

English 396
Spring 2021
MWF 12:00pm – 12:50pm
Gailor Hall 011

Dr. Ben Mangrum
benjamin.mangrum@sewanee.edu
Office: Gailor Hall 102A
Office hours: T 10:30am-12:00pm
(and by appointment)

American Environmental Writing

Students in this course will study American writing on environmental justice, biodiversity, climate change, the loss of wilderness, animal rights, and the unnaturalness of our obsession with the natural. We will also think about the various genres of writing often lumped together under the term “environmental writing,” asking what these very different kinds of writing have to do with one another. Finally, the readings in this course will give us an opportunity to explore key terms in the environmental humanities.

This is a reading intensive course. For this reason, the graded assignments will focus on evaluating your grasp of the assigned readings and lectures. You will also be asked to make creative interpretations and critical connections across the works from the semester in a final essay-based examination.

Required texts:

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (ISBN 978-0-446-67550-5)
- Percival Everett, *God’s Country* (ISBN 9780807083635)
- Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Word for World Is Forest* (ISBN 978-0-765-32464-1)
- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (ISBN 978-0-452-27387-0)
- *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*, edited by Bill McKibben (ISBN 978-1-59853-020-9)

| Course Assignments | Due Date | Grade % |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| First, Second, and Third exams (20% each) | March 5, April 2, May 7 | 60 |
| Final Essay Exam | May 17 | 25 |
| Course Participation | Daily | 15 |

Course Learning Outcomes:

This course will enable students to...

- Read texts closely and critically within national and historical conditions.
- Identify the different genres of environmental writing with a view to their cultural, global, and political stakes.
- Make effective use of the general history of modern environmentalism when interpreting cultural phenomena.
- Employ key terminology in ecocriticism and the environmental humanities.
- Write clearly and analytically about literary texts.

DAY-BY-DAY SCHEDULE

All of the readings may be found in the five required texts. Readings found in *American Earth* are followed by *AE* and the page number. Readings should be completed by the due date listed in the course schedule below. I strongly discourage purchasing electronic versions of these texts.

| | Monday | Wednesday | Friday |
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| Week 1 | <p>February 1 Syllabus and introductions</p> <p>These two poems will be discussed during class: Robert Frost, ““Out, Out—”” and Audre Lorde, “Every Traveler Has One Vermont Poem”</p> | <p>February 3 César Chávez, “Wrath of Grapes Boycott Speech” (<i>AE</i>, pp.690-695) and Robert D. Bullard, from <i>Dumping in Dixie</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.725-736)</p> | <p>February 5 Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet</i>, ch.1 (pp.3-46)</p> |
| Week 2 | <p>February 8 Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet</i>, chs.2-3 (pp.49-130)</p> | <p>February 10 Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet</i>, chs.4-5 (pp.133-176)</p> | <p>February 12 Thoreau (<i>AE</i>, pp.1-2), from <i>Huckleberries</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.26-36)</p> |
| Week 3 | <p>February 15 Michael Pollan, from <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.948-960) and Rebecca Solnit, “The Thoreau Problem” (<i>AE</i>, pp.971-974)</p> | <p>February 17 Jane Jacobs, from <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.359-364) and Ellen Meloy, “Flora and Fauna of Las Vegas” (<i>AE</i>, pp.793-808)</p> | <p>February 19 Sigurd F. Olson, “Northern Lights” (<i>AE</i>, pp.323-326) and Linda Hogan, from <i>Dwellings</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.809-814)</p> |
| Week 4 | <p>February 22 Aldo Leopold, from <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.265- 294)</p> | <p>February 24 Rachel Carson, from <i>Silent Spring</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.365-376) and E.B. White “Sootfall and Fallout” (<i>AE</i>, pp. 327-336)</p> | <p>February 26 Edward Abbey, from <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (<i>AE</i>, pp.413-433)</p> |
| Week 5 | <p>March 1 Selections from John Muir’s writing (<i>AE</i>, pp.84-112)</p> | <p>March 3 <i>No class – Reading Day</i></p> | <p>March 5 First Exam</p> |
| Week 6 | <p>March 8 Mary Austin, “The Scavengers” (<i>AE</i>, pp.134-139) and Eliot Porter, “The Living Canyon” (<i>AE</i>, pp.380-391)</p> | <p>March 10 Everett, <i>God’s Country</i>, chs.1-8 (pp.3-70)</p> | <p>March 12 Everett, <i>God’s Country</i>, chs.9-18 (pp.71-153)</p> |
| Week 7 | <p>March 15 Everett, <i>God’s Country</i>, chs.19- 26 (pp.155-219)</p> | <p>March 17 William Cronon, “Seasons of Want and Plenty” (<i>AE</i>, pp.632- 658)</p> | <p>March 19 N Scott Momady, “A First American Views His Land” (<i>AE</i>, pp.570-581) and Alice Walker, “Everything Is a Human Being” (<i>AE</i>, pp.659-670)</p> |

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| Week 8 | March 22 George Catlin, “The North American Indians” (<i>AE</i> , pp.37-45) and Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” (<i>AE</i> , pp.405-412) | March 24 Le Guin, <i>The Word for World Is Forest</i> , chs.1-3 | March 26 Le Guin, <i>The Word for World Is Forest</i> , chs.4-5 |
| Week 9 | March 29 Le Guin, <i>The Word for World Is Forest</i> , chs.7-8 | March 31 <i>No class – Reading Day</i> | April 2 Second Exam |
| Week 10 | April 5 Walt Whitman, from <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (<i>AE</i> , pp.62-70) | April 7 Thoreau, from <i>Walden</i> (<i>AE</i> , pp.9-25) | April 9 Annie Dillard, “Fecundity” (<i>AE</i> , pp.531-549) |
| Week 11 | April 12 Wendell Berry, selections (<i>AE</i> , pp.504-530) | April 14 Barry Lopez, “A Presentation of Whales” (<i>AE</i> , pp.696-715) and W. S. Merwin, “Place” (<i>AE</i> , pp.716-717) | April 16 David Quammen, “Planet of Weeds” (<i>AE</i> , pp.874-897) and Janisse Ray, from <i>Ecology of a Cracker Childhood</i> (<i>AE</i> , pp.898-906) |
| Week 12 | April 19 Kenneth E. Boulding, from <i>The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth</i> (<i>AE</i> , pp.399-404) and Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (<i>AE</i> , pp.438-450) | April 21 Butler, <i>Parable</i> , chs.1-9 (pp.3-99) | April 23 Butler, <i>Parable</i> , chs.10-15 (pp.100-178) |
| Week 13 | April 26 Butler, <i>Parable</i> , chs.16-21 (pp.179-269) | April 28 <i>No class – Reading Day</i> | April 30 Butler, <i>Parable</i> , chs. 22-25 (pp.270-329) |
| Week 14 | May 3 Bill McKibben, from <i>The End of Nature</i> (<i>AE</i> , pp.718-724) | May 5 Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day” (<i>AE</i> , pp.737-738) | May 7 Third Exam |
| Week 15 | May 10 Distribution of Final Exam | May 12 TBD | May 14 The Final Exam is due by 9:00pm CST on Monday, May 17. This is the time set as our exam period by the Registrar. |