

Writing Urban Nature Course Overview and Policies

Welcome to Professor Mike Bryson's Summer 2018 SUST 360 Writing Urban Nature course, which focuses on explorations and representations of urban and suburban environments here in the Chicago Region. This document provides a brief overview of the course's theme, learning goals, format, field activities, and basic requirements. More detailed information will be posted on the course Bb site and my faculty blog. SUST 390 is a upper-level course in the Sustainability Studies major, and may be taken for elective credit by students in other RU programs as well as from the Resilience Studies Consortium university partners. Pre-req: ENG 102; counts for credit in PLS 371 Seminar in Humanities II.

Exploring Chicago's Urban Nature

Writing Urban Nature is an environmental literature and writing special topics course distinguished by in-the-field explorations of various natural and urban environments. The class provides a unique immersive experience in "nature close at hand" at sites of ecological and cultural significance in the Chicago region. Strong emphasis is placed on closely observing place, people, and wildlife; walking and exploring landscapes and neighborhoods; discussing compelling ideas, stories, and images of urban nature, broadly defined; and working on the craft of writing creatively, descriptively, and insightfully.

Daily activities will consist of field excursions to sites of interest in Chicago's urban environment, where we will hike through and observe the landscape; discuss assigned readings for the day; engage in writing exercises designed to challenge you and generate ideas; and enjoy quiet time for personal reflection, journal writing, and photography. Your writing notebook and photo archive will provide material for a personal "urban nature" essay (due one week after the class ends) that incorporates text and image, critically engages selections from the course reading list, and reflects on your individual experiences and observations during our class explorations. Collectively, we will contribute to the [Writing Urban Nature online project](#) hosted by the SUST at RU Blog, which provides a unique platform for our creative and reflective writing.

Assigned readings will come from the required book *City Creatures: Animal Encounters in the Chicago Wilderness* (eds. Van Horn and Aftandilian, U of Chgo P, 2015), on order at the RU Bookstore, as well as selected urban nature blogs/websites, including [City Creatures](#), [The Nature of Cities](#), [Orion](#), and [Terrain](#). Readings will be finalized and distributed during the week of May 14th.

Learning Objectives and Course Goals

- Explore and experience different urban and suburban environments first-hand, with an emphasis on close observation of and analytic reflection on one's surroundings
- Discover and critically analyze the diversity and value of nature in Chicago and its suburbs
- Develop an appreciation and knowledge of the interactions between built and natural elements of the urban environment
- Explore the relationship between nature and culture in urban ecosystems

- Develop your writing and photographic skills in the context of reflecting upon your experiences with urban nature
- Understand the potentials and limitations of written and visual representations of nature in an urban context
- Connect the practice of nature writing to the study of urban sustainability

Tentative Schedule (subject to updates before May 21st)

Date	Place	Sites of Interest	Activities & Assignments
May 9	Required Pre-session (4-6pm, WB 1014 & via Zoom)	RU Chicago Campus	Overview, introductions, and logistics; travel waiver forms
May 21	Lakefront Parklands (WB Lobby)	Millennium Park & Grant Park; Museum Campus; Northerly Island	Hiking & nature observation; writing exercises, photography, & discussion
May 22	The Chicago River & South Side Parklands (WB Lobby)	Bubbly Creek & Canal Origins Park; Eden Place Nature Center; Stearns Quarry Park	Canoe trip with Friends of the Chicago River; hiking; writing exercises, photography, & discussion
May 23	North Side Trails & Parklands (WB Lobby)	606 Trail; North Park Village Nature Center	Hiking & nature observation; writing exercises, photography, & discussion
May 24	Suburban Landscapes (RU Schaumburg Campus Lobby)	RU's Schaumburg Campus; Busse Forest Nature Preserve; Spring Valley Conservation Area & Nature Center; Volkening Heritage Farm	Hiking & nature observation; writing exercises, photography, & discussion
May 25	Industrial Reclamations (Joliet IL)	Downtown Joliet; Des Plaines River; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	Hiking & nature observation; writing exercises, photography, & discussion
June 1	360 Bb site		Urban Nature Essay

Seminar Format and Logistics

This class is a participation-intensive seminar which places a premium on active engagement, writing, discussion, critical thinking, and risk-taking creativity. Our small size and hands-on learning approach mean that **each of you will play a vital role in the class as scholar, writer, and active participant.** Consequently, my expectations are high for engaged, thoughtful, and regular participation.

