

LIT 202
The Environmental Imagination
Fall 2016

MWF 10-10:50
LA 202

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Office Hours:
TR 11-12:30
and by appt

I do not know where to find in any literature, whether ancient or modern, any adequate account of that Nature with which I am acquainted.

— Thoreau, *Journal*, February 1851

Course Description

As the gateway course to the Literature & Environment Option, LIT 202 The Environmental Imagination is designed to introduce students to the many discourses of nature. In this course we will approach “natural history” as a complex literary genre grounded in personal and cultural experience of the “more-than-human” world (in David Abram’s now ubiquitous phrase).

While the study of natural history writing has historically focused on authors like Gilbert White, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and John Burroughs (as prominent practitioners of the personal narrative essay that explores the natural world), a more thorough understanding of the genre requires a broad chronological context.

We should not be surprised that even within the shifting boundaries of Anglo-American natural history writing, conceptions of “nature” have changed dramatically over time—which is to say, the “nature” we encounter in the work of authors under the banner of ecological science, quantum physics, or the threat of imminent environmental transformation or collapse (to name only some of many possible influences) is not likely to be the same “nature” we encounter in White or Thoreau or Muir or Burroughs.

Because one’s experience of nature is profoundly shaped by personal and cultural identity, an adequate approach to natural history writing would also need to include consideration of the role race, class, and gender (for example) play in shaping discourses of nature. Further, consideration of non-Anglo-American traditions (including, for example, a range of Native American, Australian Aboriginal, and Asian “literary” practices) expands our understanding of those traditions as it allows us to see the Anglo-American tradition in useful perspective.

Course Goals

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of the historical and cultural range of natural history writing
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of the essential connection between cultural epistemologies and environmental ethics
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays the ability to apply productively an essential critical vocabulary
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of the many rhetorical strategies used by writers of natural history
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays the essential connection between effective thinking and effective writing about literature
- demonstrate through well-reasoned essays a thorough understanding of the rhetorical conventions associated with literary scholarship (especially the disciplinary conventions articulated by the MLA)

LIT 202 and the Writing Competency Requirement

As an approved course in partial satisfaction of the Writing Competency Requirement, LIT 202 is designed to give students the opportunity to develop the ability to write with clarity of thought and precision of language.

This course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university's writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following Writing Learning Outcomes:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific (MLA) writing conventions
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Click on the link to access the **rubric** that will be used to score the papers.

LIT 202 and the General Education Program

As a course that satisfies the General Education Group V: Literary and Artistic Studies (L) requirement, LIT 202 is designed to develop familiarity with significant works of literature. Through this experience, students will enhance their analytical skills and explore the historical, aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural features of these literary texts.

Upon completion of LIT 202, students will be able to:

1. analyze works of art with respect to structure and significance within literary and artistic traditions, including emergent movements and forms; and
2. develop coherent arguments that critique these works from a variety of approaches, such as historical, aesthetic, cultural, psychological, political, and philosophical.

Required Texts

Chatwin, Bruce. *The Songlines*

Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Elder, John and Robert Finch, eds. *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*

Via Moodle:

“Taoism, Buddhism, Nature”

Hinton, David. “Introduction” to *Mountain Home: The Wilderness Poetry of Ancient China*

Lopez, Barry. “Landscape and Narrative”

Lyon, Thomas. “A Taxonomy of Nature Writing”

Suzuki, D.T. from “Love of Nature”

LIT 202 Requirements

- Regular class attendance and participation, steady preparation
- Two revised Critical Essays
- Environmental Perception Project
- A portfolio that includes all your written work

Grading

Revised Essay #1:	40%
Revised Essay #2:	40%
Environmental Perception Project	20%

Course Policies and Procedures, and Unsolicited Advice

- Attendance and Participation: Because I believe you can learn the material covered in this course only by being here, your attendance and **ACTIVE** participation are required. Your final grade will be dropped one full letter grade after **four** unexcused absences; a failing grade will be assigned after **six** unexcused absences. (An **excused** absence requires a **pre-arranged** scholastic or athletic commitment or a **bona fide and substantiated** medical emergency.)
- If you miss a class, **please make arrangements with a colleague to get notes**. Also, please check with me to see if you missed any handouts or special instructions.
- If you get confused, or have a question, raise your hand. If your hand is not in the air, I can only assume you understand the texts and ideas under consideration **PERFECTLY**.
- Texts: The texts under consideration are central to our work in this class, especially during class time. You **MUST** purchase the texts for this class **and you MUST bring the relevant texts to class**. No exceptions, no excuses.
- Being a careful reader and scholar means **LOOKING UP THE DEFINITIONS OF ALL UNFAMILIAR WORDS**. Anything less reflects neglect, if not contempt, for the efforts of authors, and of language itself, the ground of our study, and delight.
- Laptops and tablets may be used for note taking; laptops, tablets, and cellphones used for other purposes will be confiscated and given to wayward children.
- Deadlines: All work is due in class on the assigned date. **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED**.
- Presentation: Essays must be printed. Black ink. 10 or 12 pt. font. Arial, Cambria, Times, or Times New Roman are each sufficient. Please, no funky fonts. I would like you to follow the MLA citation and documentation guidelines in this class. Make sure you include on your work your name, the title and draft number, this class and section number, my name, and the date.
- Please make hard copies of all your work and keep them in a safe place.
- I do not accept work in electronic form. Recycled paper saves trees. Double-sided printing is fine.
- Revision: You may revise your first two essays. Please follow the “Guidelines for Revision” I will give you.
- The instructor and the University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as needed.

