

**Portland State University**  
**Capstone - Effective Environmental Interpretation**  
**Spring Term 2008**

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Office: Nature Center, Tryon Creek State Park

Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday 1:00 – 5:00 pm by appointment

Course Number: CRN 64074 UNST 421 584

Credit Hours: 6 credits

Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, April 2 – June 10, 2008, 9:00 am - noon

Meeting Place: Nature Center, Tryon Creek State Park

**Course Description:**

This course focuses on the preparation and presentation of environmental education programs for visitors to Tryon Creek State Park. Collaborative groups will work to develop and analyze materials and programs dedicated to educating the public about a variety of environmental topics relevant to understanding the natural history of Tryon Creek State Park.

Programs will focus on the Nature Explorations for School Groups field trips presented at the Park during the spring. Class participants will function as Nature Guides for small groups of students visiting the park. As our population has become more urbanized and technology oriented, children have fewer and fewer opportunities to interact with the natural world. We are all dependent on healthy ecosystems to support life on our planet, including our own, and we are increasingly asked to examine issues involving the environment. In order to make informed decisions about our personal role in supporting the environment, the Friends of Tryon Creek feel it is important to experience the natural world directly. The programs offered at the Park are oriented toward helping individuals develop personal connections to the living earth. It will be the role of class participants to assist children in their explorations of the Park and help them develop a comfort with our natural systems.

**Aims and Objectives:**

- Students will**
- work in an effective interdisciplinary collaborative group.
  - explore different approaches to natural history and environmental education and interpretation.
  - develop an understanding of natural history interpretive techniques.
  - present trail based interpretive programs to elementary students participating in the Nature Explorations for School Groups programs.
  - complete a project supporting the environmental education programs offered by Friends of Tryon Creek State Park.

**Capstone Course Goals:**

1. **Inquiry and Critical Thinking:** Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula (problem posing, investigating, conceptualizing) in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.
2. **Communication:** Students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways (writing, graphics, and other visual and oral means) to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies.
3. **Appreciation of Diversity:** Students will enhance their appreciation for and understanding of the rich complexity of the human experience through the study of differences in ethnic and cultural perspectives, class race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability.
4. **Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility:** Students will expand their understanding of the impact and value of individuals and their choices on society, both intellectually and socially, through group projects and collaboration in learning communities.

**Required Textbooks:**

1. *A Forest in the City: Your Guide to Tryon Creek State Park*
2. *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children need Wild Places*  
by Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble

**Course Requirements:**

1. Participate in class discussions and submit written assignments as described in the Class Calendar. **All assignments must be typed and double-spaced. Written assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class on date due or e-mailed (word format) to the instructor on the date due. Late assignments will not receive full credit.**
2. Prepare a plant journal that includes at least 40 plants found in Tryon Creek State Park. Complete a project for Friends of Tryon Creek State Park. Projects will be assigned the first week of class. Participate as a Nature Guide for the Explorations for School Groups programs presented by the Friends of Tryon Creek State Park. Students are required to participate in a minimum of 6 morning sessions and prepare a Nature Guide portfolio based on their experience.
3. **Attendance is mandatory:** The course is structured around the classroom experience. **After two (2) absences per term, students will not receive credit for the course.**

**All requirements must be met in order to receive credit for the course.**

#### **Grading Policies:**

1. To receive a passing grade, a student must complete all course requirements as outlined in the Class Calendar, including the attendance requirement. If you are in danger of not receiving credit for the course because of absence, you will be notified in writing, and I will encourage a conference to discuss the problem.
3. The final grade for the course will be based on five components:
  - a. Attendance - 200 points
  - b. Written Assignments - 300 points
  - c. Plant Journal – 200 points
  - d. Group Project - 200 points
  - e. Nature Guide portfolio – 100 points
4. Letter Grades: A (900-1000) B (800-899) C (700-799) D (600-699) F (0-599)

#### **Course Policies:**

**ADA accommodations:** If you have a disability and wish an accommodation, please make arrangements to meet with me outside of class to discuss your specific request. A request may require that documentation of disability be reviewed.

#### **Add/Drop policies:**

**Adding the class:** Admission to the class will not be accepted after the second week of classes. Work missed during the first weeks must be made up.

**Dropping or withdrawing from class:** Refer to the PSU Spring Term Schedule of Classes for University drop and withdrawal policies and dates.