

THE NATURE OF EUGENE  
LA 337  
Fall 2015

Syllabus

Instructor:

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In late summer, the madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) sheds its outer layer of bark.

*From the hills that embrace it to the Willamette River that flows through it, learn what makes Eugene's natural landscape unique and what efforts are being made to preserve and sustain it.*

### Course description:

Like any community, Eugene's natural character is based on its unique combination of topography, climate, flora, fauna, and settlement patterns. In this course, students learn about the natural history of this place we call home. Discussion topics include: geography and topography; geology and soils; weather and climate; flora and fauna; watercourses; the landscape before 1846 (when Eugene Skinner and family arrived); the landscape since 1846; and contemporary issues that affect the natural world in Eugene (e.g., outdoor lighting, noise, transportation choices). Because the scope of this course is so broad, discussion of individual topics will naturally be limited.

The ten-week course consists of lectures on Mondays (10:00-10:50); and outdoor study on Mondays (11:00-11:50) and most Wednesdays (10:00-11:50). In other words, the bulk of the class will take place outside, both on- and off-campus. On three Wednesdays, special two-hour field trips will supplant the usual near-campus walks: one to Skinner Butte; one to Hendricks Park; and one to Masonic Cemetery and Amazon Park. Plus, there are three all-day Saturday field trips from 9 am to 5 pm, 3 October, 24 October, and 14 November. Students will find their own way to the two-hour field trip sites and to the first two of the three all-day field trips.

At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

- identify the predominant plants and animals found in Eugene's natural areas and understand those organisms' roles in our community
- go virtually anywhere in Eugene—from residential areas to forested parks and treeless wetlands—and understand each site's natural history, as well as its possible future
- understand and appreciate Eugene's contemporary landscape and how it evolved
- be familiar with Eugene's "natural" as well as "cultivated" landscapes
- understand historical changes in Eugeneans' views of the local landscape (from "all that grazing land" in the mid-1800s, to "orchards galore" in the early 1900s, to "just scenery" or "a recreational opportunity" these days)
- be familiar with Eugene's great variety of parks and natural areas
- appreciate the roles played by climate, soil type, and topography in shaping the Eugene landscape

### What to bring—or not—to class:

Please bring to **every** class a folding umbrella and/or rain gear and an extra sweater, so you'll stay warm and dry and happy when we go outside—one cannot depend on weather forecasts. You might also find useful a sit-upon or kneel-upon—a square piece of insulite (or similar) 12"-18" on a side that keeps buttocks or knees warm, dry, and clean when outdoors exploring.

Open lap-top computers are not permitted in the classroom. And mobile phones and other electronic devices must be turned off and put away—so you're not even tempted to use them—during both the inside **and** the outside portions of the class. Any device being used during class time will be taken from you, and then returned at the end of the class period. During field trips outside, however, devices are permitted for taking photos.

Out of consideration for your fellow students—and in line with university policy—smoking is not permitted anytime during the outdoors portion of the class, including the off-campus field trips.

### Field trips:

Three Wednesdays during the term, we will meet off-campus—but not too far away—for **two-hour** field trips during our usual class time. Some TNOE students have classes just before or just after this one, and need more than the usual ten minutes between classes to get to or from the TNOE field trip sites. Because of this, I will always wait until 10:05 to begin the field trip, and will make every effort to get you back to our starting point by 11:45.

Students might also consider apprising the instructors in their classes just before/after TNOE of these circumstances; perhaps those instructors can permit the TNOE student to leave a few minutes early—or arrive a few minutes late—for just these three times during the term.

Another option for students with classes right before or after TNOE off-campus field trips is to make arrangements with someone in the class who is driving a personal car to the field trip site, to be picked up at, say, the Onyx Bridge parking lot at 9:55, so you can get to our meeting place by 10:05—and just reverse that for a timely return to campus.

Three non-football (!) Saturdays—not home games, anyway—during the term, we will have **all-day** field trips to Eugene-area sites. The first will be in Spencer Butte Park, which is dominated by conifer forest atop Class B or “hill” soils. The second is along the Willamette River, where the woodlands consist primarily of broad-leaved trees atop Class A or “river loam” soils. And the third is to the West Eugene Wetlands, much of which is treeless grassland atop Class C or “wetland” soils.

### Grading:

Grades for this course will be based on two essays, three quizzes, a term project, and a term-long journal. **All work must be original and all sources acknowledged—the penalties for cheating and plagiarizing are severe and can include expulsion from the university.** A paper copy of each assignment will be handed in at the beginning of the class period on the day it is due. Late work (which may be emailed) will be penalized one grade (10%) for each day it is late. For example, if you turn in a 150-point essay two days late, the most points you can get—if the essay is absolutely perfect—is 120 points (150 minus 15 minus 15).

