

Outdoor Recreation at Brock University

by Mary Breunig, Tim O'Connell and Garrett Hutson

Brock University offers both undergraduate and graduate programs and is host to approximately 17,000 students. It is the only Canadian university located in a World Biosphere Reserve — the Niagara Escarpment. The Bruce Trail passes through campus, and offers ample opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, nature interpretation and outdoor education. Brock is nestled in the heart of the Niagara wine region in St. Catharines, Ontario with Niagara Falls in close proximity.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the readers of *Pathways* to some of the recent changes and exciting outdoor recreation educational opportunities within the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Brock University.

The Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at Brock University has a long and distinguished history. The department opened its doors to students in 1981, and currently serves over 400 undergraduate and 15 graduate students. Undergraduate students elect to study in one of three concentrations — Inclusive and Therapeutic Recreation, Community Recreation or Outdoor Recreation — and may choose a general recreation degree. The department also offers a three-year pass program, and has articulation agreements with several colleges. Graduate students may choose the Leisure Studies field in the Master of Applied Health Sciences program, and focus their studies in any of the three concentration areas, including Outdoor Recreation.

Early coursework focused on outdoor leadership and challenge course facilitation. As new faculty joined the department, outdoor recreation courses centered on outdoor recreation resource management, ecotourism and recreation in nature-based environments.

Recently, three new faculty members — Dr. Mary Breunig, Dr. Garrett Hutson and Dr. Tim O'Connell — have refocused the concentration on outdoor leadership in the natural environment.

A new concentration mission was articulated and reads as follows:

The Brock University, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Outdoor Recreation concentration provides students with the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary to serve as wilderness trip leaders, to facilitate groups in outdoor recreation settings, to work in a variety of outdoor and experiential education environments, and to serve as agents of social and environmental change in the world. All classroom and field-based activities include lectures, outdoor and experiential activities, and small group work.

An exciting new outdoor recreation curriculum was implemented in the fall of 2007. All courses include theoretical knowledge related to leisure, play, recreation, outdoor leadership, group dynamics, outdoor education in the K-12 context and experiential education. Technical outdoor skills such as rock climbing, canoeing, winter camping, orienteering, backpacking and minimum impact camping are the centre of a sequence of field courses beginning in second year. The development of interpersonal, critical thinking and writing, and research and evaluation skills is also emphasized in the concentration. The Outdoor Recreation faculty emphasize the need for inclusive, professional and ethical dispositions through their deliberate use of an anti-oppressive teaching and learning framework, both in the classroom and in field activities.

In addition to Recreation and Leisure Studies core courses, some Outdoor Recreation and general elective courses include the following:

RECL 2F16 — Outdoor Recreation Theory and Practices

Examination of outdoor recreation theories and engagement in a variety of introductory outdoor field experiences that may include backpacking, winter camping, rock climbing, canoeing, snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

RECL 3P06 — Outdoor Recreation Resource Management

Social and ecological principles in the management of people in outdoor settings. Theoretical and applied perspectives on decision-making systems (governance), management frameworks and site considerations.

RECL 3P26 — Outdoor and Environmental Education

Theoretical and practical investigation of the outdoors as a setting to develop environmental awareness and connection to place.

RECL 3P30 — Risk Management in Recreation

Issues and concerns with the identification and management of recreation and leisure programs on individual, organizational and industry-wide levels. Legal and industry standards for risk management.

RECL 3P76 — Outdoor Program Management

Examination and analysis of the organization and operation of outdoor recreation programs, challenge courses, residential and day camps, and/or environmental education programs.

RECL 4P16 — Advanced Wilderness Program Planning

An in-depth analysis and application of the planning and execution of an extended outdoor wilderness trip.



RECL 4P55 — Group Dynamics in Recreation

An in-depth analysis and application of group dynamics theory, techniques and research to successful group facilitation in a recreation context.

The Brock University Outdoor Recreation program is currently accepting applications for the Master in Applied Health Sciences program. Please visit <http://fahs.brocku.ca/gradstudies> for more information about this program.

Additional information about the undergraduate program is available on the Recreation and Leisure Studies homepage at <http://fahs.brocku.ca/recl/>.

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