *Opening the World* Exercises:
  - Drawing Guidelines: Shape, Sketch, Gesture: 14-15
  - Pick a plant to sketch: see Drawing Plants and Flowers, pages 16-22;
  - Add Plant Diagram: p. 27; See Botany 101 Refresher, p. 13
  - [http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS\\_NatureJournaling\\_JMuirLaws\\_96p\\_2012.pdf](http://sdchildrenandnature.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CNPS_NatureJournaling_JMuirLaws_96p_2012.pdf)

### **Participation Grade**

While attendance is required, it is only a portion of your participation mark. You will also be assessed on the basis of the sharpness, relevance, and open-endedness of questions posted on the CU-learn "Reading Questions Discussion Forum" prior to the weekly class meeting, and on your contribution to the exchange of ideas in the forum and in zoom class discussions. Tracking both your initial responses to the readings through your questions and your participation in group discussions enables me to see how your understanding of the course materials evolves over time.

Formulate your contributions as strong, focused responses and open-ended questions that invite the participation of your peers. We will often take up your reading questions and responses in class.

### **Autumn Transformations Local Habitat Field Research Final Project**

The final project assignment will invite each student to adopt a local (to you) water, field, forest, or park habitat as an observation focal point to sit with, walk with, listen to, write and sketch with, and learn alongside. All the fieldwork writing and drawing exercises, along with the creative non-fiction and creative literary and visual fieldwork readings/viewings and guest speakers throughout the course will serve as mentors and models. We have a unique opportunity to observe our adopted habitat go through seasonal transformations from early autumn to late autumn. These transformations will form part of our investigation and inquiry.

#### **⇒ Local Habitat Field Journal 1, Species List: Due 9 pm, cuPortfolio, Tab 1**

You will choose your focus habitat by the third week of class. See Clare Walker Leslie's, "A Place to Observe through the Seasons," *The Curious Nature Guide*, page 120-121.

Build your Habitat Intro in three parts:

- **"Initial Exercise for an Autumn Journal" (C. Walker Leslie):** Walk around your habitat and then sit in one spot, "observe, draw and write about signs of fall. Create a **two-page spread**, letting images flow one after another" (*Keeping A Nature Journal*, p. 73).
- **The Species List:** C. Walker Leslie also suggests listing plant, tree and wildlife species that you can already identify and keeping it on a wall or on the fridge so you can add to it as you deepen your observation skills.
- **Two Intro Paragraphs:** Just like you introduced your neighborhood, introduce your habitat: what kind of habitat is it? (wetland, forest, urban park, garden, river path etc.)? Where is it located? Is it on Indigenous territory? Which one? What if anything do you already know about it? What are the features that attracted you to it? What do you hope to learn about and from it?

#### **⇒ Part One: Autumn Transformations Local Habitat Fieldwork Journal Practice:**

From weeks 3 -8, in addition to your other fieldwork exercises in response to plants, bees, bogs, and rivers, you will add an extra **1-hour fieldwork practice encounter** with your focus habitat, where you will walk and sit to observe, write jot notes and draw quick sketches in your field notebook; outdoor time will be followed by **1-2 hours at home** to write up journals and finish/revise the sketches. This fieldwork practice where you observe the seasonal changes from early autumn to late autumn will be built sequentially across the course and provide the foundation of your field research.

#### **⇒ 9 pm: Autumn Transformations Field Journals 1-5: cuPortfolio, Tab 2**

This will include Journal 1 already submitted for your introduction assignment, Journal 2 on Birds, Journal 4 on Trees, plus 2 more journals (see prompts below).

### **Autumn Transformations Journal Practice Prompts**

In *Keeping a Nature Journal (KNJ)*, Clare Walker Leslie provides these focus prompts to consider autumn changes we can observe, write about, sketch, and learn from: (pp. 68-69). You may use these as keys to your weekly fieldwork journaling from weeks 3-8.

