

WTQS/SUS 102: Identity and Belonging in the Outdoors

Fall 2023

Instructors:

Dr. Jess “River” Vooris (they/them)
Email: jrvooris@wells.edu
Office: Zabriskie 209
Office Hours: Mons 12:15-1:30, Thurs 10:45-1:30 pm

Dr. Jen Myers (she/her)
Email: jmyers@wells.edu
Office: Zabriskie 212
Office Hours: Tues/Th 9-10 am

Meeting time: Tuesdays 1:30-4:20
Location: See Class Schedule for Location Each Week

Course Description

This course will examine the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ability, nationality, and class to unpack the ways identity influences human-nature relationships, access to outdoor spaces and recreation in nature, and environmental activism. Historically, those who have been minoritized along gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual lines have been at the forefront of environmental justice, land reclamation, food justice, and related movements that focus on ending social and environmental domination. For oppressed communities, maintaining or rebuilding relationships with self, community members, and the natural world offers stress relief and recreation, healthier food cultivation, spiritual connection, and other paths toward healing.

Students will be invited to interrogate their personal relationships with nature through engagement with queer, feminist, and indigenous theories on land and ecology. Through class discussions, guest speakers, and experiential learning opportunities, students will develop key academic skills and foster sustainability skills including mindfulness, species identification, bird-watching, organic gardening, cooking, and community organizing. Together we will cultivate a connection to campus and the Finger Lakes region, developing a sense of place rooted in relationships to the land, water, and community at Wells College.

Learning Goals:

- Define key concepts related to gender, sexuality, intersectionality, decolonization, and sustainability
- Critically examine human understandings of the natural world, using a variety of perspectives
- Learn about the places you inhabit and be able to identify and document non-human species on campus and in the Finger Lake area
- Describe ways to foster just and flourishing relationships among humans and other species that work toward sustainable futures and inclusive communities
- Cultivate a sense of belonging and community on Wells Campus and beyond

- Gain academic based skills including note-taking, presentation skills, group-work, critical thinking and annotation

Required Course Materials

You will need a notebook to take with you for field notes during trips.

Additional materials for trips:

- comfortable shoes for hikes (hiking boots not necessary, but helpful for some trails. Sneakers are also fine)
- hat and/or sunglasses
- bug spray
- sunblock
- water bottle
- Some of our field-trips may require masks depending on the mask policies of those institutions.

All texts will be posted on Moodle

How the course will be organized

- This course meets once a week. Every week class will look a bit different—some weeks we will be traveling off campus for fieldtrips, other days our work will be in the classroom (especially as the weather gets colder!)
- We will be engaging in verbal discussion every day—interspersed with interactive and physical activities.

Each week students should:

- Carefully read the materials and take notes on them
- Come to class prepared to talk and share your thoughts with others

Creating a community of learning means we must:

- Build a space where each member of the class feels comfortable about sharing their thoughts.
- Understand that we may not always agree, but that disagreement can be a positive, productive part of learning
- Listen carefully to each other and treat each other kindly and with respect.
- Remember that we all have something to contribute, every one of us is learning (including the professors!) and it is okay to ask questions.
- Understand that learning means taking risks, trying new things, playing around, guessing at times, making mistakes and recognizing that sometimes we won't get it right the first time¹.

¹ This wording about taking risks and play is taken from a Katie King syllabus

Note: Part of our roles as professors is to guide your learning. We may interrupt if someone is using outdated language or saying something harmful, and we may suggest a way of re-wording a question or statement to be more inclusive. Please take these moments as an opportunity to grow and learn—hopefully this is one reason you are in this course!

Communication for the Course

Moodle: Class readings, an updated syllabus, course calendar, and announcements will be kept on Moodle.

Note: Moodle keeps track of when you log in, what links you click, and how long you keep any part of the Moodle open. This means I can tell if you haven't logged in for a week, or if you never opened a particular file.

Email: Please send emails to jrvooris@wells.edu AND jmyers@wells.edu if you have questions/comments about the course, readings, or assignments. If you want to set up a meeting with just one of us—you can email that person specifically. It will be helpful if you include the course number and a relevant subject heading with your email. **Example:** WTQS 102: question about class reflections

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS/GRADES

Participation (20%) (14 x 10 points = 140 points)

Syllabus Quiz (1%) 10 points

Active Engagement Points (7%) (5 x 10 points = 50 points)

Weekly Class Reflection 35% (10 x 25 points = 250 points)

Mid-Term (22%) 150 points

Learning Analysis: (15%) 100 points

Total 700 points

Participation (20%): This is a discussion-based course, and your participation is important, whether in the classroom or during field trips. You are expected to come to class having read and taken notes on the material, and to be ready to discuss the material. The success of the class will depend on everyone sharing their ideas and perspectives. If you are someone who has a hard time speaking up in class, we encourage you to come to class with prepared written notes or questions. You can also show that you are actively participating through your listening, your reactions to what your classmates are saying, and mindfully paying attention rather than spending time on your phone or laptop. We will record attendance and participation every Tuesday.