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Essay #1 ( <i>A Natural Encounter</i> )	150 points
Essay #2 ( <i>It's Getting Better All the Time</i> )	150 points
Three quizzes @ 100 points each	300 points
Term project	200 points
Journal	<u>200 points</u>
	1,000 points total

A+	98-100%	B+	88-90%	C+	78-80%	D+	68-70%
A	92-98%	B	82-88%	C	72-78%	D	62-68%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%

Pass/no-pass: Undergraduate students must have a C-minus or better to pass a class; graduate students must have a B-minus or better.

### Attendance:

Since much of what you are likely to take from this class is “experiential” and cannot be acquired from books or on-line materials or borrowed notes, it is essential that you attend every class. But because unanticipated events may arise during the term—e.g., illness, a death in the family, a conflicting activity—each student is permitted **one excused absence** from any of the 19 two-hour class meetings if the student contacts the instructor in writing (email), preferably before the absence. In addition—new policy for this class!—each student is permitted **one UNexcused absence** from any of the two-hour classes.

Any additional absences from the two-hour class meetings will result in a deduction of 25 points from your term-end total. An absence from any of the three **all-day** field trips will result in a deduction of 50 points; the 50 points can be recouped, however, by visiting the field trip site(s) on your own and writing a 1000-word essay (four pages, double-spaced) about your observations.

### Required and optional texts:

Because the land itself will serve as our text—once we learn how to read it—there will be no required text or weekly “readings,” as you may be accustomed to in your other university classes. You will, however, be required to purchase a Course Packet—full of useful information that supplements, but does not substitute for, lecture material. And there will be weekly handouts, some of which may be posted on Blackboard.

Field guides which you may find helpful for this course include:

- ***Manual of Oregon Trees and Shrubs*** (Jensen et al.), 2008 edition
- ***Birds of Oregon*** (Burrows and Gillian), 2003
- ***Plants of Coastal British Columbia—including Washington, Oregon, and Alaska*** (Pojar and McKinnon), 1994

### Your journal:

In an effort to help you hone your observational skills—and get to know one place really well, rather than many places just a little bit—find somewhere outside that you could conveniently return to on a regular basis during the course of the term. It might be a favorite bench on campus; a particular part of Pioneer Cemetery; a corner of a favorite park; or a more “wild” site. But it needs to be somewhere that you’ll feel comfortable enough to sit down and **stay** sitting for a half-hour or more. And pick a particular day of the week when you think you’ll always be able to return.

Then, once a week, visit the site—the time of day you visit is really inconsequential—and take notes of what you notice and how the site has changed since the previous time you visited. Make drawings of your discoveries—you needn’t be an artist. These drawings will help jog your memory later on, when you look back at what you’ve written, and of course they’ll help you describe your experiences with pictures as well as prose. You may wish to supplement your journal with photos you’ve taken, but please don’t include any perishable material (e.g., leaves, cones, feathers).

For part of each journal entry, I want you to focus on one small thing—maybe a small patch of ground adjacent to your sitting spot, or the shoot tip of a broad-leafed tree or shrub that it going to lose its leaves during the term. But I also want you to look at The Big Picture around your spot, and observe what’s happening there, too.

When you’re in the field, you may make your notes and observations in whatever format you like—a pocket-size bound journal, a loose-leaf notebook, a laptop, or whatever. But the journal you’ll eventually hand in needs to be on 8-1/2 by 11 sheets, bound on either the left or the top (spiral-bound or just staples), and have an attractive and creative cover that includes both your name and “Fall 2015” or something similar. In other words, it’s best to make notes and sketches in the field, then re-do those by hand or with a computer once you’re back inside. (Sketches from the field may simply be cut out and pasted onto the final journal page instead of re-copying them.)

On the last day of class, you will turn in your lovely finished journal for a grade. It will be returned to you during finals week.

### Your essays:

This is a class about nature, not an English class. Nonetheless, it is important that you express your thoughts in an articulate and professional manner, and present your prose in an attractive form.

Please remember to group similar thoughts into paragraphs of a reasonable—but not excessive—length. And adjust your margins (including top/bottom) and/or your font size and type face so your essay fills each page and is nicely centered.

Begin each essay with a title, even if it's just "A Natural Encounter." And put your name, class name, and date on the essay.

