NOVEL ECOLOGIES:
AN UNDERSTANDING
OF WILD URBAN PLANTS
Syllabus

LARCH 3189/7189 - Ecological Field Explorations

Instructors:
Brett Kordenbrock (brett.kordenbrock@gmail.com)
Tatiana Parfenova (tatiana.v.parfenova@gmail.com)

TIME/MEETING
The course will be meeting both Tuesday and Thursday throughout the month of May. The course is scheduled to begin May 6 and end May 29. We will meet from 6-8:30pm, generally, in Knowlton Hall, Room 175.

INTRODUCTION/SYNOPSIS
Weeds or, in more recent times, wild urban plants have become a target for eradication campaigns by municipal park departments and homeowners alike. However, with rapid climate change and increased globalization foreign and domestic species are forging ahead of natives resulting in novel ecologies—groupings of species that have never before existed. Many of these species are incredibly resilient, have cultural value, and provide ecosystem services. Furthermore, we find many of these plants populating the most heavily degraded conditions within our urban fabric. They are incredibly resilient, use few resources, and commute very easily. Why are these species able to thrive versus native communities? Through an understanding of wild urban plants we may find new ways of use - to meet design objectives from a large-scale ecological urbanism perspective down to brownfield or site specific interventions.

DESCRIPTION
To date, there are few studies, surveys, or projects specific to the wild urban plant matrix of Columbus, Ohio. The course would build on and polemicize with current texts and projects focused on wild (spontaneous) urban plants throughout the United States. The course would aim to understand- the value of wild urban plants in an increasingly urbanized environment, identifying dozens of species (field work), researching their characteristics, mapping through the Instagram interface, and designing for and/or with them. The use of Instagram will add to the current network of wild (spontaneous) urban plant projects, specifically the work of David Seiter/Future Green Studio.

The course would then conduct several field-work sessions at a variety of sites around
DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)  
Columbus, Ohio. These may include portions of Franklinton, Scioto Mile, Downtown Business District, and the Arena District. Students will be responsible for collecting, uploading, tagging, and researching plant material from these sessions. A final project will include an analysis of conditions for these plant species and design proposals for use in urban conditions.

The course would focus on readings and lectures at the onset. These readings would draw largely from Peter Del Tredici’s Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast: A Field Guide as well as Weeds of the Midwestern United States and Central Canada by Charles T. Bryson and Michael S DeFelice and Richard Uva’s Weeds of the Northeast. Conceptual readings would include selected essays from Ecological Urbansim by Mohsen Mostafavi, Joan Nassauer, and Kazys Varnelis’ The Infrastructural City: Networked Ecologies in Los Angeles.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES  
The goal of the course will be to create a base of knowledge focused on wild urban plants and their respective characteristics—cultural value, performative potential, invasiveness, aesthetics, etc. Students will glean from this course a critical perspective on these ecologies, the reasons they are becoming more and more important, and how they might be adapted in urban conditions. Additionally, students will gain plant identification skills as well as field research and analytical skills.

TEACHING APPROACH  
The course will focus on in class lectures and require students to come to each meeting having read the assigned material. Class discussions will engage students in what we are hoping to be a healthy debate over the use and existence of wild urban plants. These discussions would help guide the class to subjects important to the students with the potential to modify course schedule, readings, and fieldwork.

Field trips would be conducted as a class. Students would also be responsible for their own field work/assessments as they research and analyze given plant material as they prepare for their final design proposal or similar. A conference call or Skype session with David Seiter and other professionals engaged in this topic would help frame the discussion and introduce the students to other participants.

COURSE TEXTS  
Plant-based:


Conceptual Framework:


CREDITS

The class is structured as a 1.5 credit-hour course. An opportunity will be provided to earn additional 1.5 credits through an independent study (limited space available).

SUPPLIES

Students are required to have digital cameras, sketch pads, Smart Phone/iPads, or other device with the Instagram application, and a plant identification field guide (i.e., Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast). The application enabled device (iPhone) can be shared as a group.

GRADES

Refer to Calendar in this document (syllabus) for milestones and due dates. Grades for this course will be determined based on the standard The Ohio State University grading system. The make-up of your course grade is as follows:

- Participation (field trips, discussions, attendance): 25%
- Assignment 01 (groups, directions, upload, data collection): 30%
- Assignment 02 (presentation-verbal and graphic, citations, content, contribution): 40%
- Group and Personal Evaluation (performance): 5%

EVALUATION

Studio work is both individual and collective. Criteria of evaluation include not only individual design excellence, but also a student’s contributions to the studio through collective research, documentation and discussions. There is one major project with several milestones, as well as additional assignments. Grading is based on comparison with other students in the course, and with the instructors’ expectations relative to the objectives of the course. Evaluation of projects may be by jury review involving reviewers from other courses, other academic institutions, and architectural firms. For an “A”, the student must satisfy the course objectives excellently; for a “B”, in an above average manner; for a “C” in an average manner; for a “D” in the lowest acceptable manner; and an “F” denotes that the student has not satisfied the course objectives.