Active Engagement Points (7%): These are gained through a variety of ways—the first one is filling out the access survey sent at the start of the semester. Other ways include meeting with a professor outside of class, attending events on campus, going on a hike with classmates, volunteering at a local food pantry, writing a short review of a book, blog, or youtube video that is related to class topics that you have found, or having a conversation with a friend outside of class about class topics. You will see that there are AEPs included on the syllabus—these are

recommended readings/podcasts that are related to specific syllabus topics, and at the top of the moodle page. You will write a paragraph about each of your AEP and post them on Moodle.

Weekly Class Reflection 35% A key component of the class is learning how to take notes on key readings and during class discussions. You will be given question prompts each week that will ask you to reflect on the readings and class discussion from Tuesday, or will ask you to share observations you made on our field-trips. These should include at least one citation from readings or class materials that week with at least one direct quote. **Due Every Thursday at midnight.**

Mid-Term (22%) Archival Project: For your mid-term assignment you will be creating an “educational object” to teach others about an aspect of Wells College history related to the outdoors. The project will require you to spend time in the Wells College archives (we will spend two class periods there to get you started) and to synthesize archival materials that you find there. You will then make an “educational object” (zine, short video, comic, podcast, brochure, children’s book, collage, drawing, PowerPoint presentation) to share what you have learned with others. Finally, you will write a short 1-2 page reflection on the process of archival research and the choices you made with your educational object, and will present the object to the class. Due **November 7th in class.**

Learning Analysis: (15%): This will be a synthesis of the course, how you understand it to be constructed, what you see the argument of the course to be, what you learned from your readings, how you place yourself in the course, and overall what you have gained from taking this class. Part of this assignment will include revised learning goals from the mid-term. The assignment with full details and requirements will be posted on Moodle, but I will note here that the format of the assignment does not have to be a traditional paper; you can turn in a creative story, a poem, or something of your own choosing, as long as it includes the analysis of the course, answers all the questions required, and shows evidence of understanding key concepts. Should include analysis of your own identity on campus in historical context and future goals.

Due Date: Tuesday, December 12th at 5 pm

Grading Policies

All assignments should be submitted via Moodle by the official due date and time. If you need an extension, please reach out to us in advance of the due date to request one. Assignments submitted late will receive a 10% reduction in the potential grade for the assignment per day. Be sure to double-check that your assignment has been successfully submitted to Moodle after you upload your work.

All written assignments will be graded to assess your understanding of course content and your critical thinking skills. You are expected to cite your sources on all assignments, using in-text parenthetical citations and a reference list using APA, MLA or Chicago style.

READING SCHEDULE: *professors reserve the right to change the schedule with notice*

Week One:

Tuesday, August 29th

- MEETING IN ZABRISKIE 212
- Introductions - names, pronouns
- In class read “Claiming an Education” Adrienne Rich
- Mapping Exercise, walk on campus
- Wendell Berry short reading
- Fill out kayak forms

Homework:

- Class Reflection #1 Due Thursday, August 31st (What are your two biggest take-aways from class this week? What are you looking forward to next week and why?)
- Syllabus Quiz
- [Access Survey if you haven't already filled it out](#)
- Read for next week

AEP: Mary Oliver “Wild Geese” and Mary Oliver “Summer Day” (poems)

Week Two: Where are we?

Tuesday, September 4th

Activity: Canoe/Kayaking

Readings for Discussion (read before class):

- The history of Aurora, NY as told by the Gayogohó:no' (Cayuga Nation) and the Village of Aurora Historical Society. (links on Moodle)
- General George Washington's orders to Major General John Sullivan (May 31, 1779) regarding the military offensive against Indigenous inhabitants of upstate NY, including the town now known as Aurora, NY
- Dieckman, Jane Marsh. “The Inauguration of Wells Seminary” *The History of Wells College, 1995. (1-12) PDF Below*

HW:

- Class Reflection #2 Due Thursday, September 6th
- Read for next week

AEP: Lauret Savoy “What’s in a Name” from *Trace: Memory, History, and the American Landscape* (pg 69-76)

Week Three—Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Tuesday, September 12th

Fieldtrip: Hike at Long Point State Park

Readings:

- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. “Sky Women Falling” *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Milkweed Editions, 2015 (5 pages)
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. “In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place” *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Milkweed Editions, 2015 (10 pages)
- PBS [“Should Native Americans Control National Parks”](#) (8 min listen)

HW:

- Class Reflection #3 Due Thursday, September 13th
- Read for next week

AEP:

- “Goldenrod and Asters” *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (9 pages)
- Treuer, David. “Return the National Parks to the Tribes” *The Atlantic*, 2021.