Most students use some version of Spell-Check to avoid making spelling errors in their work. That's fine. But Spell-Check does not correct poor grammar. Nor does it catch the many **homophones**—words that sound alike but are spelled differently—that exist in English. Know the difference, for example, between these sets of commonly misused or misspelled homophones:

**their** (a possessive pronoun)/**they're** (a contraction of they are)/**there** (not here!)  
**its** (a possessive pronoun)/ **it's** (a contraction of it is)  
**your** (a possessive pronoun)/**you're** (a contraction of you are)  
etc.

Remember that Word and other programs usually don't contain plants' scientific names in their dictionaries, so if you use scientific names, check them very carefully. And always use them parenthetically. That is, use the plant's common name when you first mention it in the text (followed by its scientific name in parentheses). Any additional times that you use that plant's name in the same essay, refer to it only by its common name. And don't forget to always italicize scientific names, using an upper-case letter to begin the genus name and a lower-case letter to begin the species name.

Avoid, too, the common error of accidentally typing a word such as **three**, for example, as **there**, which Spell-Check will not catch—since **there** is a correctly spelled English word, too. To help eliminate errors and improve readability, **proofread** your work, preferably by reading it aloud to someone else in a setting where you will not be distracted.

Finally, be sure to look at the document in your Course Packet entitled, "Some Tips on Better Writing."

#### Essay #1 (A Natural Encounter):

It's the beginning of the term, and students are just getting their feet wet—so to speak—with regard to all there is to see and know and understand about the landscape we call Eugene.

Alone or with a friend, sit down and sit still (no walking around!) in a "natural-looking" area in Eugene—i.e., not somewhere on campus or in a developed city park—and **for an entire hour**, note what you see, hear, smell, and feel around you, focusing on the "nature" of the site (plants, animals, rocks, weather, etc.). Appropriate sites include (but are not limited to) the riverside woodlands and meadows on the north side of the Frohnmayer (Autzen) Footbridge; the wild, **forested** part of Hendricks Park (i.e., not the Rhododendron Garden); anywhere in Spencer Butte Park (except the parking lot, of course); the ash woodland or unmowed meadows in Amazon Park; the Delta Ponds area near Valley River Mall; and the West Eugene Wetlands.

Then, in a four-page, double-spaced essay (approximately 1,000 words; please use 12-point font):

- describe the site (it doesn't matter if you don't know the names of plants and animals you might mention—just describe them)
- discuss what aspects of the site appear to be "natural" and which appear to be "un-natural"
- if you see other people, what are they doing?
- what do you think this site looked like 100 years ago? (you won't know for sure, of course—but just imagine what it might have looked like!)
- what do you think it might look like 100 years from now?

Enjoy your visit—I look forward to reading about it.

When you hand in your essay, attach to it a copy of Eugene Landforms—Shaded Relief (available on Blackboard) which shows no roads (and very few other human “imprints”) and indicate on it the exact location of the site you visited.

### Essay #2 (It’s Getting Better All the Time):

The term is now more than half over, and students have by this point been exposed to a lot of different aspects of Eugene’s natural environment, and have acquired some sense of how that environment—and our collective view of it—has changed since Eugene Skinner arrived in 1846.

In a four-page, double-spaced essay (approximately 1,000 words; please use 12-point font) and with thoughtful and well-organized prose, describe in general—or, if you prefer, choose just one site in particular that we have visited or one discussion we have had—something that gives you hope for the future of Eugene’s natural environment. (If, by chance, you do **not** feel hopeful about that future, use your essay instead to explain why you feel this way.)

### Term project:

One way to show how well you have learned something is to teach it to someone else. To that end, your term project will consist of an informational walking or bicycling tour of somewhere in Eugene, with a specific theme. It could be a small area such as a cemetery, or a much larger area such as an entire neighborhood or “The Four Buttes.” The completed project will be a tri-fold brochure on ledger-size paper (11 inches by 17 inches), so when folded, it will be about 6 inches wide and 11 inches tall. That should give you plenty of space to be creative—but you’ll still have to carefully choose what information to present, and what to leave out so that you provide enough interest for potential readers without overwhelming them.

Remember that the name of this course is *The Nature of Eugene*, so choose a brochure topic or theme appropriate for the course.

Teams of up to **three** students may work together on the project; each person on a team will get the same grade for the completed project.