CALENDAR

Tuesday, May 6

WEEK ONE

Introduction to Wild Urban Plants

- Lecture 01 (Frame topic, growing interest in native and adaptable species, climate change; review of projects, websites, and technology we will be using in our investigation)
- Course requirements.
- Grading.
- Introduction to projects (discussion of assignment and expectations, goals, products)
- Resources.
- Questions.

Thursday, May 8

Field Trip 1. Olentangy River Greenway south of the 5th Avenue Dam) Walk. Rain or shine. Meet at 5th Avenue Dam overlook along Olentangy Greenway.
STEP 1 of Assignment 01 is DUE: Selection and User creation (upload information per instructions on assignment sheet)

- Plant ID
- Sketching
- Photo catalog/Instagram network

Assigned Readings (via Carmen and e-Reserves):

- [UG, G] Introduction to Peter Del Tredici’s Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast: A Field Guide.

Saturday, May 10 (or May 17)

Field Trip 2. North-central Ohio Quarry (student input on best date)

Field-trip will require travel of up to 2 hours each way with approximately 4 hours on site (plan to be out from 8am to 5pm). We understand there might be conflicts so please let us know as early as possible if you need to leave early or are unable to make it. Students will be encouraged to carpool. Please pack and dress appropriately, the site is rather rugged and host an assortment of topographic features as well as a variety of program (mountain biking). Bring snacks, a bag lunch, water, and all appropriate materials for identification and documentation in the field.

Directions will be given approximately a week before the trip is to commence. Once we are in the quarry there will be a short discussion of readings from the previous week. Groups will then be free to explore.

Assigned Readings (via Carmen and e-Reserves):

  http://bi.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/global/article/GALE|A152888853/a8bb5c7c9839f68029b17c42ea53e4ee?u=colu44332
WEEK TWO

Speaker 1 Introduction and Discussion (David Seiter)

- Video Conference with David Seiter/Future Green Studio; Profiles of Spontaneous Urban Plants; d3 Natural Systems Design Competition; website launch
- Video lectures fragments
- Students will be tasked with bringing photos to this class which memorialize a wild urban plant (examples will be provided to the class via Carmen or other means)

Assigned Readings (via Carmen and e-Reserves):


Meet at NBBJ (1555 Lake Shore Drive) at 5:45p for set-up.

STEP 2 of Assignment 01 is DUE: Group/individual presentation of findings

Discussion of recent readings

- Group/individual presentation of findings
- Discussion of findings and recent readings
- Frame discussion for final project(s)

WEEK THREE

Speaker 2 Introduction and Discussion (Peter Del Tredici)

Work session with open questions

- Move to computer lab
- Instructors will be around to help with formatting, idea generation, etc.
CALENDAR (CONTINUED)

Assigned Readings (via Carmen and e-Reserves):

- Review of guides, field guides, booklets, etc. to prepare for class presentation/pin-up

Thursday, May 22

Field Trip 3. Abandoned rail line off Cleveland Ave AND Linden Air Theatre (meet earlier on-site; budget time from 4-8pm)

Assigned readings (via Carmen and e-Reserves):


Tuesday, May 27

WEEK FOUR

Final Pin-up/Presentation (will occur at regular meeting time; location TBD)

Thursday, May 29

Final Meeting

- Discussion of course, takeaways, and general evaluation for future growth

- Projects uploaded to Carmen and CD’s due to instructors

- Additional coordination of graphic package (Independent Study)

DEADLINES

Students who miss deadlines due to valid extenuating circumstances may submit the required work at a date agreed upon with the instructor. University regulations limit such circumstances to serious personal illness and death in the immediate family, and both cases require written documentation: a doctor’s note or a newspaper obituary. Unexcused late projects are not accepted, incomplete projects are evaluated in relation to their degree of completion, and a student is present only if he or she presents sufficient work to the instructor. A student will be warned by e-mail after the first unexcused absence; a student’s grade will drop one letter grade after the second unexcused absence; and a student with three unexcused absences will be immediately dismissed and given a failing grade.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

OSU’s Sexual Harassment policy, which applies to all faculty, staff, and students, includes lewd remarks and inappropriate comments made in the studio environment, classroom, and computer labs as well as the “display of inappropriate sexually oriented materials in a location where others can see it.” Students can file a complaint by contacting Student Judicial Affairs at 292-0748. Sanctions include reprimand, suspension, and dismissal from the University.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES</th>
<th>If a student requires accommodation for a disability, he or she should immediately arrange an appointment with the professors and the Office for</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISABILITY SERVICES</td>
<td>At the appointment, the professors, disability counselors, and student can discuss the course format, anticipate needs and decide upon accommodations. Professors rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENT SAFETY</td>
<td>University escort service provides safe transportation 7:30AM-3AM. Call 614-292-3322.</td>
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