

EN2D0: Field trip reports (intermediate students)

Due: Week 11, Term 2

This assessment asks you to plan, carry out and report on a field trip of your own choosing. You can work alone or with others, but in either case you will submit your own written report of **1,500 words** describing and reflecting on your findings. The report allows you to bridge creative and critical approaches – ‘creative’ in the sense of not being limited to the *form* of a conventional academic expository essay, but ‘critical’ in the sense of being driven primarily by an expository essay’s goals of intellectual presentation and analysis.

A few guide points:

- **The expectation is that this assessment should require no more than one (1) week’s work.** This report does not require the extensive preparation of a written essay.
- **The mark you get will be based on the quality of both your observations and the reflective analysis you include in the report.** Additional criteria involve the degree of planning and the imaginative form taken by your write-up (see below).
- **The usual presentational standards for written essays apply – clarity, grammatical correctness and precision of style.**
- You are not required to get pre-approval of your chosen field trip site.

What you need to do

Select a site of ecological interest or significance, local or otherwise, and carry out an observational visit in which you record any relevant details or data. Write your report in whatever form you think is appropriate for recording your experiences: it can be a straightforward narrative followed by a reflective conclusion, or a series of data presentations (lists, maps, graphs) that you then analyse, or a combination of images and texts, etc. Be sure, however, to incorporate analysis alongside observation, and to develop a theoretically informed perspective on what you encountered during the field trip.

The following source may be useful when planning and writing your field report:
<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/fieldreport>

When writing the report, keep in mind the notion of ecology as a way of seeing: how do you make sense of the interrelatedness of socio-ecological features present at your site? In what ways do the themes we’ve covered on the module (nature-society dualisms, the country and the city, public vs. private or enclosed space, gendered and raced nature, etc.) shed light on your observations? How does your site function as an ecosystem or as the convergence of multiple ecosystems; what evidence can you find of its history? What might it mean to ‘think’ like any

one feature of the site (as in Leopold's 'thinking like a mountain') – thinking like a wood, a pond, a waste-processing plant, a building site, etc.?

The following are some suggestions for possible site visits:

- Any one of various sites on campus: Tocil Wood, Diamond Wood, Cryfield Grange, Windmill Hill, car parks, residential halls, cafes, University House, Westwood Sports Pavilion, etc.
- War Memorial Park, the Cathedral, FarGo Village, etc. in Coventry
- Brandon Marsh, Stoneleigh Park, Jephson Gardens, Coombe Country Park
- Other local wildlife reserves or woodlands (see Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust websites)
- The HS2 works cutting across local landscapes at Crackley Wood or Cubbington Woods; other sites of environmental or social protest
- Commons: Kenilworth Common, Newbold Comyn, Hearsall Common, etc.
- Energy, waste or water-treatment plants (e.g. Finham Water Treatment Works)
- Parks, cemeteries, farms, brownfields, quarries, reservoirs, railway sites
- Ruins, memorials, historical landmarks, earthworks (see Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" and other of his writings)
- Retail parks, industrial estates, edgelands; community gardens; allotments
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) – what do these designations entail? How did they come by their official status?
- The world's your (possibly contaminated) oyster – go for it!

Note that you may be required to get official permission to visit some sites; be aware of both safety issues and legal protocols when choosing yours.

Submission

Submission of your report is on Tabula in the usual way.

A few tips for effective field reports

- Before setting out, do some planning: discover what you can of the history, geography and notable features of your site and plot your intended route (but allow for contingency, serendipitous encounters, detours and digressions)
- Take whatever equipment you'll need for observation and recording purposes (phone, guidebooks, notebook, etc.)
- Record weather conditions and lists of what you notice (fauna, flora, objects, topographical features, people)
- Try sketching as well as photographing scenes and samples from the site: the hand-eye coordination necessary for drawing something prompts you to look at it in a different way
- Try producing a sound-map (see <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/sound-maps.htm>)

- Pay attention to examples of intended and unintended usage in any instance of site-planning
- Feel free to interview people you encounter
- Choose vivid descriptive language for your report
- Reflect on the ecological/environmental significance of what you've observed, relating it to any of the issues, concepts and texts we've covered in class

Appendix: Assessment criteria for field reports

80+ First class

- Research has been exceptionally focused and comprehensive, information has been selected and presented appropriately, and the writer has articulated close observation with insightful and original ideas
- There is a focused development of the presentational analysis and there are clear logical links between ideas and paratextual elements (if used)
- Very thorough, detailed analysis with convincing, wide-ranging evidence to back up arguments, which use observational materials in creative and ethically responsible ways
- Clear evidence of originality in lines of argument, selection of site and presentational format
- The report is exceptionally well structured and well written, using immaculate, grammatically correct sentence structure and appropriate style, including a full bibliography and references
- The report responds to the brief in an original and creative way, and shows exceptional imagination, innovation, and conceptualisation
- A sophisticated understanding of the purpose of the assessment and an imaginative deployment of the form in service of a well-honed argument

A submission achieving 80+ must be outstanding in every way. It offers an exceptionally coherent, well structured, immaculately presented, very well informed report that is cogently supported, highly ambitious in conceptualisation and shows originality and evidence of exceptional powers of observation and analysis.

