Project Summary

In this project, we are researching and developing pedagogies for increasing access and inclusion in place-based teaching and learning. One main output will be a new course for Bachelor of Sustainability, Anthropology and Cultural Studies students. We are also developing open access materials and resources for use by diverse community partners, at the same time as we learn from their expertise and experience.

Background: Place is not “neutral”, and neither are field methods!

In the new field of environmental humanities (EH), environmental issues are inseparable from cultural contexts. EH frameworks explore how place is never neutral. Place is always shaped by and experienced via cultural, social, economic, historical and personal factors. Immersive field methodologies are one way to learn about the “thickness” of place.

Yet, while EH offers influential scholarship on themes like care, inclusion, and diversity in nonhuman environments, the field’s dominant pedagogies and practices replicate the exclusions of many settler academic learning environments, where a “standard” body (often white, male, neurotypical and without disabilities) is assumed as the participant norm. Particularly in relation to field methodologies, disability or cultural and structural access challenges are seldom addressed.

As a way of unsettling dominating settler epistemologies and methods in relation to place, this course will also help prepare students to engage syilx-led land-based learning in other contexts.

Consultation with Pedagogy, Disability & Inclusion Experts

In March 2023 we organized two consultative workshops with experts in disability and inclusion, and invited them to a practice-run of one of our course activities. Key findings from these workshops included:

• Importance of student co-design
• Importance of engaging live perspectives on disability and disability studies, beyond just universal design or “one-size-fits-all” models; good pedagogy is responsive and flexible.
• Need to address how engagements with “the senses” have been shaped and limited by Western epistemologies
• Opportunity to address the learning environment alongside built and ‘natural’ environments, all with connected accessibility challenges
• Equity & access needs of instructors are part of the picture, too!

What’s Next?

• Community Workshops
  Spring 2023: We will organize workshops with diverse community partners to share our activities, and seek their feedback on how these learning materials might be adapted to support the goals of their work.

• Finalizing Course Design
  Fall 2023: We will finalize our course design for Senate approval and complete development of our open-access community-facing materials.

• Sharing Our Findings and Prototypes
  Winter 2023: Our team will share results from the project at an international conference and prepare scholarly communications in a number of formats.

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