Please note these important guidelines:

- Attend every class session. Allow plenty of time to get to our appointed meeting place each day, starting May 21st.
- Dress to be outside in the weather; be prepared to get dirty, wet, cold, or hot. (This is part of the fun!) Wear good walking shoes.
- Come to each session prepared to discuss our assigned readings.

- Bring your gear (textbook, notebook, pens/pencils, sack lunch, water, sunscreen, camera, binoculars, field guides, etc.) in a comfortable bag.
- Check our Bb site and your RU student email account nightly for important updates/announcements.

Backing Up Your Files

Avoid heartache and sadness from losing your brilliant prose and deep thoughts. Here's how:

- Save each version of a document under a separate name (e.g., Essay1 v1, Essay1 v2, etc.).
- Back up your files frequently by:
 - emailing them to your Roosevelt and personal email accounts
 - saving them periodically to a flash drive and/or external hard drive

Requirements and Key Assignments

Because this is a one-week intensive field-based class, the basic requirements are relatively simple.

- Required attendance at pre-session and all scheduled class meetings: if you have to miss all or part of a daily session, for whatever reason, you need to notify me ASAP via email. Any absence will require make-up work/activities to be determined by the instructor.
- Field participation: attendance, discussion, writing exercises (20 points/day, 100 points total)
- Urban nature essay, 7-10 pages (100 points)

How I Calculate Your Grade

There are 200 total possible points that can be earned in this class. Each assignment will be given a numerical score based on its potential point value (e.g., 18 out of 20 points, equivalent to 90%, or an A- for that assignment). Final grades are calculated simply by dividing your total earned points by 200, then multiplying by 100 to convert that to a percentage. Letter grades are assigned according to the following percentage scale:

A	93-100%	C+	77-79%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%
		C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%		
B	83-86%	D+	67-69%
B-	80-82%	D	63-66%
		D-	60-62%
		F	0-59%

A Note on Academic Honesty -- Very Important!

All of your work in SUST 360 and every other college class must be your own. A full explanation of academic honesty is available in the document, [Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students](#), published by the Roosevelt University Provost's Office. You should read this document carefully and print a copy for your records.

- **Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and is unacceptable in any form.** Examples in academic writing assignments include putting your name on another person's writing and presenting it as your own work (an egregious case!); failing to properly cite information from another source (i.e., not giving credit where it's due); failing to put a direct quote in quotation marks (even if it's cited properly); or not adequately paraphrasing the language of an outside source (again, even if it's cited properly). The latter two examples are the most common forms of plagiarism, and even though in many cases they are unintentional mistakes, *they're still wrong -- and unethical.*
- **My policy on plagiarism:** An assignment that contains plagiarized passages, whether intentional or not, usually is returned without a grade. The author must schedule an appointment with me to discuss the assignment and then submit a thorough revision of the paper. If the revision does not correct the problem, the assignment will receive a failing grade. The objective of my policy is not to punish, but to help you gain critical skills and confidence in properly summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and documenting sources within your writing. *In cases of egregious academic dishonesty*, however, I reserve the right to record a failing grade for the assignment without possibility of revision, a lowered course grade, or a failing course grade (per the *Roosevelt Student Handbook*).

How I Evaluate Writing Assignments

The following is a summary of the criteria I use to evaluate most kinds of writing assignments. Please bear in mind that no list is universal -- each assignment usually demands a few special categories of consideration, and I always make the appropriate adjustments depending on the assignment. For example: text contributions to an online discussion forum are read much more loosely in terms of grammar and spelling than are formal pieces of writing, such as a critical essay.

"A" paper: Excellent

- Fulfills and successfully pushes beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment in terms of thoroughness and level of detail
- Defines its purpose/thesis very clearly and addresses a defined audience
- Exemplifies a high level of sophistication in terms of content and style (i.e., goes beyond obvious points, shows originality of thought, tackles a difficult subject, flows logically and coherently, uses mature sentence structure and diction, etc.)
- Demonstrates evidence of careful and thoughtful revision
- Displays excellent overall organization and nearly flawless mechanics
- Makes effective and judicious use of other sources (if required), and documents them correctly
- Is readable, clear, and free from needless ambiguity

