

Student Land Stewardship Program for Ithaca College Natural Lands (ENVS 201/301/402 Environmental Research)

Credits: 1-3

Semester: Fall 2021

Meeting time: Fridays 2-3pm

Meeting place: 207 Williams (2nd floor south stairwell)

Professor: Jake Brenner, jbrenner@ithaca.edu

Office / Hours: CNS 258 / TR 11:30am-1pm and by email appointment

Course Description

Ithaca College owns ~600 acres of protected natural areas known as Ithaca College Natural Lands (ICNL). Students play various important roles in the management of ICNL according to a student-authored (2012) management plan. The most formal and rigorous level of involvement is a full-time paid Student Intern position in summer. The Student Land Stewardship Program (SLSP) gives students in introduction to ICNL management, and prepares them for a paid summer internship. The field exercises, assignments, instruction, and peer mentoring that take place in this course are also designed to teach the knowledge and skills demanded by professional land management organizations.

Students enrolled in the SLSP join the "ICNL Staff." This group includes the Faculty Manager, Student Manager (sometimes) and other student interns. The Faculty Manager oversees the Student Manager, and they in turn provide coordination and guidance for the trainees. Collaboration across and within levels is an important part of the SLSP.

All SLSP participants should approach the program as a professional development opportunity. The program instills in all students (Manager and Interns) a keen understanding of their role in ICNL management, and in doing so it prepares them to articulate their skills and experiences when speaking with prospective employers in land management organizations. Examples include the Finger Lakes Land Trust, New York State Parks, and the National Parks Service. Former SLSP students have earned paid appointments in these organizations and many others.

The successful completion of at least two semesters of the SLSP (200- and 300-level) constitutes the base qualification for a paid Student Manager position. However, many students join the SLSP and find it fulfilling even though they never pursue a paid position. *Any interested student, regardless of major, prior experience, or professional orientation, is eligible to participate in the SLSP and thereafter to apply for a paid position.*

Work for Fall 2021

In any given year, ICNL will be engaged in one or more major projects that require all hands on deck. These projects often constitute the bulk of a student's work throughout the semester. Notable projects in years past include mapping the reserve system and its features, managing invasive plants, overhauling the recreational trail system, and building the Boothroyd Woods turnpike. In Fall 2021 the major projects on ICNL will be guiding nature trail hikes for the ICSM (first-year seminar) program, and trail repair and maintenance. Please send questions about the project and its details to Faculty Manager, Jake Brenner, at jbrenner@ithaca.edu.

Expectations

This program requires the following from students:

- **Attendance** and active participation in a weekly ICNL Staff meeting.
- **Reading** and comprehension of the materials available on the ICNL Web site, including the *ICNL Management Plan*.
- A **preliminary discussion** with the Faculty Manager by the end of Week 2 about goals for the semester and a weekly work schedule. This plan should consider factors such as course credit load, extracurricular commitments (e.g. athletics), and other limitations (e.g. darkness) and their potential effects on SLSP work.
- **Completion of the required weekly hours** associated with the registered credit load. Each registered credit involves 3 hours per week of work, including meeting time. (1 credit = 1 hour meeting + 2 hours outside class; 2 credits = 1 hour meeting + 5 hours outside class; 3 credits = 1 hour meeting + 8 hours outside class).
- A **summary discussion** with the Faculty Manager during the last week of class to discuss accomplishments and opportunities for improvement—in both your work and the SLSP.
- A **500-word reflection** due the last week of class.
- * **Extraordinary self-motivation, organization, time-management, and teamwork.**
Many students founder on their inability to work effectively in the semi-structured (sometimes unstructured) environment of the SLSP. Tasks are often not prescribed in detail, but require creativity or problem-solving. Orders and instructions from the Faculty Manager and the Student Interns might come sporadically. Students must become adept at managing these orders and find a way to work effectively—or be assertive about seeking help. Students are responsible for communicating time-management and workload concerns.
- * **Continual open communication of issues and concerns related to the course work.**
Email and in-person correspondence is encouraged, and guidance is always available upon request. Students must respond to email within 48 hours, and must clearly and frequently communicate so that shared tasks and responsibilities are completed in a timely way and to a high level of quality.

Grading

A work is truly excellent, showing uncommon devotion, originality, creativity, professionalism, planning, and execution. Attendance must be perfect, and all assignments must be completed on time.

B work may be complete, compliant with requirements, well designed and executed, good in many respects, and a result of great effort—work to take pride in—but it is not outstanding in the way that A work is.

C work may be complete and compliant with requirements, but it is mediocre in originality, accuracy, comprehensiveness, or quality of execution. It might be a result of great effort, and it might even be excellent in some respects, but it might be significantly flawed in others. Habitual lateness or unexcused absences cannot earn a grade higher than a C, regardless of the quality of the submitted work.

D work is seriously deficient in one way or another and generally leaves little doubt in anyone's mind about what grade it deserves. It reveals minimal effort, significant misunderstanding, or seriously flawed execution.

F grades are rare—usually products of incomplete work or partial attendance. The upper end of the failing grade range (~50%) is for work attempted but failed. Assignments not submitted, on the other hand, are awarded zero credit.

Policy

- **Attendance** affects your participation grade. Please send requests for excused absences by email by the time our class meeting ends. Generally speaking, requests for excused absences for religious holidays, critical personal matters (e.g., funerals, etc.), and illnesses are granted when properly requested. These do not affect your participation grade. Absences occurring without prior notification are recorded as unexcused, regardless of the reason. Please plan your travel (pre- and post-holidays, end-of-semester, etc.) so that you do not miss scheduled course activities.
- You are responsible for understanding what constitutes **plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty**, as well as their consequences. Please be aware that most acts of plagiarism are inadvertent, but nevertheless punishable. Unless specified in the course material, all work is assumed to be your sole responsibility. All ideas that are not your own must be properly attributed. Suspected or alleged acts of academic dishonesty will be referred directly to the appropriate authority, and the grade in question will be “incomplete” until a plea is negotiated or a verdict is delivered. For more information on the rules, please consult the Ithaca College Policy Manual (http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/vol7/Volume_7-70104.htm). For more guidance on how to follow the rules, please consult the Ithaca College Library (<http://www.ithacalibrary.com/research/index.php?widget=6>).
- **I strive for an inclusive classroom. Please see me in private to discuss any personal concerns**, such as anxieties in the classroom, a first language other than English, or any aggressions you are facing in this course, macro- or micro. You may feel uncomfortable with the content or tone of a conversation, but you should feel safe to be who you are and express your ideas. If you do not, please let me know.