Week Four: Introduction to the Archives

Tuesday, September 19th

- introduction to archives with Tiffany
- Project outlining/time-line/brainstorming
- Archives Reading TBA

HW:

- Class Reflection #4 Due Thursday, September 15th: What surprised you in the archive? What are your plans for your project?
- Read for Next week

Week Five: Identity and Belonging: Connections to Land

Tuesday, September 26th

Field-trip: Auburn Harriet Tubman House

Readings:

- hooks, b., (2011). earthbound: on solid ground. In A. H. Deming & L. E. Savoy (Eds.), *Colors of nature: Culture, identity, and the natural world*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions. (2.5 pages)
- Walker, Alice. “Growing Our Mothers’ Gardens” *From WIthin the Circle: An Anthology of African-American Literature from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994. (10 pages)
- Soul Fire Farm reading TBA

Reading Response #5 Due September 27th

Week 6: Archives Work day

Tuesday, Oct. 3rd

Back to the archives for beginning of projects

Week 7: FALL BREAK

Tuesday, October 10th: NO CLASS, BREAK

Week 8: Black Birders

Tuesday, October 17th

Field Trip: Montezuma Wildlife Area

- Seymore, Nicole “[Black Lives, Black Birds, and the Unfinished Work of Queer Ecologies](#)” *Succession: Queering the Environment Series*, 2020.
- Cooper, Christian. “Introduction” *Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World*. Random House, 2023.
- Santora, Tyler. “[Black Women Who Bird Take the Spotlight and Make Their Presence Known.](#)” Audubon Website, 2020.

Class Response #6 Due Thursday, October 19th

AEP:

- [Interview with Christian Cooper](#)
- J. Drew Lanham [“9 Rules for the Black Birder”](#) *Orion Magazine, 2013* (humor/sarcasm)
- any episode of “Extraordinary Birder: Birding with Christian Cooper” (hulu, Disney+)

Week 9: Queer Nature

Tuesday, October 24th

- Imbler, Sabrina. “Salps” *How Far The Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*. Little, Brown and Company, 2022.
- Roughgarden, Joanne. “Evolution’s Rainbow” from *The Trans Studies Reader* edited by Susan Stryker, 2008.
- Poems from *Queer Nature: A Poetry Anthology* edited by Michael Walsh

AEP: Myra Hird, “Trans Sex”

Class Response #7 Due Thursday, Oct. 26th
Mid-term Presentations Due in class

Week 10: Disability Justice

Tuesday, October 31st

- Syren Nagakyrie “Disability is Natural,” from *Nature is a Human Right* (10 pages)
- Eli Clare’s “The Mountain” from *Introduction to Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies*

AEP: TBA

Class Reflection #8

Week 11: Mindfulness in Nature

Tuesday, November 7th

- Qing Li, “The Secret Power of the Forest: From a Feeling to a Science” from *Nature is a Human Right* (12 pages)
- Podcast on Nature Sounds

AEP:

- How to Survive the End of the World Podcast, “Tactical Hope: Interview with Queer Nature” and “The OODA Loop” Interview with Queer Nature
- Brain on Nature Podcast

Week Twelve: Farming and Food Systems

Tuesday, November 14th

Class Activity: COOKING!

- Soul Fire Farm reading
- Reading about Dolores Huerta and the Farmworker’s Strikes
- Cooking together!

AEP:

- Outside/In Podcast: Gingko Love episode
- Short Story from “Glitter and Ashes” Queer Anthology

Class Reflection #9 Due

Week Thirteen: The Body

Tuesday, November 21st

- Sabrina Imbler, Octopus Essay, *How Far the Light Reaches: A Life in Ten Sea Creatures*. Little, Brown and Company, 2022.
- Second essay TBA
- In Class: Shoog McDaniel, Laura Aquilar, Ana Mendieta, and Queer Nature Photography

No class reflection: Thursday is Thanksgiving!

Week Fourteen: Making Kin and Eco-Futures

- TBA

Class Reflection #10 Due

Week Fifteen:

- Final class wrap-up, Readings TBA

Additional Class Policies:

Citations:

It is important as scholars and writers that we respect the work of others, and that we make sure to cite our sources. I like to think about citations as a way to give credit, as a way to guide a reader to more information, and as a way to be a part of a community conversation.