"B" paper: Good

- Fulfills the minimum requirements of the assignment, and attempts (not always successfully) to go further in terms of development
- Defines its purpose/thesis adequately and addresses a particular audience (with perhaps an occasional lapse)
- Displays coherent organization, with room for possible adjustment
- Demonstrates some degree of thoughtful revision
- Employs reasonably sound writing mechanics
- Uses and documents sources competently
- Is reasonably free from logical flaws and ambiguity (though minor lapses may occur)

"C" paper: Fair

- Fulfills the bare minimum of the assignment; makes no attempt to go beyond what's easy or obvious
- Defines an audience, but does not address it adequately or consistently
- Defines a purpose, but in an unclear or confusing manner -- thesis is ineffective and unclear
- Presents material in a somewhat unorganized fashion
- Demonstrates little thoughtful revision -- changes are made only on the surface (e.g., spelling and grammar)
- Documents sources and/or uses visuals, but not effectively
- Lacks clarity -- the thought process is obscured and the prose is difficult to read
- Contains a number of stylistic and mechanical weaknesses (e.g., sentence structure may be simplistic and/or repetitive)

"D" paper: Needs a Major Overhaul

- Makes a minimal effort to fulfill the assignment, but fails to do an adequate job
- Lacks a clear purpose/focus
- Is seriously deficient in terms of audience awareness, organization, mechanics, documentation, etc.
- Is difficult to follow -- fundamental errors or lack of thoughtful development make reading a chore

Contact Information

Email (mbryson@roosevelt.edu) is the best way to get in touch with me; cellphone is next best. I will not keep office hours during our class, since we will be together in the field the entire week.

Mike Bryson, PhD

Professor & Director of Sustainability Studies | AUD 829

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<http://blogs.roosevelt.edu/mbryson> (faculty website)

General Academic Policies for Students

This page lists official university policies and student resources. Please review these policies carefully, ask me if you have any questions, and keep the list handy for reference throughout the semester. This document as well as all other relevant course materials are posted in the **Syllabus** section of our course Blackboard (Bb) site.

Academic Dishonesty: The university's official policies on issues such as plagiarism, recycling, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty can be found in the student handbook, which is available online (<http://www.roosevelt.edu/CurrentStudents.aspx>) and should be reviewed carefully. Additional guidelines for avoiding plagiarism are available on the RU Provost's website: <http://catalog.roosevelt.edu/undergraduate/policies/academic-integrity-policy/>

Blackboard: Accessing the course Blackboard site, the online space for this class, is a required part of this course. The Blackboard course site will include the syllabus and instructor contact information. Blackboard may also contain other required assignments and communication from your instructor. Please notify your instructor immediately if you do not know how to use Blackboard or cannot access it. The Blackboard course management system is supported by the RUOnline staff and by the Roosevelt University Help Desk.

- Quick guides: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/RUOnline/Students/BbTutorials.aspx>
- Help desk: <http://roosevelt.parature.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=15161>
- RUOnline: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/RUOnline/ContactUs.aspx>

Disability: Roosevelt University complies fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Details about ADA and Roosevelt's policies and practices are found in the following link: <https://www.roosevelt.edu/student-experience/disability-services>. If you have a condition or disability that requires reasonable accommodation, please alert your instructor or the Academic Success Center as soon as possible, certainly before any assignment or classroom activity that requires accommodation.

- The Academic Success Center is located in AUD1050 (inside the Library) in Chicago, and the phone number is 312-341-3818. In Schaumburg, the office is in room 125, and the phone number is 847-619-7978. Email Adam Wouk or Danielle Smith at dsmith51@roosevelt.edu.

Withdrawal Date: The final date for an official withdrawal from this class (meaning a "W" would appear on your transcript) is March 23, 2018. After that, if you want to withdraw, you'll need to petition the registrar. Petitions are granted only for non-academic reasons after the deadline. You should consult your academic advisor if you are considering withdrawing from a course. If you receive financial aid, also check with your financial aid counselor to assure that aid isn't affected by withdrawing from a class. The complete withdrawal policy is here: <https://www.roosevelt.edu/current-students/academics/register-classes>

Religious Holidays: Please let your instructor know as soon as possible if you will miss class because you are observing a religious holiday. Roosevelt University policy requires written notification of religious holiday observation within the first two weeks of the term. Any work you miss because of a

religious holiday can be made up. You can see the full policy here:
<http://www.roosevelt.edu/Policies/ReligiousHolidays.aspx>

Student Code of Conduct: Students enrolled in the university are expected to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the university's function as an educational institution.
<https://www.roosevelt.edu/current-students/get-help/complaint/student-misconduct>

Title IX: Roosevelt University cares greatly about the health and well-being of our students, staff, faculty, and guests to our campuses. Federal law, specifically [Title IX and the University Sexual Misconduct Policy](#), require that **all employees are mandated reporters** of incidents involving sexual or gender-based violence or harassment.

