

BIOL 240 Monteregian Flora – July 7-19, 2024

Hi -- This is a note to all the students who have registered for Monteregian Flora – BIOL 240. At this point in time I assume you are all in the course for sure; **please let me know immediately if you receive this email and do NOT intend to take the course.** The class will go ahead smoothly if you take the time **NOW** to read this information. There are questions in the following material that require an answer from you.

Course dates and location

As you know, the course begins Sunday afternoon, July 7, at the Gault Nature Reserve in Mont St. Hilaire and ends on Friday afternoon, July 19. Please plan to arrive at Maison Gault before **4:45 PM on July 7th**. We will have a short opening lecture after supper that evening. We will live and eat in Maison Gault on the shore of Lac Hertel during the course.

Mid-course weekend

A specific question about the mid-course weekend: The first week of the class ends Friday afternoon (4-5pm). You can leave your gear in your room over the weekend and you may head back into the city if you wish. You also are free to stay in Maison Gault (cooking for yourself) and spend the weekend on the public trails relaxing and reviewing plants you have learned. Friends may want to join you on Saturday or Sunday (paying the entrance fee) BUT cannot stay overnight. On Sunday, we usually hold a review session for Monday's "midterm exam" for any students who are back at Maison Gault around 4 or 5 pm. You **MUST** be back by breakfast time on Monday to take the midterm exam. If you are not staying at Maison Gault for the weekend, you need to provide your own mean of transportation to leave and return to the reserve : I won't be able to pick you up in Mont-Saint-Hilaire. **Please let me know if you are likely to 1) stay in Maison Gault all weekend, 2) leave Friday afternoon and return Sunday, or 3) leave Friday afternoon and return Monday morning.**

Course fees

There is a course fee for lodging, suppers, textbook, and supplies that is payable through MINERVA. You have already paid the deposit in order to be able to register for the course. Once your registration works its way through the university computer system, you should receive a bill for the balance of the course fee; this fee must be paid before the course begins. If any refunds or rebates are due to you they will come only after the course is completed.

Textbook

To simplify matters, I will buy copies of the Newcomb textbook as part of the course fee (Newcomb. L. (1989). Newcomb's wildflower guide. Boston: Little. Brown & Company.). If you already have your own copy of the textbook, the biology department will give you a rebate on the course fee. Just let me know and I will put you in contact with the right person. We will also provide you with a hand lens. Course syllabus, reference materials, and handouts will be deposited on myCourse. Feel free to print those, if you prefer printed copies to consult during the course. There is a McGill printer at Maison Gault that you can use if necessary.

Food

Once the caterer is booked, it will be harder to meet unannounced dietary needs. I understand that some of you are vegetarian, have food allergies or special dietary requirements. **NOW is the final time to change your dietary needs or warn us of any special circumstances.**

You will need to buy your own food for breakfast, lunch and snacks, so bring food or some cash to meet your needs. We will provide food for Monday breakfast and lunch (vegetarian option will be available), and you can go grocery shopping on Monday to get supplies for the rest of the week. There is a kitchen for your use and a modest amount of shared refrigerator space. Suppers are provided by a caterer from Sunday to Thursday. You need to buy your own food and cook for yourself for the weekend.

Getting to Gault Nature Reserve in Mont-St-Hilaire

Please let me know how and when you will get to the mountain. If you have a car and can take riders from some convenient pick-up point at Mac Campus, Longueuil metro or downtown, just let people know on myCourse. If you don't have access to a car or cannot organize a ride, you can take the bus as described below.

ARRIVING BY BUS: There is a bus that runs from the Longueuil metro terminus that can get you to the town of Mont St. Hilaire. Unfortunately, the bus does not go very close to the actual entrance of Gault Nature Reserve. The bus does run every day, once every 30 minutes on weekends. The trip takes about 40 minutes. Get off at the corner of Radisson and Bd. Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier, right in front of the Provi-Soir/Esso (depanneur+gas station). I will meet you at the bus stop and drive you to the Reserve. **You will need to let me know which bus you are taking so that I can pick you up at the right time!** Make sure you take a bus that arrives before 4:45 pm. Visit EXO's website for current fare and schedule (Line 200) <https://exo.quebec/en/trip-planner/bus/CITVR/200/0>.

ARRIVING BY CAR: There is free parking by Maison Gault. If you drive on your own, McGill will activate your McGill ID to open the gate. On the day of your arrival, let the gatekeeper know you are coming for the course; you will be directed to Maison Gault, which is on the lakeshore. If you can offer rides to other students that would be great.

COMMUTER TRAIN: This does not really work as the trains run into the city in the morning and return only in the evening; they do not run on weekends. The train station is also inconveniently distant from the reserve entrance; bus or driving are better alternatives.

