

**Carleton University
Spring 2024
Department of English**

**ENGL 4115/5901: Culture and the Text
Leaves of Leaves: Plant Literacy and Literature**

Prerequisites: fourth-year standing or permission of the department

**Instructor: Robin Norris
Email: robin.norris@carleton.ca**

Course Description

Plants have been important throughout human history for reasons of both survival and culture. Although plants have been central to mythologies and folklore around the globe, today our personal awareness of plants is at an all-time low. This is an experiential learning course that combines fieldwork, experiential learning, and text-based discussion to develop plant literacy and increase awareness of the plant life in our environment while redefining our understanding of literacy. Writing assignments will emphasize reflection on the experiential learning aspects of the course and will include in-class writing and a plant journal. The intersecting goals of the course are to explore the concept of literacy while expanding our ability to perceive and engage with plants, as well as considering new methods of observation and understanding by challenging fixed notions of knowledge and being.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will develop their understanding of the concepts of literacy and plant literacy.
- Students will increase their plant vocabulary by learning new words and plant literacy by learning to identify a number of plants that were previously unfamiliar to them.
- Students will read and respond to fundamental literary texts and cultural concepts about plants.
- Students will analyze differences in how plants have been catalogued, categorized, written about, and engaged with in various cultural contexts.

Note: Fieldwork will take place outdoors during each meeting, rain or shine, so please dress and prepare accordingly.

Texts for purchase

These may include a field guide and notebook for field notes.

Evaluation

- A holistic assessment of the following will comprise the course mark, at 20% each.
- Students may request to meet one-on-one to discuss feedback on these assignments at any time.

- Leadership of one text discussion.
- Leadership of one reflective writing session.
- Leadership of one fieldwork experience.
- Final plant literacy exam.
- Attendance and participation. These criteria will be determined together in our first class.