

National Geographic Article

Local Physical Geography, Urban Trees

Note to Instructors: This is an open-ended activity designed as a long-term undergraduate research project for Earth science, physical geography, or environmental studies courses. It is designed to allow for substantial student autonomy with the guidance of an instructor. The activity presented here may be modified to fit one's class and instructional style.



Task Prompt

Writing: The idea behind this project is for you to get out of the classroom and discover the physical geography around you. For this work you should take on the role of a *National Geographic Magazine* (NG) writer and photographer. That is, act as if you are researching, writing, and photographing for Nat Geo for this work.

Research: Your work should be original physical geography fieldwork research combined with academic journal research on urban trees.

Presentation: At the end of our class you will conduct a short presentation of your research experience. This is NOT a PowerPoint presentation. It is a peer-reviewed presentation to small groups of your peers who will score your work based on its merits.

Background Media

Please view and listen to the following media files where researcher and author Harini Nagendra gives overviews of her work with students at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, India. Her work will set the background for your independent field research project and article.

Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) Channel. (2016). *Harini Nagendra | Nature in the city: Bengaluru in the past, present, and future* [Video]. <https://youtu.be/xyZZiO8IZI4?t=2397> (from 39:57 to 51:23).

OR

Azim Premji University. (2016). *Nature in the city by Harini Nagendra* [Video]. <https://youtu.be/mW3XhB7ex9A?t=3101> (from 51:43 to 56:43).

AND

Srinath, P., & Tenkayala, R. (2020). *Re-wilding cities (with Harini Nagendra): Sustainable development as DNA* [Audio podcast]. Bangalore International Centre Talks. <https://bangaloreinternationalcentre.org/audio/re-wilding-cities-with-harini-nagendra/>

Notice that Dr. Nagendra outlines nature as vegetation in Indian slums, nature in personal spaces such as home gardens, nature as roadside trees, nature in parks and public spaces, and nature in sacred spaces (temples and other places of worship). When I visited Bengaluru in 2019, I also noticed nature in the form of trees on K-12 school grounds and universities.

This is an open-ended project of your personal design to consider urban trees in some context you have access to. Previous students have done a study of trees on a ¼-acre plot on campus, a comparison of trees on a plot on the north side of campus compared to those on the south side, a comparison of “parking lot” trees at Northwest Vista College compared to those at St. Phillips College (inner urban setting). Others have done an analysis and story of street trees in their neighborhood, and yet another related to street trees and the urban heat island effect. Be creative, look at nature in the environments you have access to.

Reference: Nagendra, H. (2016). *Nature in the city: Bengaluru in the past, present, and future*. Oxford University Press.

Products/Guidelines

You are researching, writing, and developing a magazine article suitable for publication and public presentation.

- The article must be 1000-1500 words.
- Single-spaced.
- Original photographs YOU have taken must be included and they must include captions/descriptions. (Do not include photos from other sources.) I recommend 3-5 quality photos.
- A quality map, or maps, must be included and they must include captions/descriptions and complete in-text citations and a full APA style reference (unless you develop the map yourself).
- Sub-headers should be used to differentiate different sections of your article.
- Lay out your article as if it were a NG magazine article.
- Bring one printed copy of your article to class on your presentation day. Front-to-back printing is okay.

No research from popular web-based resources (Wikipedia, etc.) or encyclopedic resources (even if you get them through our library) are acceptable. Any research references must come from academic, peer-reviewed journal articles and your own research.

This is designed for original field research YOU conduct. Go out, get dirty, take pictures, write about it!

Article Proposal

Due Date: See class calendar.

Please provide a summary with sections explaining your (1) ***article's thesis*** (bold & underline), the (2) urban nature physical geography you are writing about, (3) significance (i.e. why this is important), and (4) geographic relevance of the article (i.e. what makes it "geographic"). Develop and include a detailed (5) schedule that includes dates for each step of your work.

Maximum: 500 words; Value: 20 pts. each; Percent of total course grade: 5

Progress Report

Due Date: See class calendar.

Explain in detail the (1) progress you have made to date on your article. Include what (2) success you have had and what (3) barriers you are facing. (4) Provide a printed draft of your work to date.

Maximum: 500-word report (parts 1-3). Draft is whatever length you're at on the due date.