If you are unsure of how to properly cite your information and how to avoid plagiarism please refer to online guides on MLA, APA and Chicago Style formatting. I do not have a preference for which one you use, but please pick one and use that consistently throughout an assignment. If you still need help with citations, please set up an appointment to talk with me.

Access Statement (words by Mimi Khúc):

"Everyone's access needs matter, and we will try collectively to meet them as they arise. Access needs are needs that when met enable participation in the course to the fullest--therefore they are wide-ranging and can be met in wide-ranging, creative ways. Access, as Aimi Hamraie has

taught me, is relational. This means that creating access and accessibility is something we do together, in relationship and community. It requires a shared commitment to each other's wellbeing and participation in the community space, and requires communication and negotiation and flexibility. We learn each other's needs and try to meet them as best we can, so that we can all participate as much as possible in this classroom space. Everyone has access needs, and these needs change over time. I will try to anticipate as much as possible but I cannot know everyone's needs at all times. When you become aware of your access needs, please communicate them to me. I do not require any documentation or working with any university support services--I believe you, and will work with you to generate structures to meet your needs as much as possible. I repeat: I believe you."

Official Wells Accessibility Statement:

Accessibility Services is committed to collaborating with students, faculty, and staff to ensure equal access to education for all. The office actively promotes the ongoing development of an accessible environment that embraces diversity through educational programming, services, resources, and facilities usable by all campus community members. All students must meet the academic standards for admission into Wells College. Once admitted, a student with a disability is responsible for disclosing and providing documentation to Accessibility Services to be eligible for accommodations or services. Eligibility for accommodations is based on a case-by-case/course-by-course basis each semester.

Please notify the Coordinator of Accessibility and Learning Support (Nicole Darrow-ndarrow@wells.edu and/or accessibility@wells.edu) at 315-364-3432. The Coordinator of Accessibility and Learning Support is in Main Hall Building, room 106. The coordinator can provide resources and/or reasonable accommodations in a timely manner to persons with documented disabilities under ADA and other governmental legislations.

Language Adjustment Accommodation:

To provide equitable access to learning and to mitigate a potential learning barrier, Wells College makes an effort to provide accommodations for non-native English speakers. If you feel that your English proficiency may have an impact on your work for this class, please contact your instructor to determine what types of accommodations may be appropriate for you. Wells encourages all students eligible for accommodations to put them in place at the beginning of each semester whether or not they believe they will need to use them.

FERPA and Confidentiality

FERPA, the federal law that guards student privacy, prohibits us from discussing your performance in this class with anyone except you (and each other) without your permission, which must be on file with the university, not simply told to me.

HONOR CODE: Community Honor shall be the basis of student government at Wells. The principle of community honor is based on the pledge of each member of the student body to be honest and trustworthy in the conduct of their collegiate life as it is defined or encompassed by the Collegiate Constitution. Wells College students are under community obligation and pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, deceive, or conceal in the conduct of their collegiate life as defined or encompassed by the Collegiate Constitution. Each student is obligated to report violations of community honor involving himself to a member of the appropriate judicial body within 24 hours. A member of the

student body, member of the faculty, or member of the administration or staff who is witness to a violation (or an admission of a violation) of community honor has the responsibility to urge the offender to report himself. If the offender fails to do so, the obligation falls to the witness.

INCOMPLETES: Under extraordinary circumstances an instructor may request a grade of I (Incomplete) be assigned if a student is unable to complete the work of a course on schedule but will be able to complete it at a later date without further class attendance. The extraordinary circumstances must be beyond the student's control (e.g., reasons of health or severe personal contingencies), and they must be documentable. The need for the Incomplete must have become apparent after the withdrawal period, and the student must have been passing the course at that time. The student must file the incomplete grade request and contract form with the Registrar by the last day of the final exam period. Both the student and the instructor must sign the contract.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: Federal and State law, Title IX, and Wells College policy prohibits discrimination, harassment, and violence based on sex and gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can receive confidential counseling on campus at the Community Medical Center (315.364.3273) or through Sexual Assault Victim's Advocate Resource (S.A.V.A.R.) Rape/Crisis Hotline (315.252.2112). Alleged violations can be reported non-confidentially to a number of the College's staff. Please see page 22 of the Wells College Misconduct Policy (available at <https://www.wells.edu/sites/default/files/public/studentlife/sexual-misconduct-policy-2020-21.pdf>). Please note as an instructor I am considered a mandated reporter and as such I have responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct and crimes I learn about in order to help make our campus a safe place for all.