- Watch for weather changes: length of days, temperature changes, amount of sunlight, amount of rain, cloud: how does this affect the habitat?
- Consider which plants are blooming the latest, like asters, marigolds, goldenrod, chicory, others?
- What sounds in nature change from early to late fall?
- Observe which **birds** leave and which birds are still around in late autumn
- If you have access, observe the habits of feeder birds like chickadees, sparrows, cardinals, nuthatches, woodpeckers, mourning doves, jays, finches, crows (I love the feeders at Fletcher Wildlife Garden for this.)
- If there is water in your habitat, observe habits of any water birds: geese, herons, gulls, ducks, loons (who leaves, who stays? What do they eat?)
- Are there any signs of bigger birds in your habitat? Herons, Hawks, owls, turkeys?
- What **insects** are still around in the early fall (bees, butterflies, spiders, others?); when do they leave? Are there still insects in late fall?
- Which **animals** stay active in your habitat? Observe their behaviours? Can you tell what they are eating?
- Look for signs of winter preparations, including butterfly and bird migration, red, black, or grey squirrel, chipmunk nut gathering etc.
- Which **trees and shrubs** turn colours first, loose their leaves first?
- Which trees are native to your area? Which are imported? What are the tree's roles in the local ecosystem?
- In late fall, draw a silhouette of a winter tree: **C. Walker Leslie, See "Guide to sketching trees" resource:**  
[http://www.lessonsforhope.org/pdf/Guide\\_To\\_Tree\\_Sketching\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.lessonsforhope.org/pdf/Guide_To_Tree_Sketching_PDF.pdf)
- **Zoom in:** Observe and draw four different kinds of autumn leaves after colour change: See Walker Leslie, *Curious Nature Guide*, Fall Leaves, p. 72-73.
- **Zoom in:** Collect objects for indoor observation on rainy, cold days: leaves, seed pods, small branches. Observe and sketch shapes, patterns, textures.
- Observe and draw several varieties of tree seeds, nuts, and fruits.

⇒ **Autumn Transformations Local Habitat Project Proposal: Due Nov. 28, 9 pm – cuPortfolio, Tab 3**

- Your goal in this stage of your project is to deepen your understanding of your local habitat through several different possible research lenses. Use online field guides for plant, tree, wildlife identification, growing or behavior habits.
- Pick a single focus plant, tree, bird, insect, or animal species from your habitat to learn more about its life cycles, behaviors, role in the ecosystem, challenges due to human activity, climate change etc. **“When a particular plant, animal species captures your imagination, stay with it . . . make as many field observations about it as possible in your journal . . . research its nature, origins, unique characteristics and habits. . . . See how much you can learn and observe by staying with this focus for an extended period.”** (Clare Walker Leslie, *KNJ*, p. 81)
- Develop a research question or set of linked questions arising from your field observations and your choice of a focus species. Consider contexts of land, water, and species stories from several possible perspectives of local Indigenous knowledge, biology, climate change impacts, sustainability questions, and restoration initiatives.
- Write one paragraph previewing what elements of your adopted habitat interest you, what you have noticed about changes in your habitat from early to late fall
- Write two paragraphs that preview which **focus species** you will conduct in-depth research on and what your preliminary research investigations for this will be.
- Provide **List of Proposed Research Resources** you will consult from online resources, library e-books and articles, and potential live interviews with knowledge keepers, scientists etc. (6 Sources)
- **Annotate three sources**, noting how they will enrich your inquiry, research questions, interventions

**Creative Presentation Practice: Post in cuPortfolio, 9 pm, Tab 4 and Share in Brightspace Final Projects Forum**

Building from your Autumn Transformations fieldwork and your Research, choose a creative format to introduce the transformations in your local habitat and present your research findings to your classmates in a podcast, zine, or multi-media website format.

⇒ You will submit links to your zine, web platform, or podcast in CuPortfolio and on Brightspace.

