

ENG 289
Spring 2016
MWF 1:30pm – 2:20pm
Chambers 2130

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Office: Carnegie B 18
Office hours: MF 9:30-11:00, W 2:30-4:00
(and by appointment)

Environmental Literature

This course fulfills the LITE/LTRQ distribution requirement and the Humanities track of the Environmental Studies major and concentration.

Catalog Description: Overview of environmental literature, covering various time periods and genres. Generally focuses on the environmental literature of the United States, but may include other English-language literature. Designed for both majors and non-majors.

Key questions for the semester: This course will consider how American literary texts understand human beings in relation to their environments, both natural and constructed. We will consider a spectrum of questions regarding ecology, culture, regional and social justice, race, humanism, and the intersection of nature and philosophy. This course will require you to grapple with a spectrum of complex social, cultural, and philosophical problems; however, it also will serve as an introduction to canonical works in American environmental literature and the skill of reading texts that are not conventionally viewed in ecological terms. In short, the creative non-fiction, novels, film, and poetry considered in this course will help you become a better ecological citizen through the intellectual struggle of analyzing cultural texts and ideas.

Learning Outcomes – by the end of the semester, you will be able to...

- employ skills of literary analysis, especially close reading
- situate literary texts within the wider conditions of ecology and social justice
- understand important terminology, genres, and movements in historical literary criticism
- hone the ability to discuss, debate, and reevaluate your ideas with peers and a faculty interlocutor

Required texts:

- Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (ISBN 9780345326492)
- Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (ISBN 0-06-091545-5)
- Paul Harding, *Tinkers* (ISBN 978-1-934137-12-3)
- Jynne Dilling Martin, *We Mammals in Hospitable Times* (ISBN 978-0887485961)
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (ISBN 978-0-307-38789-9)
- Aimee Nezhukumatathil and Ross Gay, *Lace & Pyrite* (purchase at aimeenez.net)
- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (ISBN 0-395-98077-1)
- Ron Rash, *Saints at the River* (ISBN 978-0312424916)
- Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge* (ISBN 978-0679740247)

(Additional readings will be posted to Moodle. Kindle or other electronic versions of these texts are not allowed in the classroom. I strongly discourage you from buying digital copies of the course texts.)

Honor Code: All work for ENG 289 is subject to the Davidson College Honor Code and must be pledged. All ideas, quotations, and paraphrases that are not your own must be documented in MLA format. If you are ever unsure about what might constitute an Honor Code violation, please contact me. I am very happy to consult and advise on sticky matters.

Course Assignments	%	Due Date
Thinking-with-Thoreau Project	20	Feb. 17
Environmental Creative Work	20	3/30; 4/1
Reading Evaluations (10% each)	20	
Engagement	20	
Final Project	20	April 29

How to Format Your Assignments:

In addition to the minimum word length, your assignments should conform to the following formatting standards (violation of which will be penalized at my discretion):

- Double-spaced
- Times or Times New Roman font only – 12-point in size
- 1-inch margins on all sides
- Last name and page number in the upper-right hand “Header” of every page
- Staple your paper in the upper left-hand corner
- To save paper, you may print on the front and back of the page
- In addition to your name, my name, the course number, and due date, please also include **a word count at the top of the first page**

A Further Note on Assignments:

Your papers should be submitted both in hard copy and to Moodle. I am a stickler for having clean and concise prose, arguable claims, and for compelling “close readings” of texts. Please refer to the handouts on Moodle for examples of close readings and other “writing” tips. Also, late assignments (including late arrivals to class) will be penalized by at least one letter grade. Late assignments of more than 48 hours will not be accepted. (Of course, if there is a legitimate health-related emergency, please discuss your situation with me.) Late reviews **will not be accepted** except for dire emergencies and only if you contact me **well before** the due date.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Your overall performance and class participation grade will suffer from excessive absences. If you must miss class for any reason, please let me know well in advance. With few exceptions, I will deduct **ten percent from your Participation grade for every absence after the third**. So, if you miss four classes, the highest you could earn for your Participation grade would be 90%, five classes would be 80%, and so on. It would be wise to attend every class from the beginning of the semester in the event that emergencies arise or you need to be gone for University events. Furthermore, if you are late to class three times, I will count that as one absence.

