

Keeping It Real and Getting Muddy: First-Year Composition Meets Physical Geography in Stanley Park

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Student engagement in introductory general education core courses tends to be low. Place-based education, interdisciplinary learning communities, and civic engagement can enhance first-year students' engagement and develop critical thinking and writing. This report details a learning community, linking physical geography with English composition, that used a local park as a context for exploring and bridging the divides between the sciences and the humanities, environment and society. The course model is worth duplicating on other campuses as a strategy for orienting new students to campus and community, demonstrating the relevance of general education classes to their lives, and developing the interdisciplinary critical thinking and rhetorical flexibility that will help them navigate the various discourse communities of college, career, and civic life.

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