- Disclosures made to faculty or teaching assistants (TAs) about sexual or gender-based harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and/or stalking on or off campus **must be forwarded** to the Title IX Coordinator, Alice Jones (ajones90@roosevelt.edu; phone x2051, office AUD 204). The above listed staff are Responsible Employees and therefore are mandated to report.
- The Title IX office will contact any student who discloses an incident regarding student rights, including the option to request an investigation, interim safety measures, and/or academic accommodations. In certain circumstances, the Title IX Coordinator may need to proceed with an investigation, even if none is requested, if there are safety risks to the student or campus community. Participation in the process is voluntary.
- **If you want a confidential place** to disclose sexual assault, sexual harassment or intimate partner violence, there are two confidential advisors on campus who are not mandated reporters. They are: Audrey Guy (phone: 312-244-0577) and LaDonna Long (phone: 312-244-0426). Both are available via phone all hours. The Counseling Center (430 S. Michigan Avenue Room 470; phone: 312-341-3548) staff are also NOT mandatory reporters and therefore NOT required to report a disclosure to the Title IX Office.

Student Resources

Academic Success Center: Disability Services, Peer Mentor Program, Tutoring

Chicago campus: AUD 1050 (inside the Library), (312) 341-3818.

Schaumburg campus: room 125, (847)619-7978.

Email: Adam Wouk (awould@roosevelt.edu) or Danielle Smith (dsmith51@roosevelt.edu)

Blackboard Support, Training, and Quick Guides: The Blackboard course management system is supported by the RUOnline staff and by the Roosevelt University Help Desk. Every RU class is assigned a Blackboard (Bb) site, which instructors may use at their discretion. Fully online courses take place entirely on Blackboard. Here are selected resources for students:

Quick guides: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/RUOnline/Students/BbTutorials.aspx>

Help desk: <http://roosevelt.parature.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=15161>

RUOnline: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/RUOnline/ContactUs.aspx>

Campus Safety:

Auditorium Building: (312) 341-2020
Gage Building: (312) 341-3111
Schaumburg campus: (847) 619-8989

Computer Labs: A list of open labs available for student use is located here:

<http://www.roosevelt.edu/ITS/labs.aspx>

Counseling Center: Provides free and confidential individual counseling, as well as group and couples counseling.

Chicago campus: room 470 Auditorium Building, (312) 341-3548
Schaumburg campus: room 114, (312) 341-3548

Current Student Information: Check this page on the RU Website for up-to-date information and key resources, from the catalog to the student handbook.

<https://www.roosevelt.edu/current-students>

Financial Aid: Chicago campus: Mezzanine, Wabash Building, (866) 421-0935; FAO@roosevelt.edu
Schaumburg campus: room 125, (866) 421-0935; FAO@roosevelt.edu

Learning Commons: Tutoring and academic support in all subjects, in person and online. 10th Floor (in the Library), Auditorium Building.

- Writing Center in the Learning Commons; (312) 341-2206; writingcenter@roosevelt.edu
- Math Lab in the Learning Commons;
<https://www.roosevelt.edu/current-students/get-help/academic-assistance/math-lab>

Library: Find everything you need to know at <http://www.roosevelt.edu/Library.aspx> about the Auditorium Building library, the Schaumburg library and the Performing Arts library. The main library in Chicago is located on AUD 10th floor, Michigan Ave side of the building.

Registrar: Registration, drop/add, withdrawal, transcripts, credit evaluation, graduation.

Chicago campus: Mezzanine floor, Wabash Building, (312) 341-3535; registrar@roosevelt.edu
Schaumburg campus: room 125, (847) 619-7950; registrar@roosevelt.edu

RUWiFi: To access the university's wireless network, either email helpdesk@roosevelt.edu or call (312) 341-4357 for the connection key. The library also has wifi connection info (GOGREEN!).