Engagement:

Your participation grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

- Attendance (per Attendance Policy)
- Quality and quantity of contributions to class discussion. I want you to contribute each class meeting, but no cursory contributions. (50% of participation grade)

- Quality and quantity of forum posts. The “forum post” component of your Participation grade mirrors the attendance policy. Every missed post after the third will correspond to a 10% deduction of this component of the grade. “Check minuses” on posts correspond to a “late arrival” in the attendance policy. (50% of participation grade)

The following will negatively affect your participation grade:

- Using a laptop, computer, phone, iPod, iPad, or any other electronic technology, unless allowed by the Learning Disability act
- Talking while either the instructor or one of your peers is speaking
- Displaying an unengaged or insouciant attitude
- Showing disrespect or indifference toward your peers
- Not reading an assignment in its entirety

Accommodations for Students With Disabilities:

Full accommodations are the legal right of students with all kinds of disabilities, whether learning disabilities or physical disabilities, and I am happy to provide accommodations. If you are a student with a learning disability documented by Davidson College or other form of disability, please identify yourself to me within the first week or two of class, so I will know what accommodations you need and how to enhance your learning experience. All discussions will be fully confidential unless you stipulate otherwise.

Religious Accommodations for Students:

Please look carefully at the syllabus during the first week of class. If any of the assignments conflict with a major religious holiday for your faith, please let me know. I will make every effort to make the necessary accommodations.

Reading Evaluations:

As another mechanism for prompting our class discussions, each student will be responsible for two “reading evaluations” across the semester. These are class meetings when you will be responsible for (a) reading your peers’ forum posts, (b) leading class discussion on the assigned readings, in part by reference to your peers’ posts, and (c) introducing a secondary critical perspective not already expressed in the reading schedule. You will select the secondary source in consultation with the professor. (Don’t worry; I will help you identify complimentary essays, and I’d like to connect these with your personal interests. These secondary sources are typically short chapters or theoretical essays.) During your two assigned days, you will begin your “reading evaluation” by briefly presenting an evaluative or critical framework for understanding our assigned text. Then, you will lead our class discussion. (You should meet with me at least one week in advance of each of your “reading evaluations.”)

Thinking-with-Thoreau Project

This project gives you the opportunity to put Thoreau’s writing in conversation with another text from the class. You should (a) formulate a clear thesis or arguable interpretation about the relationship between Thoreau and a later example of American environmental writing. You should also (b) support that position by analyzing salient ideas, images, or the literary form of the texts. Finally, you should (c) situate your thesis and close reading within wider conditions (philosophical, environmental science, regional history, etc.). I’ve read these texts, so summary is not necessary. We will regularly conduct “close readings” of focused passages, and you should

take this in-class work as a model for the method of “close” textual analysis in your papers. In addition to providing an illuminating close reading, your writing must be flawless.

I will be happy to serve as a sounding board, recommend secondary sources, and read drafts of your papers during my office hours. Please take me up on this offer.

Environmental Creative Work

From eco-poetry and non-fiction essays to the philosophical musings of naturalists and an eco-horror film, this course will expose you to a variety of models for ecologically inflected imaginative work. We will do the hard intellectual labor of thinking critically about this material. However, you will also try to contribute to this body of work through your own creative project. You will determine the specific medium, conceit, length, and other parameters of the creative work in consultation with the professor. You will present your short story, poetry, memoir, etc. to the class on either March 30 or April 1. This assignment works from the premise that creative work can be as critical and substantial as an analytical research paper.

Final Project:

The semester will culminate in a thesis-driven research project (written formats must be 2000 words). You will submit an ungraded proposal of the final project on April 15. I will distribute a detailed assignment description on April 1. The project is due on the last day of class, April 29.

