Nature Journal Background and Instructions

Introduction
One goal of this activity is to encourage you to pay attention to your natural surroundings and foster interest in—and care for—the local environment. Nature journaling also reminds us that the environment is not just something "out there" and exotic. Sometimes courses on the environment tend to focus solely on big, hot-button issues such as climate change. While such topics are critically important, our ability to appreciate them is limited unless we have a personal connection to nature.

This journal also is an opportunity for you to develop a deep understanding of a natural place in Bloomington, which for many of you is not your hometown. Finally, the reason that this project asks you to study just one place, examining it closely and from many angles, is that there is always more to nature than first meets the eye. Similarly, no environmental debate can be understood from just one perspective. Just as you will return to your nature journal site repeatedly and each time observe something new, so too should you approach your education about environmental issues: continually revisit the critical questions as you acquire new information and develop new ideas.

Your journal will be in blog format via Blogger/Blogspot, http://www.blogger.com. Using the web as the journal forum allows you to create a multimedia picture of your place. You will be asked to take and post pictures of your place and you may opt also to load relevant video or audio files. (When you are asked to post scanned drawings, please note that there are plenty of scanners in the first-floor computing area of the Wells Library, and they have easy-to-follow instructions.) The journal prompts will provide the minimum requirements for your responses, but please feel free to enhance your responses with additional photos, sketches, and web links. At the end of the course you will have the option to share your nature journal with the class.

Instructions
1) Pick your nature place from the following list:

•	Some part of the grassy and tree-filled area by the SRSC; this area is bounded by North Business Boulevard to the west and south, North Union to the east, and a parking lot on the north
•	An area in the arboretum (the pond is a good choice)
•	Some part of the wooded area in front of the Chemistry Building
•	Some part of the gardens, grass, and woods in the Old Crescent/Sample Gates area
•	The area surrounding Rose Well House
•	The gardens and area surrounding Showalter Fountain
•	Some part of the gardens and wooded area near Morrison Hall
•	An area surrounding the dam on the Jordan River near the School of Education
•	Some part of the grassy, wooded area between the president's house and Woodburn Hall
•	A section of the Jordan River by the Union
•	An area of the frequently flooded meadow surrounding the section of the Jordan River near the School of Education
•	A segment of the Jordan River where it flows behind Eigenmann

- A part of Dunn Woods
- Dunn Cemetery
- A part of Dunn Meadow

If you have another natural place about which you would prefer to write, please send me an email describing it. Email me before your first nature journal entry is due. You may be able to use your selection instead, but you must obtain approval first.

2) Determine the boundaries of your nature place so that you can describe them in your first journal entry. The list above gives you some freedom in deciding the specific area you will observe. For example, if you choose to observe a site in the arboretum, you can pick a certain area of the arboretum rather than the whole thing. When determining the boundaries of your nature place, follow these guidelines:

- Do not make your site too large; one city block is roughly the maximum.
- Do not make your site too small; a 20-foot by 20-foot area is roughly the minimum.
- Choose a place that you can access easily every week.
- Pick a place where you will be comfortable sitting and observing nature for at least 15 minutes once per week.
- Pick a place where you anticipate that there is enough diversity of flora and fauna and human and non-human uses to give you something to write about every week.

3) Set up your online journal.

See the blogging handout for instructions.

4) Respond to the weekly nature journal prompt.

Every Monday by 8 p.m., I will post on Oncourse a prompt for your nature journaling in the subsequent week. (All the prompts area already posted in Oncourse in one document, but I will remind you each week about the prompt you should be answering.) Your response for that week must be posted on Blogger by the *following* Monday at 8 p.m.

Answering the prompt will require you to go to your nature place and examine it carefully for at least 15 minutes. All prompts will require work subsequent to that observation period. For example, you may be asked to take pictures of animals or plants at your location, use print or online resources to identify them, and then post a short writeup of your findings.

Some prompts will require you to do more work than others. The maximum amount of time you are likely to need to devote to your journal in a week is 3–4 hours and the minimum is 30 minutes. As necessary, I will provide you with links and resources that can help you answer the prompt's questions.

4) Receive your grade and feedback.

I will always provide you—in advance—the grading rubric that will be used to evaluate your journal entry. Please look at the rubric carefully so that you know how to craft your nature journal to get maximum points. If you are in any way unclear about what is expected of your nature journal or about how to improve your nature journal grades, please come talk to me in office hours.

After you have submitted your nature journal and it has been graded, I will give you a short evaluation form that provides and explains your grade. Typically, you will receive this evaluation in the Thursday class following the Monday 8 p.m. deadline.

Content Guidelines
The same standard for writing applies to this journaling activity as applies to any other assignment. I cannot emphasize this point enough. Your writing in your nature journal entries will be evaluated per the same standards as would be applied to any academic paper. Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Be complete and thorough. Only link to websites that you would cite in an academic paper.

The standard rules about academic misconduct apply. Plagiarism is unacceptable. When your response to a journal prompt requires that you document a source, use the standard Chicago style and put the reference list at the bottom of your online journal entry.

Only post photos you have taken yourself or sketches you have created yourself. Cite yourself as their source in a caption beneath the photo. Use this format: "Source: [Your name] [date photo was taken]." For example, "Source: Gwen Arnold 2010." Omit the quotation marks.

Technology Issues
Be sure that your OnCourse settings are adjusted so that you are alerted when I post a new journaling prompt.

Remember that computers and websites crash, usually when you can least afford a crisis. Always type your text into a word processing program, save it, and then upload it to your nature journal. Back up your files. Similarly, save backups of your photos and sketches on your computer; do not make Blogger the only repository for these items.

Technological problems are not generally an acceptable excuse for a late submission. If you complete your journal assignment early, you will have plenty of time to work through any such problems. If you complete your journal the night before it is due and then have trouble posting to Blogger, you may indeed be in trouble. There is a computer help desk in the first floor of the Wells Library; bring your questions to staff there. You also can rely on the extensive resources available from Indiana University Technology Services; see http://uits.iu.edu/page/amgy. **If some technological problem absolutely prevents you from posting your materials to Blogger, you must email me by 8 p.m. on Sunday before the Monday deadline.** In that email, you must (a) explain the nature of the problem that is preventing you from posting to Blogger and (b) attach the completed journal response,

including all text, photos, and/or other materials, which you have been trying to post. I will then do my best to help you connect with technological support that can address your problem.

After 8 p.m. on the Sunday before the Monday deadline, I will NOT accept journal entries sent to me via email due to technology problems. If you email me your journal entry after 8 p.m. on Sunday, I will ignore it, so please don't bother. At that point, you will need to figure out the technology problem on your own. If you cannot figure it out by the time your assignment is due, you must accept the consequences for a late assignment. Period. The message here should be exceedingly clear: Get your journal entry done well before the Monday 8 p.m. deadline so that you can figure out any technological problems that you may encounter.

Late Submissions
Late submissions will be penalized according to the policy stated in the syllabus. After you upload your late nature journal post to Blogger, you must send both me and the TA an email notification. If you fail to send this email, your journal will not be graded and you will not receive points for it, whether or not you completed it.