Each tour will include:

- A prominent title page or side
- At least 10 informational stops—but no more than 15
- A map of the area showing the numbered stops
- Appropriate graphics or photos (contemporary or historical) to add interest to your prose
- Your name(s) and the title of this course at the end of the brochure

Term projects will be graded based on the following:

- General appearance of the brochure, including neatness (40 points)
- Usefulness as an educational tool (40 points)
- Correctness of spelling, technical information, etc. (40 points)
- Creativity (40 points)
- Amount of time evidently spent working on the project (40 points)

### Keeping in touch—by email and by telephone:

I make every effort to be accessible to my students, but I purposely do not have a computer (nor access to email) right in my office, nor do I carry with me any electronic devices. Nonetheless, I get to a computer terminal once or twice a day to check my email. If I receive an email from you, I will respond yet that day or, at the latest, by the

following day. (I hope that you, too, will respond to any email from me within a reasonably brief period of time.) Please remember, too, that your emails to your teacher are a form of professional communication, so you need to avoid using slang or any expressions that might be considered in bad taste. (E.g., “Hello Whitey” or just “Whitey” and “Dear Whitey” are all suitable salutations; “Hey Whitey” is not.) And just as in your essays, watch your spelling and punctuation—and use paragraphs, preferably short ones.

I also make myself available by telephone from my home office. The best time to reach me is weekday evenings from 8-10 pm—except Thursday, which is my Day-in-the-Woods. If you do **not** reach me, kindly leave your name, your number, and a brief message on my voicemail (which picks up after the sixth ring).

I don’t have a mobile phone or other electronic device that makes me instantly accessible anytime and anywhere. But if you need to tell me you’ll be missing a class—or if you’re late for a field trip and are trying to find where the group is—you may call or text one of my assistants, who will pass the message on to me.

I’m also happy to meet with you in person. Just send me an email or leave me a telephone message and give me a couple of possible times you are available, and we’ll make arrangements to get together.

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Fall 2015 Calendar

Week 1	<u>Monday, 28 September</u> Course introduction CAMPUS WALK	<u>Wednesday, 30 September</u> ALTON BAKER PARK WALK (meet at south end of footbridge across river to Autzen) <b>The-Nature-of-Me cards due</b>
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**ALL-DAY FIELD TRIP #1: Saturday, 3 October (9 am to 5 pm): Spencer Butte Park**

Week 2	<u>Monday, 5 October</u> Geology and soils CAMPUS WALK <b>Essay #1 due</b>	<u>Wednesday, 7 October</u> <b>Field trip to Skinner Butte</b> (meet at 10 am at Lamb Cottage, between the Butte and the River, along Cheshire Street)
Week 3	<u>Monday, 12 October</u> Weather and climate CAMPUS WALK <b>Journals due for "preview"</b> (returned 16 October)	<u>Wednesday, 14 October</u> Mammals and birds ( <b>double</b> lecture with brief break between them)
Week 4	<u>Monday, 19 October</u> <b>Quiz #1</b> (covers Weeks 1-3) Willamette River and local fisheries	<u>Wednesday, 21 October</u> ALTON BAKER PARK WALK (meet at south end of footbridge across river to Autzen)

**ALL-DAY FIELD TRIP #2: Saturday, 24 October (9 am to 5 pm): Willamette River**



A young bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) in forest understory.

Week 5	<u>Monday, 26 October</u> Geography CAMPUS WALK	<u>Wednesday, 28 October</u> <b>Field trip to Hendricks Park</b> (meet at 10 am at Wilkins Picnic Shelter at top of Summit Drive)
Week 6	<u>Monday, 2 November</u> Parks development and philosophy CAMPUS WALK	<u>Wednesday, 4 November</u> CAMPUS AND NEAR-CAMPUS WALK (nature-friendly buildings and landscapes) <b>Term project “check-in” due</b> (via e-mail)
Week 7	<u>Monday, 9 November</u> <b>Quiz #2</b> (covers Weeks 4-6) Fungi CAMPUS WALK	<u>Wednesday, 11 November</u> ALTON BAKER PARK WALK (meet at south end of footbridge across river to Autzen)

**ALL-DAY FIELD TRIP #3: Saturday, 14 November (9 am to 5 pm): West Eugene Wetlands**

Week 8	<u>Monday, 16 November</u> Bryophytes and lichens CAMPUS WALK <b>Essay #2 due</b>	<u>Wednesday, 18 November</u> <b>Field trip to Masonic Cemetery and Amazon Park</b> (meet at 10 am at 25 <sup>th</sup> and University)
Week 9	<u>Monday, 23 November</u> <b>Term projects due</b>	<u>Wednesday, 25 November</u> No class—enjoy your holiday weekend!
Week 10	<u>Monday, 30 November</u> Contemporary issues that affect the natural world in Eugene	<u>Wednesday, 2 December</u> ALTON BAKER PARK WALK (meet at south end of footbridge across river to Autzen) <b>Journal due</b>
Finals Week	Wednesday, 9 December (10:15 am) <b>Quiz #3</b> (covers Weeks 7-10) Journal returned And a little farewell party!	



The view at 27<sup>th</sup> and Hilyard on a foggy winter morning...



and the view that same morning from the top of Spencer Butte!