Writing Urban Nature
Exploring the Natural & Built Environment in and around Chicago

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SUST 390 / ENG 340 / PLS 371
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Writing Urban Nature
Pre-session Agenda

• Quick overview of course theme and format
• Personal introductions
• Housekeeping Tasks:
  ✓ RU Waiver Forms
  ✓ Contact Information
• Discussion of urban nature: what is it? Where do we find it?
• Looking ahead:
  ✓ Explore blogs/websites
  ✓ Recommend reading(s)
  ✓ Stay tuned for updates
• Next meeting: 5/18 in the Gage Building Lobby
Sustainability Studies Major / Courses

Core Courses
- SUST 210 Sustainable Future
- SUST 220 Water
- SUST 230 Food
- SUST 240 Waste

Advanced Courses
- SUST 310 Energy & Climate Change
- SUST 320 Sprawl, Transportation, & Planning
- SUST 330 Biodiversity
- SUST 340 Policy, Law, & Ethics

Special Options
- SUST 350 Service & Sustainability
- SUST 390 Special Topics
- SUST 395 Internship
What Is Nature?

Picture something that comes to mind immediately . . .
What Is Nature?

Rocky Mountains, Crested Butte CO (M. Bryson, 2014)
What Is Nature?

Canada Glacier, Taylor Valley, Antarctica (M. Bryson, 1991)
What Is Nature?

What are we looking at? Where are we?
Protected lands of the Chicago region (source: Atlas of Biodiversity, 2000); see this map from Chicago Wilderness
Is this Nature?

Chicago's lakefront
Is this Nature?

Chicago Lights Urban Farm, Spring 2013 (M. Bryson)
Sustainability
Humans and Nature in Urban Ecosystems

Climate Change
Biodiversity Loss
Urbanization & Population Growth
Pollution
Clean Energy
Economic Development
Sustainable Agriculture
Social Justice & Equity
Environmental Stewardship

Mr. Will Allen -- Urban Farmer, Founder of Growing Power, & Sustainability Entrepreneur
What Would a Sustainable Future Look Like?

Environmental resources are conserved for both future human generations as well as non-human biota.

Economic development occurs not at the expense of the natural environment, but in a way to mitigate ecological costs and impacts.

Equity – social, economic, and environmental justice – governs the process of sustainable development.

Hiking Northerly Island, 2011 (photo by L. Bryson)
Exploring the Chicago River

Understanding the river as a modified natural ecosystem (natural sciences)
Developing conservation policies (social and natural sciences)
Representing the river as an environmental and cultural resource (arts and humanities)
Restoring the river: water quality, biodiversity, riparian zone integrity, citizen access and recreation (all disciplines)

Sense of Place | Urban Sustainability
Chicago's Urban Nature

Chicago in 1857
Chicago's Urban Nature

North Branch of the Chicago River (Spring 2010)
Heading south into the Loop where the branches meet; Wolf Point in the background (October 2011)
Chicago's Urban Nature

WMRD's Racine Avenue Pumping Station, Bubbly Creek, Chicago (May 2009)
Chicago's Urban Nature

Stickney Wastewater Treatment Plant, SW of Chicago (courtesy MWRD)
What's weird about this old photo?
The Abuse of Nature

Chicken on Bubbly Creek, Chicago, 1911 (Chicago Historical Society)
The Abuse of Nature

Combined Sewage Outlet, Bubbly Creek, Chicago
The Control of Nature

A river reversed, a problem created

The Chicago and Calumet rivers were once tiny waterways that trickled into Lake Michigan. Beginning in 1900 the city dug a series of canals that reversed their flows so they could carry the city’s waste into the Mississippi River basin, and away from the lake – the city’s drinking water source. A push is now under way to engineer a system to re-establish the natural hydrological divide between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi.

Sources: Great Lakes Fishery Commission
River-based Geography

Chicago Area Waterway System: rivers, canals, locks, and controlling structures

Note the relation of the CAWS to the Des Plaines River and Salt Creek
Salt Creek Watershed

Covering roughly 150 square miles, the Salt Creek watershed incorporates more than 30 municipalities that are home to nearly 500,000 people.
"Development"
MWRDGC's John Egan Wastewater Treatment Plant, Schaumburg IL / Busse Woods
Green Infrastructure
Monday – Chicago's Lakefront (The Loop and North Side)

Tuesday – The Chicago River (Southwest Side)

Wednesday – Parklands & Neighborhoods – (North Side)

Thursday – Suburban Nature (Schaumburg IL)

Friday – Industrial Reclamations (Joliet IL)