Day-by-Day Schedule:

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 1	January 11 First Day of Class – Syllabus, introductions, etc.	January 13 Martin, <i>We Mammals</i> , pp.9-27	January 15 Martin, <i>We Mammals</i> , pp.28-49
Week 2	January 18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (no class)	January 20 No Class	January 22 <i>Walden</i> , “Economy” (pp.39-94)
Week 3	January 25 <i>Walden</i> , “Where I Lived...” to “Baker Farm” (pp.94-181)	January 27 <i>Walden</i> , “Higher Laws,” “Brute Neighbors,” “House-Warming,” “Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors” (pp.181-222)	January 29 <i>Walden</i> , “Winter Animals,” “The Pond in Winter,” “Spring,” and “Conclusion” (pp.222-264)
Week 4	February 1 Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pp.ix-101 (Author’s Intro—“Rocks”)	February 3 Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pp.102-187 (“Cowboys and Indians”-“The Moon-Eyed Horse”)	February 5 Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pp.188-271 (“Down the River”-“The Dead Man at Grandview Point”)
Week 5	February 8 Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pp.272-337 (“Tukuhnikivats”-end)	February 10 Thoreau, “Walking” (Moodle)	February 12 <i>The Bay</i> (2012), dir. B. Levinson <i>Screening of this film Wednesday evening, place and time TBD.</i>
Week 6	February 15 Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” and Solint, “The Thoreau Problem” (Moodle)	February 17 Nezhukumathil and Gay, <i>Lace & Pyrite</i> , Introduction, “Summer” and “Autumn”	February 19 Nezhukumathil and Gay, <i>Lace & Pyrite</i> , “Winter” “Spring” and “Summer”

Week 7	February 22 First seven poems available at http://aimeenez.net/poems/ Nezhukumatathil will visit our class this day. She will also give a public reading in Hance this evening (<i>attendance required</i>).	February 24 Jane Jacobs, from <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> (Moodle); R. Crumb, "A Short History of America" (Moodle)	February 26 <i>Thinking with-Thoreau Project due</i>
Spring Break (no class)	February 29	March 2	March 4
Week 8	March 7 Dillard, <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> , pp.1-103 (chs. 1-6)	March 9 Dillard, <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> , pp.104-206 (chs. 7-11)	March 11 Dillard, <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> , pp.207-271 (chs. 12-15)
Week 9	March 14 Harding, <i>Tinkers</i> , pp.7-70 (ch. 1)	March 16 Harding, <i>Tinkers</i> , pp.71-126 (ch.2)	March 18 Harding, <i>Tinkers</i> , pp.127-191 (chs.3-4)
Week 10	March 21 McCarthy, <i>The Road</i> , pp. 3-92	March 23 McCarthy, <i>The Road</i> , pp. 92-190	March 25 McCarthy, <i>The Road</i> , pp. 190-287
Week 11	March 28 Easter Break (no class)	March 30 <i>Presentations of creative work</i>	April 1 <i>Presentations of creative work</i>
Week 12	April 4 Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (Moodle)	April 6 Williams, <i>Refuge</i> , pp.3-76 (Prologue-"California Gulls")	April 8 Williams, <i>Refuge</i> , pp.77-140 ("Ravens"- "Magpies")
Week 13	April 11 Williams, <i>Refuge</i> , pp.141-209 ("Long-Billed Curlews"- "Red-Shafted Flicker")	April 13 Williams, <i>Refuge</i> , pp.210-314 ("Dark-Eyed Junco"-Note to Reader)	April 15 Catch-up day <i>Final project proposal due</i>
Week 14	April 18 Rash, <i>Saints at the River</i> , pp.3-65 (beginning-ch.3)	April 20 Rash, <i>Saints at the River</i> , pp.67-123 (chs.4-5)	April 22 Rash, <i>Saints at the River</i> , pp.127-180 (chs.6-7)
Week 15	April 25 Rash, <i>Saints at the River</i> , pp.181-237 (chs.8-10)	April 27 <i>TBD</i>	April 29 Conclusions and Evaluations <i>Final Project due</i>
Week 16	May 2 <i>No Class</i>	May 4 <i>No Class</i>	May 6 <i>Exam period begins at 8:40am</i>