**SPECIAL PLACE PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATIVE RUBRIC**

**(TBD% of grade)**

purpose and Learning objectives

The purpose of this portfolio assignment is for you to move beyond interpreting existing ecological studies and towards better understanding ecological dynamics. You will do this by making linkages between course materials and a special place that has some unique value for you. By applying lessons learned to a real-world place that you have visited or live(d), you can more meaningfully comprehend the importance and relevance of the information you learn about, and open the door to new questions that will further your learning.

By the end of this portfolio assignment, you should be able to articulate how each of the four topics that you selected can be applied in the context of your special place.

**Introduction**

When you took AUBIO 253: Ecological Interactions you were asked to identify a place of special significance to you, and then to answer a series of questions related to the ecological interactions topics that we covered. In this assignment I would like to build on the assignment you completed by having you once again use a special place (this can be the same one you used previously or alternatively pick a new one). Use of this special place will help support your learning as you make connections among the ecological dynamics concepts we cover in class, and how they can be related to your specific special place.

**Instructions (one submission per INDIVIDUAL)**

For this assignment, you will be writing a portfolio entry for 4 of the 8 course topics of your choosing (i.e., you will write on half of the course topics) along with a final reflective paragraph. Remember that the purpose of the assignment is to have you digging deeper into the course content by using an example that is relevant to you, and then further reflecting on the content and your special place by formulating a research question to ask in each of your entries.

Each topic portfolio entry will be 1-2 paragraphs in length and should include:

1. Your key learnings from the topic materials (both lecture and discussion portions),
2. An explanation of how you envision the material is linked/relevant to your special place,
3. A proposed research question that you could attempt to answer in your special place,
4. An explanation of how (at least) one of the discussion articles of the topic is relevant to your special place (please provide in-text citation and reference page for each entry).

Some tips – since the portfolio assignment is meant to be connective and reflective in nature, you will want to keep notes during both the lecture and discussion portions of the class (note: even if you aren’t writing an entry for a specific topic, this exercise will likely enhance your learning!).

Some tips for preparing for each of your portfolio entries:

* Document your learnings in both lecture and discussion in the context of your special place (i.e., what concepts, ideas, knowledge are relevant?). When debriefing on the discussion articles, what is relevant from at least one of the discussion articles (be specific)?
* Highlight particularly significant ideas that have arisen during class and discussion. Are they relevant to your special place? Why or why not?
* Identify what needs to be further explained or discussed – what is a research question you could ask in the context of your special place that would take what you learned about this topic to the next level (be specific)?
* Connect the specific issues raised in lecture and discussion to the broader context of your special place.

**At the beginning of the portfolio you should provide a brief introductory paragraph about your special place – including providing information on where it is located, what types of plants and animals you might expect to find there, and why it is your special place.**

At the end of your portfolio you should provide a final reflective paragraph where you share what you have learned from the portfolio beyond the actual content within it. You should consider the following questions in your response:

* How did the portfolio increase your knowledge about these topics in ecology?
* Why did you pick these particular four topics to focus on?
* What topics did you learn the most from?
* Were there any topics that you really struggled with in your portfolio? If so – why?
* What made some topics easy and others more difficult for you to answer?

**Final Portfolio Requirements/Criteria:**

* Your Special Place Portfolio final submission should consist of a single MS Word document that includes an introduction to your special place, an entry for each of the four topics that you selected to include, along with your final paragraph reflection. Each topic and the final reflection should be clearly delineated within the portfolio with its own header.
* Include a title page that includes your title, your name, and a picture of your special place.
* Include a Table of Contents. Be sure to insert page numbers too!
* Include all references (CSE format required – except you do not have to abbreviate journal names). You should include references at the end of the document, rather than within the individual submissions.
* Remember to attach a separate document that includes Table 1 from the assignment.

Table 1. Evaluation table. Grading requirements for portfolio, evaluated using criteria in Table 2.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Requirement | Description | Score |
| Professionalism | Titles for each topic, Table of Contents, Page numbers, Grammar, typos, appears that thought went into preparation of portfolio, references organized (CSE format required), etc. | \_\_\_/1 |
| Introduction | Introduction to your special place | \_\_\_/0.5 |
| Topic 1. | Reflective paragraph(s) about the topic that you selected | \_\_\_/1 |
| Topic 2. | Reflective paragraph(s) about the topic that you selected | \_\_\_/1 |
| Topic 3. | Reflective paragraph(s) about the topic that you selected | \_\_\_/1 |
| Topic 4. | Reflective paragraph(s) about the topic that you selected | \_\_\_/1 |
| Reflection paragraph | Final reflective paragraph | \_\_\_/1 |
| TOTAL | | \_\_\_\_\_/6.5 |

Table 2. Criteria assessed to evaluated score for individual topics and reflection

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **0-0.5** | **0.5-0.65** | **0.7-0.85** | **0.9-1.0** |
| **Individual Topic Content Criteria** | Weak grasp of topic. Poor connection to class content and readings. Appears no thoughtful reflection was done. | Adequate grasp of the topic. Some connection to class content and readings but with disconnects/lack of clarify of connections. Some evidence of thoughtful reflection on linkage to your special place when completing the assignment. | Good grasp of topic. Demonstrates solid connection to class content and readings. Wrote with strong evidence of thoughtful reflection on content and linkage to your special place. | Grasp of topic exceeds expectations – went above and beyond with the level of information provided. Demonstrates outstanding connections to the class materials and readings. Superior evidence of thoughtful reflection on content and linkage to your special place. |