

Fall 2015

ENGL 5391

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ENGL 5391: SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

WRITING AMERICAN NATURE

SECTION 001

TIME: 9:30-10:45 TTH

INSTRUCTOR: J. HAZLETT

This course, designed for graduate and upper-level undergraduate students, will explore the treatment of nature in American writing from the early colonial period to the present. Strictly speaking, it is not a genre course in American Nature Writing, since its primary concern is with the ways in which nature is constructed in many forms of American writing, not only in those texts whose primary purpose is to represent the natural world. Thus, the course title—Writing American Nature. The course will examine evolving and differing constructions of nature in American writing, as well as the cultural, literary, and ideological functions they serve in a variety of texts and genres, including several that figure significantly in the genre of American Nature Writing. The course will begin with an examination of the relationship between creation myths and cultural attitudes toward nature, and then review some of the primary literary, philosophic, and hermeneutic models used by writers to frame nature, including Calvinist typology, Western pastoral, physiocratic environmentalism, nationalism, 18th- and 19th-Century scientism, Theories of the Sublime/Beautiful/Picturesque, Transcendentalism, Darwinism, preservationism, conservationism, eco-criticism, and so on.

Classes will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and student presentation. There will be two exams, journals, and two short essays for undergrads. Graduate students will have additional assignments, including a research paper and short critiques of secondary material.

Primary Authors and Texts (tentative):

Native American Origin Myths

Genesis

William Bradford, selections, *History of Plymouth Plantation* (1647)

Thomas Morton, *The New English Canaan* (1637)

Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, selections, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782)

William Bartram, selections, *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida* (1791)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836)

Henry David Thoreau, selections, *Maine Woods* (1864)

Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (1949)

John Muir, selections, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)

Rachel Carson, selections, *Silent Spring* (1962)

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1975)

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (1968)

Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991)

David Gessner, "Sick of Nature" (2004) and *Tarball Chronicles* (2011)

Contact Information

Instructor: John Downton Hazlett

Office: International Center, Room 117

Office Hours: TTH 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
MW 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Tel: 504 280 1136 (office)
504 231 7751 (cell)

Email: jhazlett@uno.edu

Classroom: LA 156

Class hours: TTH 9:30—10:45am

Student Learning Outcomes

5000-level graduate students who complete this course will be able to

1. Identify and discuss the following elements, among others, of American nature writing written between 1600 and the present:

- types of nature narrative
- relationship between creation myths and cultural attitudes toward nature
- British colonial constructions of New World nature
- Native American constructions of nature
- typological constructions of New World nature
- pastoralism and Western ideas of nature
- relationship between early American nationalism and American geography
- relationship between American geography and the construction of American national character
- 18th and 19th Century scientism and taxonomical constructions of America nature
- the “Adamic function” and American nature
- American Transcendentalism and nature
- the concept of the “Wild” and the “Wilderness”
- the role of aesthetic theory in constructions of the environment
- role of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age in nature writing
- Louisiana nature and nature writing
- preservationism and/or conservationism
- literary nature writing

2. describe and analyze the role of the natural world in canonical and non-canonical American literature and writings

3. identify the canon and tradition of American nature writing

4. discuss and take a position on the cultural/social/political contexts out of which nature writing emerges

5. conduct in-depth analyses of significant writers and texts within the tradition of North American nature writing, including Thomas Morton, Jonathan Edwards, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Thomas Jefferson, William Bartram, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, Bob Marshall, David Gessner

6. identify and articulate the positions taken by significant critics and theorists of the canonical tradition of American nature writing and writings that reflect attitudes toward nature in American literary and cultural history.

7. write graduate-level papers that reflect a familiarity with MLA conventions and professional standards of literary/critical discourse.

Class Expectations and Policies

1. Participation:

ENGL 5391 is an introductory graduate-level special topics class in literature. Because of its level and the nature of the texts, the classes will be conducted as discussions. This means that students will be **REQUIRED** to keep up with the syllabus readings. Students who come to class prepared and ready to engage the texts under consideration will ensure that the class succeeds and will be rewarded for their efforts.

