



School of Science
NOST 201
Natural History of the North
Fall 2026
3 Credits

Course Outline

INSTRUCTOR: Gabriel Rivest

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OFFICE: N/A

TIME/DATES: Wednesdays 1:00-3:50 pm, A2312

OFFICE HOURS: TBA, please email to make an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students taking this course will gain a broad introductory overview of the natural history of the circumpolar northern regions. The course emphasizes field skills in collecting data and enjoying the natural world. We begin by learning the processes of identification, methods of study and strategies of survival (particularly for winter) for the spectrum of species living in the north. We also introduce the forces which shape and have shaped the northern landscape including climatic, geomorphic and soil forming processes. The course is circumpolar in context, but local Yukon examples will be emphasized.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Admission to the second year of the Northern Studies program, or admission to the Renewable Resources Management program, or permission of the instructor. Students must be willing to engage in field activities in inclement weather and uncomfortable circumstances such as insects and steep terrain. A certain (moderate) level of physical fitness is required for activities such as hiking.

EQUIVALENCY OR TRANSFERABILITY

Please be aware that receiving institutions determine course transferability. Find further information regarding course transferability here:

<https://www.yukonu.ca/admissions/transfer-credit>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. use standard field manuals to identify naturally occurring species including birds, mammals, plants, fish and some invertebrates.
2. compile a list of commonly found northern species,
3. identify the adaptations and strategies northern species exhibit to survive and thrive in a northern environment,

4. use various outdoor study aids, binoculars, spotting scopes, manuals, cameras, and collection apparatus,
5. use ethical, safe, and respectful behavior in the collection of data and enjoyment of natural history,
6. be able to express in writing personal field observations of species and phenomena.

COURSE FORMAT

There will be three hours of lecture per week. Students are expected to read and watch videos posted on the Moodle site and participate in at least two field trips that may occur outside of class time. Students are required to keep a journal of natural history observations. Although it will vary from individual to individual, students should expect to spend at least 2 hours on course material outside of the classroom time (per week) on studying, reading, field trips, or completing assignments.

Delivery format

This course will be delivered in a face-to-face (in person) format. Students will be expected to access the YU online learning platform for additional material (Moodle).

EVALUATION

Assignment	Grade	Due Date
Field Trips (2)	20%	Sept 26-27 (Overnight), Other TBD
Collection	15%	October 14
Mid Term	15%	October 28
Photo Essays/Stories	10%	November 4
Article Review	10%	November 18
Natural History Journal	10%	October 21 & November 25
Final Exam	20%	December 9

COURSE WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION

The last date to withdraw without academic penalty is Nov. 2, 2026. Refer to the YukonU website for other important dates.

TEXTBOOKS & LEARNING MATERIALS

There is no official textbook for this course, but students are expected to read suggested online and print materials, watch videos, and access scientific articles to support their writing and learning.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to contribute toward a positive and supportive environment and are required to conduct themselves in a responsible manner. Academic misconduct includes all forms of academic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, fraud, deceit, using the work of others without their permission, aiding other students in committing academic offences, misrepresenting academic assignments prepared by others as one's own, or any other forms of academic dishonesty including falsification of any information on any Yukon University document.

Please refer to Academic Regulations & Procedures for further details about academic standing and student rights and responsibilities. <https://www.yukonu.ca/policies/academic-regulations>

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Yukon University is committed to providing a positive, supportive, and barrier-free academic environment for all its students. Students experiencing barriers to full participation due to a visible or hidden disability (including hearing, vision, mobility, learning disability, mental health, chronic or temporary medical condition), should contact [Accessibility Services](#) for resources or to arrange academic accommodations: access@yukonu.ca.

TOPIC OUTLINE (Subject to change) *TBA!*

Week	Dates	Topic
1	September 2	Course Introduction Natural History and Science The Modern Naturalist
2	September 9	Guest Speaker
3	September 16	Borealis (film) Biome Taiga (films)
4	September 23	Natural history writing Natural history collections Northern Biomes: Introduction to the Taiga (Boreal Forest) and Arctic Tundra
5	September 30	Boreal Biome: Classification Distribution Ecozones Environmental characteristics Ecosystems Characteristic animal and plant species

		Processes that shape the boreal biome The Future (Conservation and Climate Change)
6	October 7	Boreal Biome (Tress & Plants)
	October 14	READING WEEK NO CLASS
7	October 21	Boreal Biome (Birds & Mammals)
8	October 28	Boreal Biome (Fish, Amphibians, Invertebrates)
9	November 4	Arctic Tundra Biome: 1. Classification 2. Distribution 3. Ecozones 4. Environmental characteristics 5. Ecosystems 6. Characteristic animal and plant species 7. Processes that shape Arctic biomes 8. The Future (Conservation and Climate Change)
10	November 11	Arctic Tundra Biome (continued)
11	November 18	Life in the cold: plant and animal adaptations to life in the north
12	November 25	Life in the cold: plant and animal adaptations to life in the north (continued)
13	December 2	Hunting and Trapping History of the Yukon
14	December 8	REVIEW