

Nature Connection 2023-24 Syllabus



“Man’s heart away from nature becomes hard.” (Chief Luther Standing Bear)

Instructor: Mr. Greg Hennemuth ([he/him](#)) **Co-Instructor:** Ms. Anja Pfeffer ([she/her](#))

Assistant Instructor: Solomon Lew ([he/him](#))

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Office Hours: By appointment after school

Website: www.daretobeme.org

Course Description: This class aims to inspire students to (re)connect with themselves as part of Nature. Through the Dare To Be Me approach, students will spend lots of time outside, walking on the Hardwick Trails and sitting quietly in the woods. By learning to pause, be calm, open their senses, and breathe deeply, they will develop a sense of aliveness that will foster their curiosity about the myriad of natural wonders that are taking place all around them all of the time. As they grow their awareness of self and others, they will begin to see the world through different lenses and gain new perspectives. They will refine their observational and listening skills, learn to ask increasingly complex questions, engage in discussions with peers and teachers, and cultivate a personal practice of journaling that allows them to express not only what they experienced, but also how they felt about it. This will simultaneously improve students’ overall well-being and prepare them to take other science classes with greater appreciation and understanding.

Guiding Question: How do we deepen our connection to and relationship with the more-than-human world?

Course Format: The class will run every day during Block 3 of Semester 2. Lots of time will be spent walking on the Hazen trails and engaging in a mixture of indoor and outdoor activities that are designed to make you come alive, build character, and grow your inner and outer strength. At the same time, major emphasis will be placed on developing your understanding of Science. Our daily explorations of the woods will allow you to hone your observational skills and expand your ability to ask increasingly deep and meaningful questions. You will learn to see the complexity and interconnectedness of all life in new

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ways and explore your own place in it. The majority of your observations will be documented in your journal, but you will also have ample opportunities to dive into research about the things that interest you the most. Furthermore, you will strengthen your interpersonal and communication skills by participating in frequent conversations with your peers and the adults in this class. In order for you to develop your sense of self as well as your academic confidence, you will regularly be asked to share excerpts from your writings and to present your research so that you can receive positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. Expect to become an engaged and respectful participant in the classroom discourse and to contribute to a thriving and rigorous class community.

General Course Outline & Topics of Discussion and Reflection:

Time Period	Core Themes	Key Questions
Quarter 3	Presence & Mindfulness Awareness of Self & Others	1. What does it mean to become fully present? 2. How does our ability to tune into our senses impact our capacity to connect with and understand Nature?
Quarter 4	Curiosity, Awe & Wonder Interconnectedness & Respect	1. How do we recognize and appreciate individuality in every living being? 2. What does it mean to see all of life as Kin?

Disclaimer: This course outline is preliminary and subject to change based on the needs of the class and the discretion of the teachers.

Proficiencies:

Your science credit for this class is based on Hazen's Science Proficiencies. The following proficiencies will be addressed and assessed throughout the semester:

Standards	Proficiencies
OBSERVING AND QUESTIONING	I can ask scientific questions, define problems and formulate solutions.
MODELING AND PREDICTING	I can construct and utilize models, observations and data to

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	examine specific scientific questions and develop testable hypotheses or solutions.
TESTING AND EXPERIMENTS	I can plan and conduct a controlled investigation to gather scientific evidence that will answer a scientific question or test a hypothesis.
RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS	I can apply scientific principles and evidence to analyze experimental results, develop explanations and answer questions.
PRESENTING, CRITIQUE AND REFINING	I can communicate scientific and technical information in multiple formats in support of conclusions or scientific findings.

Assessment:

1. Habits of Work (HOW) Grades

Your participation in class will be assessed weekly by using the [school-wide rubric for HOW grades](#). As stated in the [2023-24 Hazen Student Handbook](#), these expectations are monitored, graded, and reported separately from academic standards. For Hazen Union teachers, students, and parents, strong habits of work are as important as the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire.

2. Academic Performance Grades

You are expected to participate in all activities and discussions with a curious mind and an open heart. If you are absent from a class (no matter whether it is an excused or unexcused absence), it is your responsibility to contact Mr. Hennemuth and Ms. Pfeffer and make up any missed assignments (see Canvas). All work will be graded on completion, effort, and growth.