Class participation is a requirement that may be met in the following ways:

- a. Direct participation in class discussion.
- b. E-mail Comments and Questions to Instructor. You can discuss an issue or raise questions about an issue by sending an electronic e-mail message to jhazlett@uno.edu. Make sure that your UNO e-mail account is current and that you check it and the Moodle frequently for messages.
- c. Journals. Students are required to write six journal entries on the primary texts and works we will be reading and/or watching. Journal entry due dates are indicated in the "Course Due Dates" document. Journal format is discussed in "The Journals" document, and sample journals are available under "Sample Journal Entries." Journals will be submitted as electronic attachments, in MS Word format to jhazlett@uno.edu. The journals will be re-read by the instructor and graded twice during the semester, once at midterm and once at the end of the semester.
- d. Periodic pop-quizzes if deemed necessary.

2. Web-based Moodle Information:

This course and its materials will be made available on UNO's Moodle site. All students are expected

- a. to have Internet access to www.uno.edu and the Moodle portion of ENGL 5391. Students are responsible for all e-mail communications from the instructor to their UNO e-mail inbox. Moodle help can be accessed on the UNO Moodle site.
- b. to keep up with daily assignments on Moodle.
- c. to come to class prepared to discuss questions posed on Moodle regarding readings. This means that readings should be completed before the class during which the text or texts are to be discussed.
- d. to be aware at all times of our schedule and reading assignments. Since these are subject to changes that will be announced in class, students should not rely entirely on Moodle schedules.

3. Grading:

GRADUATE STUDENT GRADES will be based on the following:

- a. 25% -- 1 Research Paper
- b. 15% -- Journals
- c. 25% -- Midterm Exam
- d. 25% -- Final Exam
- e. 10% -- Summary-Critiques or Class Presentations of Secondary Materials

Should you feel that you have been graded inaccurately, write down your reasons and submit them to me with your graded paper or exam.

4. Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. More than three absences will result in an automatic reduction of your grade. Medical absences, verified by a doctor's note, are accepted.

5. Late papers and missed exams:

Late papers/journals will not be accepted without a doctor's note or its equivalent. You must, moreover, inform me within 24 hours of the due date that the paper is going to be late. Missed exams will also require a doctor's note; get in touch with me within 24 hours of the missed exam by calling me at my office, sending me an email, or leaving a note under my office door.

6. Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students who qualify for disability services will receive the academic modifications to which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the Office of Disability Services each semester and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance.

7. Statement on Student Conduct

Students are expected to treat their fellow students with civility, tolerance, and respect, and on-line as well as classroom discussions should be conducted with those virtues in mind. No harassment, sexual or otherwise, will be tolerated.

8. Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated by the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the UNO Judicial Code for further information at:

<http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf>

Students are required to read these pages and to send the instructor an email indicating that they have read them at jhazlett@uno.edu

The email is due by the end of the first week of classes.

Course Readings Detailed

Our readings include numerous short selections/excerpts and 6 full length texts. Almost all of the early texts are available on-line (see links below) and can be downloaded and printed. Whenever possible, you should print them out so that you can mark significant passages. For your convenience, print out only those pages designated on list..

Genesis, chapters 1, 2, 3

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/k/kjv/kjv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=1477>

Native American Origin myths

Zuni: <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/TheBeginningofNewnessv2-Zuni.html>

Navajo: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/nav/itb/itb03.htm>

Iroquois: <http://www.indians.org/welker/iroqnati.htm>

Hopi: <http://www.indians.org/welker/howtheho.htm>

William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation (1630-1647)*

Selections: Book I, chapter 9 passage

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/24950/pg24950.txt>

Thomas Morton, *The New English Canaan* (Note on the text: “f” for “s,” “u” for “v”)

Author’s Prologue, Book I, Chapter 1

Book II, Chapters I, VIII, IX, X

<http://www.archive.org/stream/newenglishcanaan00mort#page/n9/mode/2up>

or [http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=W1-m0r-](http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=W1-m0r-Nsi4C&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PA179)

[Nsi4C&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PA179](http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=W1-m0r-Nsi4C&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PA179)

Jonathan Edwards, “Types”

<http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaglsby9nZXRVYmplY3QucGw/Yy4xMDo2OjEud2plbw==>

Jonathan Edwards, “Shadows of Divine Things”

<http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaglsby9nZXRVYmplY3QucGw/Yy4xMDo1OjEud2plbw==>

Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*

Selections TBD: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15043/15043-h/15043-h.htm#A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15043/15043-h/15043-h.htm#A_PHILOSOPHICAL_INQUIRY)

Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782)

Selections: Letter III

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/CREV/contents.html>

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781)

Selections: Query VI: “Animals” 165-200; Query XI: “Aborigines” 218-232

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/JEFFERSON/cover.html>

William Bartram, *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida* (1791)

Selections: Author’s Introduction

Part II, Chapter 5: Alligators

Part III, Chapter 7: Mobile to Manchac (Maurepas), Pontchartrain

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/bartram/bartram.html>

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836)

<http://transcendentalism-legacy.tamu.edu/authors/emerson/nature.html>

Henry David Thoreau, *Maine Woods* (1864). Selections: “Ktaadn”

<http://thoreau.eserver.org/ktadn01.html>

“Walking”

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1022/pg1022.txt>

Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* (1845)

Selections: Chants, 1, 2, 6, 24

<http://depts.washington.edu/lsearlec/TEXTS/WHITMAN/SONGSELF.HTM>

John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911).

Selections: All of Chapter I; and the following sections from the remaining chapters:

Chapter II (June 13, June 16, 18);

Chapter III (July 7);

Chapter IV (July 12);

Chapter V (July 15, 20,);

Chapter VI (July 26 and 27);

Chapter VIII (August 12 and 13);

Chapter IX (August 21);

Chapter X (September 1 and 2);

Chapter XI (September 9, 10, 22)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/32540/pg32540.txt>

Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (1949)

Kindle edition: http://www.amazon.com/Sand-County-Almanac-Essays-Conservation-ebook/dp/B000SEKUM6/ref=sr_1_1_tw_kin_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1439415636&sr=1-1&keywords=9780195007770

Purchase in UNO Bookstore

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962).

Selections:

Chapter 1. A Fable for Tomorrow;

Chap 2. The Obligation to Endure;

Chap 3. Elixirs of Death;

Chap 15. Nature Fights Back;

Chap 16. The Rumbblings of an Avalanche;

Chap 17. The Other Road.

Available in Kindle or Google Book editions on-line

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (1968)

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1975)

Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991)

Bob Marshall, “Paddling Off the Edge of the Big Easy” in *Wild Places*, ed. Paul McHugh (1996),

“‘Environmentalism’ Is Not a Dirty Word,” “Environmental Policies Impact Louisiana in a Big Way,”

“Forest Chief Warns That Land Threats Are Real,” “Sportsmen, ‘Tree Huggers’ Join Hands To Spread

Word,” “The Conservative Case for Saving the Coast,” “Our abusive relationship with Big Oil” (available on Moodle site)

David Gessner, essay “Sick of Nature” (2004), and *Tarball Chronicles* (2011)

Due Dates (tentative)

- Sept 4: Journal 1 due (Creation Myths, Puritan Typology, and Pastoralism)
- Sept 18: Journal 2 due (Crevecoeur, Jefferson, Bartram, Emerson and Thoreau)
- Sept 24: Graduate student Summary/Critique 1 due
- Oct 5: Journal 3 due (Muir, Leopold)
- Oct 6: Mid-semester Exam
- Oct 14: Journal 4 due (Carson, Abbey)
- Oct 23: Undergrad Paper #1 due
- Nov 6: Graduate Students Sum/Crit 2 due
- Nov 9: Journal 5 due (Dillard, Williams)
- Nov 27: Journal 6 due (Marshall, Gessmer)
- Dec 1: Graduate Term Papers due
Undergraduate Paper #2 due
- Dec 10: Final Exam

Texts to Purchase for Course (available in Bookstore)

ABBAY, DESERT SOLITAIRE (P)

9780671695880

REQ

SS

1968

14.95

DILLARD, PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK (PERENNIAL CLASSICS ED) (P)

9780061233326

REQ

HARP

1999

14.99

GESSNER, TARBALL CHRONICLES

1-57131-333-8

REQ

MILKWE

0.00

LEOPOLD, SAND COUNTY ALMANAC (P)

9780195007770

REQ

OUP

2ND

1968

12.95

WILLIAMS, REFUGE (P)

9780679740247

REQ

RH

2001

15.00