Any questions?

Contact me with any questions sooner rather than later. I can best be reached by email – Mélanie Lapointe email: melanie.lapointe@mcgill.ca.

What the course requires of you?

This course is not conceptually difficult in the way a course in calculus might be, nor does it require any special scientific background. The course has been successfully completed by students in Science, Arts, Architecture, Management and Education. Many of them had just completed their U1 studies and a few had only had U0 or CEGEP when they took the course. This is not an advanced, technical course at the 300- or 400-level. This course at the 200-level is good preparation for advanced courses in plant systematics, but not a replacement for them.

This is not to say this is an easy course that guarantees an A! Grades range from A to C in a typical year. You have to deal with a lot of information taught over two weeks with only a weekend break in the middle. The teaching is mostly outdoors and very much "hands-on". You learn by seeing, touching, smelling and tasting plants to fix their characteristics and their names in your mind. You will learn more than 150 plants over the course of 2 weeks and you will be introduced to plant ecology. You will also learn how to use a non-technical key to identify unknown flowering plants. You'll do best if you open your mind's eye and learn how to really look at plants, how to pick out the subtle characters that distinguish one from another. If you come in good health and good spirits ready to soak up this sort of information, you'll do just fine.

If you have not followed BIOL 111 or equivalent and want to prepare before the class, please read the following: Campbell, Neil A, Michael L Cain, Peter V Minorsky, Jane B Reece, Lisa A Urry, and Steven Alexander Wasserman. 2018. *Biology : A Global Approach* Eleventh or earlier editions. Global ed. Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited. Focus on unit 5, 6, and 8. Printed or ebook available through McGill Library.

What to bring to Mont-St-Hilaire?

You will be living in Maison Gault or at the Chalets. The beds have a pillow, but no sheets or blankets. It can be cool at night so you may want to bring a summer sleeping bag or sheets with a light blanket. You need to bring your own towel(s) and toiletries.

You need to bring sturdy shoes, clothes suitable for being all day in the woods, rain gear, refillable water bottle, etc. You may want to bring binoculars, camera, or other outdoor gear of your choice. We may spend half a day wading around river edges and marshes so an old pair of running shoes that can get muddy will be useful. Most of our walking on the mountain will be on or near trails; when we go off trail you may run into poison ivy or patches of nettles. There are some risks of encountering ticks, which can carry Lyme Disease. Long pants and long sleeves tops are a good idea. Check yourself each day for ticks; a tick has to be attached more than 24 hours to transmit the disease. Bring sunscreen, bug spray. Bring a day pack to carry your gear, textbook, lunch and bottles of water.

If you are allergic to bee/wasp stings, bring an epipen emergency kit and know how to use it. There is a CLSC about 15 minutes drive from the dormitory, but you may be stung on a remote trail far from help. Carry a cell phone if you have one. If you come from outside Canada, you must ensure that you have suitable health insurance.

You need a notebook suited to use in the field, perhaps more than one depending on your handwriting and if you like to draw. Much of the teaching will be done outdoors. You need to be able to take notes easily in the field. You may also want to bring a binder or file to collate handouts, rewrite field notes, add sketches of specimen plants we have brought back to the laboratory etc. Students often take and share photos with a digital camera or cell phone to help remember what they saw in the field. Many students bring their laptop to manage photos and study. It is up to you to bring one or not, but it is not required to succeed in the course.

Contact information while you are at Gault Nature Reserve

There are phones in Gault House and a pay phone at the nearby Nature Centre Pavilion. The cell network is not always reliable around Maison Gault. You might have to walk 5 to 10 minutes to have better reception. There is free wireless internet connection available. You are responsible for the security of your laptop during the day when the class is away from Maison Gault. Your rooms can be locked for added security.

We assume that friends or family can reach you on your cell phones for routine matters, but if someone needs to reach you in an emergency they can phone **450-467-4010** during the day and speak with David Maneli (x229), Marc-Andre Langlois (x223), Martin Duval (x236). These are the university staff responsible for safety and security on the mountain, so they can find you if that should become necessary. The main number may be answered by personnel from the Mont St. Hilaire Nature Conservation Centre who should also be able to direct your call and contact us in an emergency. All these people are always in touch with one another by radios and also directly connected to local police and emergency services.

If a problem occurs during the class or in the evening, you can phone **514-398-3000** (campus security) and they will redirect your call to the appropriate personnel for assistance; if calling from one of the reserve phones remember to dial 9 first to make this outside call. **IF YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911, or 9-911** if using a reserve phone! If you do have to call 911 then also call campus security so that personnel at the reserve can be alerted to meet the first responders.

See you soon!