

Tiny Ecology

Description	one-paragraph weekly writing and five-minute final presentation, 20% of final grade
Due	journal weekly, on Sunday at midnight presentation final week of class

Assignment

Choose an outdoor place for intense ecological attentiveness. During the course of this semester, you will make frequent visits to note its changes from August until December. There are no special requirements for the place you choose: it may be a natural space, a built environment, a humanly curated space (park, garden, landscaping), an abandoned corner or lot, or a recurrent puddle. The area can be as small as a garbage can by this building or as large as a tree and its environs. Best is an area close to home that you have lived near but haven't paid much attention.

Observation

Every week you will spend at least five minutes observing your chosen space. Take a photograph while you're there. Go at different times and during different weather conditions. Pay attention to and take notes on human influence and neglect, nonhuman forces (weather, sunlight, microclimates, pollution, decay, gentrification), and the surfacings of particular histories (especially but not limited to the species of animals and plants evident; you may have to learn the difference between kudzu and dandelion, an egret and a heron).

Journal

Write up your observations and post them to your Tiny Ecology discussion on Canvas (see instructions below for how to create and post to the discussion topic). Each week, you will turn your observation notes into a solid paragraph (150 words or more). Begin with a header noting the time of day, time spent observing, and weather conditions. Next, post your photograph. Then, in your paragraph, closely describe the scene, focusing on the key details that you observed. Think about any changes that have occurred and why that may have happened.

Note: other students will be able to read and reply to your journal.

Presentation

At the end of the semester, you will give a five-minute oral presentation on how your Tiny Ecology changed (or didn't) as well as propose ideas for how the space might be improved or better used. For this presentation, you will develop a multimodal visual aid. Tutors at the Digital Studio can help you develop and improve your visuals.

Grading Criteria

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| Journal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate length each week. Includes appropriate photograph and header. • Focuses almost exclusively on the chosen space. • Carefully describes details demonstrating human and nonhuman influence. • Considers how that week's observations relate to previous weeks' observations and/or to that space's past. • Writing has an appropriate tone with a clear, readable style. • Few errors in grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure. |
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- Presentation
- Five minutes long.
 - Describes the space to an audience who is unfamiliar with it.
 - Tells the story of that space over the course of the semester, considering why it may have changed (or not).
 - Offers 1-2 suggestions for how to use that space in the future.
 - Includes multimodal visual aid.

Creating & Posting

How to Create Your Discussion Topic

1. Go to our course page on Canvas.
2. Go to Discussions.
3. Click the blue button marked “+ Discussion.”
4. For the topic title, type your first and last name.
5. In the description box, type “Tiny Ecology observations.”
6. Under options, click “Allow threaded replies.”
7. Click the blue “Save” button.

How to Post Your Journal

1. Go to our course page on Canvas.
2. Go to Discussions and click on your topic.
3. Click on the Reply bar under the initial topic.
4. Type (or paste) your journal entry.
5. Click the “Post Reply” button.

Additional Benefits

The space you choose for your Tiny Ecology may or may not be related to your topic for Paper 2. Even if the topic is not directly related, however, each week you will practice observational, descriptive, and analytical skills, which will improve your performance on the final paper. Furthermore, your attention to the way you use the space around you could develop into projects improving specific aspects of campus and community life.