⇒ You will also need to upload a text and image file that includes the following if you have not included these elements directly in your presentations:

- Key pages/images/notations from your fieldwork journal that have been instrumental to your observational learning (perhaps relevant to incorporate into zine or web platform especially)

- Intro to what your focus habitat means to you or has come to mean to you on this learning journey
- cameo on your focus species and why you chose it
- Intro to key research questions and research findings for your habitat and focus species
- Any environmental challenges for your habitat or to your focus species in terms of climate change, toxins in the environment, sustainability
- Info on restoration or sustainability initiatives, if any, related to your habit or key species
- Info on any Indigenous knowledge and priorities available on your habit, the land, focus species, as well as reflection on what if anything you have taken away from engaging the natural world from an Indigenous knowledges lens
- a final reflection on your key takeaways during this learning journey alongside and with this habitat
- A Works Cited and Consulted Page.

**An Intro to Zines** (in Zine booklet format): <https://wemakezines.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/DIY-No2-Zines-2.pdf>

**Intro to Podcasts** (Usually a series of spoken word/audio episodes focused on a topic or theme in a digital audio file format such as SoundCloud or YouTube; you can create a single episode podcast in audio storytelling format to introduce your key questions and observations arising from your Autumn Transformations Local Habitat Journal and Research.)

**How to Produce Your Own Podcast** (this NYTimes article has lots of great tips, though it is geared to teaching a class to do this, but it gives lots of examples of audio storytelling and tips on how to put it all together):

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/19/learning/lesson-plans/project-audio-teaching-students-how-to-produce-their-own-podcasts.html>

**Further Resources:**

Ontario Wildflowers: <https://www.ontariowildflowers.com/>

Ontario Trees: <https://www.ontariotrees.com/>

Ontario Mammals: <https://www.inaturalist.org/guides/1327>

Mammals of Ontario Atlas: [https://view.publitas.com/on-nature/mammal\\_atlas-38jjdao7azjw/page/4-5](https://view.publitas.com/on-nature/mammal_atlas-38jjdao7azjw/page/4-5)

Getting Started with Birds: <http://www.ofo.ca/site/page/view/articles.getting-started-with-birds>

Cornell U “All About Birds”: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>

Birds Canada: <https://www.birdscanada.org/apps/checklist/index.jsp>

Audubon Bird Guide, Free AP: <https://www.audubon.org/app>

Bugguide: <https://bugguide.net/node/view/15740>

Ontario Reptiles and Amphibians: <https://ontarionature.org/programs/citizen-science/reptile-amphibian-atlas/species/>

Ontario Endangered Species: <https://ontarionature.org/programs/endangered-species/>

Opinicon Natural History (a well vetted word press site with some specific species stories): <https://opinicon.wordpress.com/species-accounts/chickadee/>  
 Deep Time Natural History of Ontario: <https://opinicon.wordpress.com/physical-environment/quaternary/>

### **Two Peer Responses to Final Projects: 9 p.m.: Brightspace Final Projects Forum**

- Offer responses to at least two classmates' "Autumn Transitions Local Habitat Projects"; If a project already has two responses, move on to another.
- Write 2-3 sentences of response and questions for each.
- You may consider what the most interesting or surprising takeaways from your classmate's projects are, as well as what you learned from these habitat encounters and what questions arise.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance and Participation:** Class works when you do. Active participation is essential. I define class participation as both physical and mental presence during synchronous learning sessions, as well as keen engagement with the course readings, class discussions, and fieldwork exercises. Students are required to attend all synchronous sessions and contribute to class discussion in a variety of formats through spoken and written engagement (informal writing, student blog feedback). **You may have two grace absences from the synchronous learning sessions for sickness, emergencies, or appointments.** Please extend me the courtesy of letting me know when you will need to be absent. Life is especially unpredictable right now, so if you do have difficulties of any kind, please keep me in the loop and let me know how I may be of help.

**Synchronous Learning Sessions & Distractions:** In order to give ourselves the gift of being as distraction free as possible, and to offer our best attention to each other in the times when we are meeting synchronously in person on Zoom, I ask that each student turn off notifications on cell phones, email, and close social media screens on your computer, so you are not tempted to flip between screens during class time. This way we can focus on the readings and discussion.

**Late Assignment Policy: My expectation is that assignments will be submitted on time, but life happens.** Extensions should be requested (for illness or other difficult circumstances) in advance of the due date. I do not take points off late assignments.