Percent of total course grade: 5

Article and Presentation

Due Date: See class calendar.

Bring a copy of your work to class on the day its due.

No cover sheet (this is a magazine article; it should look like one, not like an essay for English class).

Stapled either in the top left corner or book style on the left-hand side as if it is in a magazine.

Be prepared for your class peers and myself to sit down and read your work, review it, hear a brief presentation by you regarding your experience, and then for us to score your work right there on the spot. For this you will play the role of the author/researcher describing his/her experience on assignment for Nat Geo. It is not you presenting a summary of the article; it is you describing your field experience and what you found.

Assessment:

Grade	Description
A. Outstanding Work	"A" work presents an extremely interesting, insightful perspective and thorough, clearly defined analysis of local geography. Research/analysis is very thorough, accurately documented, and effectively integrated. There is a clear focus (thesis, controlling idea) which is developed in an organized, concise, logical manner. Unified and coherent work includes specific, relevant supporting evidence and examples. Distinctions are made between facts, information, experience, research, data, and evidence. Your overarching concept is stated, and you demonstrate an understanding of theory, principles, and definitions. The most significant implications and consequences are clearly stated. Sentences are varied and well constructed. Word choices are precise, fresh, and vivid. There are virtually no errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, citation/reference style, or usage. Photographs are clear, focused, labeled, and support the content of the article. The article is well laid out to look as if it were found in a National Geographic magazine. You have clearly taken on the role of a geographer on assignment with National Geographic. Your presentation is well thought out and you are well prepared for it. Meets guidelines.
B. Good Work	"B" work demonstrates a thoughtful, solid understanding of the subject with a basic analysis. Research/analysis may not be as thorough, appropriately documented, or effectively integrated as "A"-level work. Although ideas are interesting, they tend to lack originality or insight. Focus is clear and content well organized, but work may be slightly underdeveloped or need more support. Most sentences are varied and well constructed. Word choice is generally appropriate. Although there may be some minor errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, citation/reference style, or usage, none of these problems is glaring or highly distracting. Photographs are present and labeled, but may be of simply "okay" quality, but they still support the content of the article for the most part. Layout is good, but may be lacking in some areas such as alignment, consistency, or look. Your presentation is thought out and you have prepared for it. Meets guidelines.
C. Adequate	"C" work is average, what most students do, presenting ideas that may be obvious or unexceptional. Parts of the work may be unclear and information general or repetitious. Research/analysis may not be appropriately used or effectively integrated. The work is somewhat developed

Work	and organized. Paragraph breaks may not always correspond to shifts in topic. Sentence structure can be repetitive or awkward and word choice imprecise or inappropriate. Errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, citations, or usage may distract the reader but do not prevent comprehension. Photographic quality is adequate to view, but may be lacking in supporting the content of the article, too few to be a NG-style article, or of mediocre quality. Layout is generic, tending more toward a class essay than a magazine article. Your presentation may be “last minute” and you could be more prepared for it. Some guidelines are not followed.
D. Poor Work	“D” work tends to lack insight and interesting ideas. Research/analysis is poorly documented and ineffectively used to develop the product. Focus is often confusing or not easily identified. The work is usually undeveloped and poorly organized. Paragraph breaks can be arbitrary. Statements are unsupported, repetitive, or irrelevant. Sentence structure and word choice may be inaccurate, confusing, or awkward. There are many grammar, punctuation, spelling, style, and usage errors. Photography is lacking in quality, numbers, or relevance toward the topic. Your presentation is lacking in preparation. Guidelines are not followed.
F. Unacceptable Work	“F” work presents simplistic, inappropriate, or incoherent ideas and lacks focus. Research/analysis is not evident, or sources are undocumented, i.e., plagiarized. Late work is also considered an F. It tends to be undeveloped and disorganized. Paragraphs are incoherent, and paragraph breaks often do not correspond to shifts in topic. Statements are unsupported, repetitive, or irrelevant. Sentence structure and word choice are inaccurate, confusing, or awkward. There are many grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage errors that often prevent comprehension. Photographs are insufficient or even not present. Layout is standard paragraph style like an essay or very poorly situated on the pages. No presentation or very poor presentation and preparation for it. Guidelines are not followed.

Maximum: 1500 words

Percent of total class score: 20

Total Percentage of this Project: 30

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