70+ First class

- Research has been focused and comprehensive, information has been selected and presented appropriately, and the writer has articulated observational details with strong and insightful analysis
- There is a clear development of the argument and logical links between ideas and observations
- There is detailed analysis with well chosen evidence to support arguments
- The report offers clear evidence of originality in its lines of argument, selection of evidence and/or sources and a good understanding of the protocols of fieldwork
- The report is well structured and coherent, with a clear format, appropriate style and a full bibliography and set of references
- The report responds to the brief with analytical intelligence and some evidence of originality

A submission achieving 70+ is an excellent fulfilment of the assessment brief. It must present a clear, coherent, well structured, very well informed argument that is very well supported, ambitious in scope, shows originality and relates the topic to the broader concerns of the module.

60+ Upper second class

- Concise and thorough presentation of field observations in an appropriate format
- There is a clear development in the presentation of information and argument, and there are logical links between most of the report's details
- There is detailed analysis with suitable evidence to support arguments and conclusions
- The report shows glimpses of originality in its lines of argument and selection of evidence
- The report is clear and well structured and includes a full bibliography with references
- The report responds to the brief conscientiously and concludes with some insight into the issues raised by the site selected

A submission achieving 60+ must be a clear, coherent, well-structured report that is well informed, uses evidence to support conclusions and shows observation and research beyond the level of the obvious. Work in this category tends to be less ambitious in scope than first-class work. Originality of thought and very good use of evidence may compensate for lapses in the argument structure.

50+ Lower second class

- Observations are generally good but limited in range, and information has not always been selected appropriately, with limited contribution from the writer
- There is evidence of an argument, but it is not fully developed or can be hard to follow; the introduction and/or conclusion is lacking in key respects
- The analysis is adequate, but there is not always enough evidence to support arguments; the presentation of data and analysis is appropriate for the site selected
- Articulates details with some degree of conceptual analysis
- Ideas are expressed reasonably well; while there may be some errors in presentation, the report on the whole is clear
- The report includes a full bibliography with references
- There are some moments of good analysis

A submission achieving 50+ must show that the student is reasonably well informed about the site and uses observational data sufficiently well to present a fairly good argument. Work in this category is competent in most aspects, but lacks the comprehensiveness, accuracy, insight and/or cohesiveness expected of an upper second.

40+ Third class

- There is some evidence of research and an attempt to address the brief, but little selectivity has been applied to the information gathered
- The work is purely descriptive rather than analytical, with a lack of critical insight into the significance of the site selected

- The structure is not related to the development of ideas and/or the reflective conclusion is inadequate
- The details included are not fully integrated into the analysis and/or important points have been missed; there is no reflection on the protocols of the field report as a genre
- Relatively competent use of language, but the report may often be unclear and/or contain frequent errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Sources are referenced, but the referencing style is inconsistent
- The form of the report is not exploited in any meaningful way
- There is a limited attempt at analysis

A submission achieving 40+ must show some understanding of relevant issues related to the site selected. Evidence may be lacking or inappropriate. A fully formulated argument may be absent and the brief may not be fully addressed. Notwithstanding errors in presentation and communication, there must be sufficient evidence that the student has undertaken a satisfactory degree of work and observation to warrant a pass.

30+ Fail (but with potential for compensation)

- Little or no research has been carried out beforehand, there is over-reliance on secondary sources and no point of view is developed
- There is little or no analysis and discussion is uninformed and superficial
- The discussion is not clearly relevant to the assignment and/or too many important points are missed
- The reader cannot follow the structure of the report and the observational data are not presented coherently
- The work consists of a string of unrelated observations, with little or no use of supporting evidence and/or sources
- Poor presentation and linguistic competence, including shaky grasp of grammar, limited vocabulary, incorrect word use and poor spelling and punctuation interfering with the transmission of ideas and information
- Few sources are cited and/or referencing is inconsistent
- There is a partial and problematic attempt at analysis

A submission achieving 30+ fails to demonstrate understanding of relevant issues related to the chosen site. Observational data are lacking, superficial or inappropriate. There are flaws in the argument or an obvious lack in argument directed toward the topic. There may be grammatical errors or lack of clarity. The overall impression is of a student who has not undertaken a satisfactory degree of work and observation to warrant a pass.

Less than 30 Fail (but without potential for compensation)

- Little or no research has been carried out and no argument is evident
- There is little or no analysis and discussion is uninformed, with little or no use of proper levels of observation
- The discussion is confused and not clearly relevant to the assignment
- The structure is very poor and disordered

- There are many errors or gaps; overall, evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate even a basic grasp of core information associated with the site
- There is no understanding of the scholarly responsibility entailed in fieldwork protocols
- Very poor presentation and linguistic competence, including little grasp of grammar, limited vocabulary, incorrect word use and poor spelling and punctuation interfering with the transmission of ideas and information
- Sources are not cited appropriately
- The report is below the required length
- There is no documentation of the process undertaken in writing the report

A submission achieving less than 30% shows obvious failure to demonstrate understanding of the site selected. Observational data are lacking, unconvincing or inappropriate. There are serious flaws in the argument or an obvious lack of argument. There are many errors and/or a lack of clarity in the writing. The overall impression is of a student who has failed to meet basic standards for university-level work.