

**Carleton University
Early Summer 2022
Department of English**

**4115A/5901S: Culture and the Text/Selected Topic in English Studies II
Leaves of Leaves: Plant Literacy and Literature**

Prerequisites: fourth-year standing or permission of the department

Preclusions:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30–2:30

Location: Tory 204

Format: In person

**Instructor: Robin Norris
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Office: 1919 Dunton Tower
Phone: 613-520-2600 x4195
Office Hours: by appointment**

Course Description

Plants have been important throughout human history for both reasons of survival and culture. Although plants have been fundamental to mythologies around the globe, today plant literacy is at an all-time low. This is an experiential learning course that requires field work to develop plant literacy. Assignments will be designed to bolster the experiential learning aspects of the course and may include a personal literacy narrative and a plant journal, as well as reflections on the course activities and texts. This class has multiple intersecting goals: to explore plants in literature and culture; to increase students' plant literacy; to explore the concept of literacy; and to re-evaluate how plant literacy influences our experience of literary texts. An abiding question will be the distinction between nature and the garden.

Learning Outcomes

Students will develop their understanding of the concepts of literacy and plant literacy.
Students will increase their 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 recognize differences in how plants have been catalogued and categorized in various cultural contexts.

Texts for purchase

Please purchase a copy of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* (ordered at Haven Books). I also recommend that you buy a field guide of your choice. Other core texts will be available through Brightspace.

Class Calendar

For each field trip, please read the background information on Brightspace prior to departure.

- Thursday, May 5: Field trip paperwork including consent forms and vaccination documentation (required to visit federal properties, e.g. National Herbarium of Canada)
Specimen collection – please see links before class!
- Tuesday, May 10: Field trip to Central Experimental Farm (esp. Dominion Arboretum and Fletcher Wildlife Garden; Ornamental Gardens and Tropical Greenhouses if time permits)
- Thursday, May 12: Plant blindness and plant literacy (readings on Brightspace)
- Tuesday, May 17: Field trip to Carp Barrens
- Thursday, May 19: Bring a hard copy of your favourite plant poem to class
- Tuesday, May 24: “Early periods” plants (readings on Brightspace)
John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (excerpts)
Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* (excerpt on plants as signs and things)
Old English texts: “The Dream of the Rood,” Nine Herbs Charm, the rune poem
Erin Sweany, “Unsettling Comparisons: Ethical Considerations of Comparative Approaches to the Old English Medical Corpus,” *ELN* 2020.
- Thursday, May 26: Field trip to National Herbarium of Canada (for tour and to mount specimens collected May 5)
- Tuesday, May 31: *Braiding Sweetgrass* and the Indigenous learning bundle on environmental relations (on Brightspace)
- Thursday, June 2: Herbals from Carleton University Special Collections
- Tuesday, June 7: Field trip to Britannia Conservation Area
- Thursday, June 9: Portfolio deadline
- Tuesday, June 14: Field trip to Purdon Conservation Area
- Thursday, June 16: Individual meetings to discuss portfolios

Evaluation

Commitment to communication within class ecosystem	24
Portfolio	74

Portfolio

Each student will submit a portfolio of 16–20 pages of writing by June 9. Individual meetings to discuss this work will take place June 16. This portfolio must include at least one example of each of the following:

Plant journal

Personal literacy narrative

Response to a supplemental text*

Response to indigenous learning bundle and *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Reflection on an experiential learning opportunity

***Supplemental texts may include:**

André Alexis, *Days by Moonlight*

Catherine Bush, “Invasives: Unknitting Despair in a Tangled Landscape”

Karel Čapek, *The Gardener’s Year*

Monica Gagliano, *The Mind of Plants* or *Thus Spoke the Plant*

Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg’s Curse*

Mary Siisip Geniusz, *Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask*

Goethe, *The Metamorphosis of Plants*

Robert Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*

Jessica Hernandez, *Fresh Banana Leaves*

Helen Humphreys, *Field Study: Meditations on a Year at the Herbarium*

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss*

Jamaica Kincaid, essays published in *The New Yorker*, 2020

Ra'nikonhrí:io Lazare and Katsenhaién:ton Lazare, *Onkwanónhkwa* ‘Our Medicines’

Jessica Lee, *Two Trees Make a Forest*

Madeline Miller, *Circe*

Beronda L. Montgomery, *Lessons from Plants*

Alexis Nikole Nelson, @blackforager

Richard Powers, *The Overstory*

Suzanne Simard, *Finding the Mother Tree*

Rebecca Solnit, *Orwell’s Roses*

Amy Stewart, *The Drunken Botanist*

Introduction to Samuel Thayer, *Nature’s Garden*

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Statement on Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” According to the Department examples of plagiarism include the following:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Special Information Regarding Pandemic Measures

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow COVID-19 prevention measures and all mandatory public health requirements (e.g. wearing a mask, physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory and cough etiquette) and [mandatory self-screening](#) prior to coming to campus daily.

If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately, self-isolate, and complete the mandatory [symptom reporting tool](#). For purposes of contact tracing, attendance will be recorded in all classes and labs. Participants can check in using posted QR codes through the cuScreen platform where provided. Students who do not have a smartphone will be required to complete a paper process as indicated on the [COVID-19 website](#).

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow guidelines regarding safe movement and seating on campus (e.g. directional arrows, designated entrances and exits, designated seats that maintain physical distancing). In order to avoid congestion, allow all previous occupants to fully vacate a classroom before entering. No food or drinks are permitted in any classrooms or labs.

For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and required measures, please see the [University's COVID-19 webpage](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact covidinfo@carleton.ca

Please note that failure to comply with University policies and mandatory public health requirements, and endangering the safety of others are considered misconduct under the [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#). Failure to comply with Carleton's COVID-19 procedures may lead to supplementary action involving Campus Safety and/or Student Affairs.

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the [Pregnancy Accommodation Form](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For

more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>