Scholarship

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrase) must be properly documented. Students who plagiarize face serious consequences that may range from receiving a failing grade on a given assignment to failing the course. Students who plagiarize also face additional University sanctions.

Accommodations

If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can discuss whatever accommodations may be necessary.

SYLLABUS

{Readings in *The Norton Book of Nature Writing* unless otherwise noted. [M] = text available via Moodle.}

Traditions of Natural History

- M 8/29 Introduction: The Nature of Nature Writing
- W 8/31 Finch and Elder “Introduction” and “Introduction to the 1990 *Norton Book of Nature Writing*” (15-30)
- F 9/2 Lyon “A Taxonomy of Nature Writing” (3-7) [M]
- M 9/5 **LABOR DAY HOLIDAY**
- W 9/7 White from *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (33-50)
- F 9/9 D. Wordsworth from *Journals* (90-95); Bartram from *Travels* (64-76)
- M 9/12 Audubon from *Ornithological Biography* (117-122);
Muir “A Wind-Story in the Forests” and “The Water-Ouzel” (250-268)
- W 9/14 Standing Bear “Nature” (326-331);
Momaday from *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (737-742)

The Nature of Narrative

- F 9/16 Teale “The Lost Woods” (435-439);
Mitchell from *Living at the End of Time* (790-796);
Bruchach “The Circle is the Way to See” (811-818)
- M 9/19 E. White “Black Women and the Wilderness” (1062-1067);
Ray “Built By Fire” and “Forest Beloved” (1130-1135)
- W 9/21 Silko “Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination” (1003-1014);
Lopez “Landscape and Narrative” [M]
- F 9/23 No Class

- M 9/26 *The Songlines* (1-71)
- W 9/28 *The Songlines* (72-143)
- F 9/30 *The Songlines* (144-223)
- M 10/3 *The Songlines* (224-294)

Nature, Metaphor, and the Poetic Imagination

- M 10/10 Literary Analysis Bootcamp
- W 10/12 MLA Bootcamp
- F 10/14 Workshop #1 **Essay #1.1 DUE**
- M 10/17 Workshop #2 **Essay #1.2 DUE**
- W 10/19 The Nature of Metaphor **Essay #1.3 DUE**
- F 10/21 Leopold from *A Sand County Almanac* (376-397)
- M 10/24 Maclean from *A River Runs Through It* (457-465)
- W 10/26 Jefferies “Out of Doors in February” (287-295);
Wilson from *American Ornithology* (76-81)
- F 10/28 LeGuin “A Very Warm Mountain” (651-657);
Thoreau “Seeing” and “Topsell’s Gesner” (214-218)
- M 10/31 Clemens from *Life on the Mississippi* (236-238);
Steinbeck from *The Log From the Sea of Cortez* (465-468)

The Nature of Scientific Discourse

- W 11/2 Science as Epistemology and Discourse
- F 11/4 Darwin from *Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle*, from *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, from *The Descent of Man*, and *Selection in Relation to Sex* (151-163); King from *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada* (276-281)
- M 11/7 Waterton from *Wanderings in South America, the North-West of the United States, and the Antilles* (104-116); Seton from *Wild Animals I Have Known* (305-312); Burroughs “In Mammoth Cave” (244-250)

W 11/9 L. Thomas “Death in the Open” and “The World’s Biggest Membrane” (533-538); Wilson “The Bird of Paradise” (658-662)

F 11/11 **Veterans Day—No Class**

M 11/14 *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* “Heaven and Earth in Jest”; Williamson from *Tarka the Otter* (410-415)

W 11/16 *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* “The Fixed,” “Untying the Knot”

F 11/18 *Pilgrim* “Intricacy,” “Fecundity,” “The Horns of the Altar”

M 11/21 Workshop #2 **Essay #2.1 DUE**

Thanksgiving Holiday

The Nature of Immediate Experience

M 11/28 “Taoism, Buddhism, Nature” [M] **Essay #2.2 DUE**

W 11/30 Hinton “Introduction” to *The Wilderness Poetry of Ancient China* [M]

F 12/2 Suzuki from “Love of Nature” [M]

M 12/5 Thoreau “Ktaadn” (205-211)

W 12/7 *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* “Seeing”

F 12/9 *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* “The Present”

M 12/12 Fowles from *The Tree* (592-605)

M 11/30 Conclusions, Loose Ends, Evaluations

T 12/20

Environmental Perception Project, Completed Portfolio DUE by Noon