The Ecology of Literature

LIT 280.80
Fall 2015

Professor David Gilcrest
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Office Hours:
M&W 11-12; Th 11:30-12:30
Office: LA 218

T&Th 9:40-11
Rankin 203

I can no longer
Tell where I begin and leave off.
--Kenneth Rexroth

Course Description

LIT 280 The Ecology of Literature examines literary representations of human and more-than-human relationships under the sign of ecology. Drawing on relevant ecocritical theory, we will explore a wide range of Anglophone literary texts that offer models of “identity” grounded in interanimating and interdependent affiliations. Our inquiry into the literature of the “ecological self” will focus on concepts of Nature, the Wild, and Wilderness—and their political and ethical implications.

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- 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 literary authors
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays the essential connection between effective thinking and effective writing about literature
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of how certain writers in the Anglophone tradition construct, and make use of, the idea of wilderness.
- demonstrate through well-reasoned essays an understanding of the evolution of the ecological self in the work of select Anglophone writers

LIT 280 and the General Education Requirements

LIT 280 Requirements

- Regular class attendance and participation, steady preparation
- Five critical essays
- A portfolio of your written work

Grading

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<th>Essay #</th>
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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 five 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.
- 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.
- Revision: You may revise your first two essays, as needed. 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.

**Required Texts**

*Walking & Wild Apples* by Henry David Thoreau  
*Nature* by Ralph Waldo Emerson  
Selected Poems by Walt Whitman (handout)  
“A White Heron” by Sarah Orne Jewett (handout)  
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*  
*Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth*  
“Black Women in the Wilderness” by Evelyn White (handout)  
“Nutting” by William Wordsworth (handout)  
*The Wild God of the World: An Anthology of Robinson Jeffers*  
Selected Poems by Gary Snyder (handout)  
*The Practice of the Wild* by Gary Snyder  
*Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood

A two-pocket folder for your portfolio

**Syllabus**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/1</td>
<td>Introduction: Environmental Ethics and the Ecological Self</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/2-SU 9/13</td>
<td>Fall Trek—Frank Church/River of No Return Wilderness</td>
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<td>T 9/15</td>
<td>Thoreau “Walking”</td>
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TH  9/17    Thoreau “Wild Apples”

T    9/22    Emerson “Nature”

TH   9/24    Whitman (selected poems) [M]

{F 9/25-SA 9/26    Overnight}

T    9/29    Literary Analysis Bootcamp

TH 10/1-M 10/5    Missouri Breaks Citizen Science Trip

T    10/6    Essay #1.1 DUE for Workshop

TH  10/8    Jewett “A White Heron” [M]          Essay #1.2 DUE

T    10/13   The Epic of Gilgamesh

TH  10/15   Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth

T    10/20   E. White “Black Women and the Wilderness” [M]

TH  10/22   Essay #2.1 DUE for Workshop;
             Wordsworth “Nutting”

T    10/27   Jeffers (poems TBA)          Essay #2.2 DUE

TH  10/29   Jeffers (poems TBA)

T    11/3    Jeffers (poems TBA)

TH  11/5    Jeffers (poems TBA)

T    11/10   Snyder (selected poems) [M]          Essay #3 DUE

TH  11/12   Snyder Practice of the Wild (vii-83)

T    11/17   Practice of the Wild (84-153)

TH  11/19   Practice of the Wild (154-198)

T    11/24   TBA

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

T    12/1    Atwood Oryx and Crake (3-110)          Essay #4 DUE

TH   12/3    Oryx and Crake (113-261)

T    12/8    Oryx and Crake (265-374)

TH   12/10   Loose Ends & Evaluations

W 12/16   Essay #5, Completed Portfolio DUE by NOON