Activity / Assignment	Timeframe for Assessment	Focus Standards	Percentages of Grade
Activities, Readings & Discussions (small and large group)	Ongoing	- Observing and Questioning - Modeling and Predicting - Testing and Experiments	40% of final grade
Journal Entries	Ongoing	- Observing and Questioning	30% of final grade

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		- Modeling and Predicting - Testing and Experiments - Results and Conclusions	
Project Presentations	Ongoing	- Results and Conclusion - Presenting, Critique and Refining	30% of final grade

IMPORTANT: Course grades will be the average of all proficiency scores for the course.

Late and Incomplete Work

Late work: Please know that failing to submit work on time will impact your HOW grade and the opportunity to sufficiently revise your work. While you are allowed to turn in an assignment until two weeks after the due date without a grade penalty, the delay will set you back and greatly diminish your chances of achieving the desired depth and quality of the final product of your work. We therefore ask you to communicate any extenuating circumstances as soon as they come up so that we may develop a plan for you not to fall behind. Also know that late will be marked “late” in the gradebook and will receive a score of “0” until it has been handed in.

Incomplete work: If your work is incomplete, you automatically risk not achieving the mastery of the proficiency that is being targeted in the assignment. That, in turn, can lead to not receiving a passing grade for the class. Please do your very best to hand in work that is completed to the very best of your ability and, again, communicate if there are hindering circumstances. Note that incomplete work will be marked “missing” in the gradebook and a score of “0” will be entered.

Plagiarism Policy

When you present someone else’s ideas as your own, you plagiarize. This can be related to you copying notes from your peers or copying and pasting information from books or the Internet, but it also includes using artificial intelligence tools from various platforms, such as Chat GPT, Bard, Bing, or Claude. Such academic dishonesty harms you and everyone else in the class because it keeps you from growing. We ask you to respect yourself and others by being keenly aware of and avoiding these kinds of practices. If, however, you do fall into the traps of being academically dishonest, the following will happen:

1st offense: Conference with Mr. Hennemuth and Ms. Pfeffer and a phone call to your parents/guardians. You will still be allowed to redo and resubmit the work, but your HOW grade will be impacted.

2nd offense: You will receive a “0” for the assignment and a meeting will be called with your parents/guardians and the administration.

3rd offense: You will not receive credit for the course.

Required Texts & Resources:

Any texts we will read as a class will be provided. You will receive a DTBM backpack which you are

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encouraged to use for the duration of this class. In it, you will find writing utensils and a plastic sheet to sit on in the woods. Please use this backpack to carry your journal (provided to you, as well), your water bottle, and any extra gear. Due to the fact that we spend so much time outside, it is absolutely essential for you to bring weather appropriate clothing to each class. There are also winter jackets, boots, gloves, scarves, and hats available for you to use. You are welcome to keep a dry set of clothes and/or shoes in Ms. Pfeffer's classroom.

IMPORTANT: If you have a medical prescription for an Epi-pen and/or Inhaler, please let Ms. Pfeffer and Sol know and have both with you at all times.

Electronic Device Expectations:

We will adhere to this year's Hazen policy for students to have their phones off and in their backpacks during all classes. If you struggle to abide by this rule, we will either ask you to keep your phone in Ms. Pfeffer's desk or in the cell phone hotel until the end of class. There will, however, be times when we will specifically ask you to use your phones, such as for taking photographs or for recordings. This is up to the discretion of the teachers and should not be abused. If you have any extenuating circumstances and need your phone, please communicate with us ahead of time.

Food & Drink Policy:

Please make sure you have eaten a healthy breakfast and lunch before coming to class. You will need the nutrition and energy in order to participate fully in all class activities. If you nevertheless get hungry, please let one of the adults in the group know and we will try to provide you with a snack.

Always have water with you, but avoid any soda or other carbonated drinks. Juices and milk are fine.

Additional Words of Caution:

With the amount of time we will be spending in the woods, there is a good chance of encountering ticks. Please do a thorough tick check when you get home every day!!

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PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN:

My parents / guardians and I, _____, have read and understood this syllabus for the 2023-24 Nature Connection class. I hereby agree to abide by all the policies.

I can be included in photographs and videos. _____ Yes _____ No

I can participate in all outdoor activities. _____ Yes _____ No

Student / Date

Parent / Guardian

Parent / Guardian

Primary Parent/Guardian Contact Information:

Parent/Guardian Name

Relationship to Student

Phone Number

Email Address

Preferred Contact (please circle one):

Phone

Email