

English 382: SWS Literature and Nature (Section 02)

Winter 2017 TuTh 4:00-5:15 The Connection 215

Instructor: Dr. Ilse Schweitzer VanDonkelaar
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 Office: Lake Huron Hall 237
 Office Hours: W 3-5 and by appointment

Required Texts:

William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Folger), ISBN: 978-0743484954
 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Ballantine), ISBN: 978-0345345059
 Claire Vaye Watkins, *Gold Fame Citrus* (Riverhead), ISBN: 978-1594634246
 Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (Random House), ISBN-10: 0770429351
 Linda Hogan, *Dwellings* (Norton), ISBN: 978-0393322477
 Assorted readings and handouts (available via Blackboard)

Web access: You will need to have access to Blackboard to retrieve some readings, engage in discussion, and to turn in some assignments.

Course Description

In this course, we will read and discuss literary nonfiction, poetry, environmental fiction, and religious texts that engage with the relationship between human beings and the natural world. As we dive into these texts, we will see how literature illuminates and reflects human and nonhuman nature and how our authors frame the effects and consequences of human and non-human interaction. Through our analysis of this literature and discussion of our own long-held beliefs, we will unpack the traditional dichotomies of human / world; culture / nature; we will also interrogate the realistic and unrealistic ways in which authors represent varied landscapes (ocean, desert, forest, plain, wilderness, garden, “paradise”) and the meanings that these landscapes have come to hold in our own minds. Finally, we will be introduced to the foundational texts and terms of ecocriticism, a field of literary criticism focusing on the intersection between text and environment. This particular section of English 382 will offer a special focus on:

- how “nature writing” and environmental texts reveal and negotiate the human spiritual experience, and how religious texts construct a relationship between humanity and the non-human world;
- philosophies of conservation and preservation within texts;
- the risks and effects of environmental destruction, species endangerment, ecophobia, and climate change;
- the ways in which authors deal with these risks, and how they relate individual struggles and experiences within the natural world to larger human anxieties about our place in the world.

Part of the Sustainability Issue. Prerequisites: WRT 150 and junior standing.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Show an improvement in reading and literary analysis skills through daily discussions and writing assignments.
2. Gain confidence in textual interpretation and actively participate in dynamic conversations about literature and the environment.
3. Demonstrate a broader understanding of the ways that authors represent varied landscapes in literature, and the different functions that environmental writing can serve in artistic expression and activism.
4. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the foundational concepts and methods of ecocriticism.

5. Read, evaluate, and discuss critical essays relating to environmental studies of literature.
6. Demonstrate improvement and revision of writing skills, literary analysis, and MLA documentation by drafting two papers, participating in peer review activities, and revising those papers for submission.

SWS (Supplemental Writing Skills) Designation:

This course is designated SWS. Completion of WRT 150 with a grade of C or better (*not* C-) is a prerequisite. SWS credit will not be given to a student who completes this course before completing the prerequisite. SWS courses adhere to certain guidelines. Students turn in a total of at least 3000 words of writing. Part of that total may be essay exams, but a substantial amount of it is made up of essays, reports, or research papers. The instructor works with the students on revising drafts of papers, rather than simply grading the finished piece of writing. At least four hours of class time will be devoted to writing instruction. At least one third of the final grade in the course is based on the writing assignments.

Coursework:

Reading, participation, and class activities:

Our class will be discussion-based and fairly light on lecture. You will be expected to complete the reading assignments prior to each class meeting, to attend class regularly, and to contribute often to class discussion. Your comments and questions will determine the shape and direction of the course -- your active engagement will help me to make this class a productive, positive experience for all of us! I will keep track of the quantity and quality of your contributions to discussion, so be sure to *think* and *speak up* often. **In-class writing assignments and your contributions to group-work assignments** will also count toward the "participation" portion of your grade.

Daily classwork points: For each class meeting, you can earn a possible 5 points for participation. I will award points thus:

- 0 points -- absence OR student is disengaged with class, unprepared (no text book), or using phone or laptop for activities unrelated to class.
- 3 points -- student is present, brings book or reading, at times attentive in class.
- 4 points -- student is present, with text book, attentive, taking notes, perhaps volunteers once in discussion; if working in groups, student contributes to group efforts.
- 5 points -- student is fully prepared, actively engaged in the class, taking notes and actively participating in discussion; if working in groups, student is actively engaged in group.

Reading Quizzes:

Over the course of the semester, you will complete five reading quizzes. These will measure whether you are keeping up with the assigned reading and how well you are comprehending the material. Quizzes will be given at the start of class. Quiz questions will be in short-answer format; expect 5 questions per quiz with an expectation of 1-2 sentences needed to answer each question. You CANNOT make up a quiz in case of absence or lateness, HOWEVER I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

Analysis Papers:

Over the course of the semester, you will complete **two literary analysis** papers of about 5-7 pages each. In each paper, you will choose one or two of our texts, and will discuss an issue relating to nature / ecotheory / environmental humanities that arises within the text. I will provide a list of more specific questions on the assignment sheet. For each paper, you **must** incorporate material from the text (e.g. quotations!) to support your observations. You **must also** incorporate material from **two peer-reviewed scholarly sources** into your work (one of these sources can be an article that we read and discuss in class). You must follow MLA guidelines for paper formatting and citation style. You will also participate in a peer review activity for each

paper. Late papers will lose one letter grade for each day of late submission and MUST be turned in within a week of original due date.

Discussion lead:

Each class member will sign up to lead our discussion of one of the scholarly articles I have assigned. Depending on class size, we will end up working in groups of 4-5. You should plan to lead discussion for about 15-20 minutes, though if we get into a rollicking debate, the floor will remain yours! To aid you in your discussion lead, you will create and turn in: (1) an outline of the major argument(s) presented in the article or chapter; (2) your own response and evaluation of your chosen article in about a paragraph or two; (3) five thoughtful discussion questions to prompt class engagement with both the article and the text read previously. These materials are due to me on the day of your presentation. All group members will receive the same grade, so if you are having trouble with the group dynamic, let me know!

Final Exam:

Final exam to be held Thursday, April 27, from 4-5:50. Exam will likely include definitions, passage identifications, short answer questions, and essay question.

Grading Breakdown by Assignment:

Participation / daily writing assignments / online work: 30%

Lit analysis papers: 30% (15% each)

Discussion lead: 10%

Reading quizzes: 10% (2.5% each)

Final exam: 20%

A = 94-100	A- = 90-93	B+ = 87-89	B = 84-86	B- = 80-83	C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76	C- = 70-73	D+ = 67-69	D = 64-66	F = 0-63	

Communication and Blackboard:

Any updates and notices (change of venue, change in assignment, instructor absence, etc.) will go out over email and will be posted on the Blackboard site. PLEASE CHECK EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD REGULARLY! I promise to make my best attempt to get this information to you as soon as possible.

Other Policies...

Respect: The classroom (this includes our online class space!) is a place of respect, civilized discussion, and open-mindedness. We will likely disagree with each other from time to time about literary interpretations (among other things), but we will learn to do so respectfully and sensitively. Please be aware your tone online and in person.

Attendance: is expected. I will take attendance at the start of each class. Arriving more than 10 minutes late (or leaving more than 10 minutes early) will result in a penalty of your classwork points for the day. Arriving more than 20 minutes late will be counted as an absence. ****EVERY** component of your grade draws upon the material we explore in class discussion and in lecture, so be here!** If you miss class, it is YOUR responsibility to find out what content you missed, preferably by first asking your classmates. Any absences beyond three will result in a deduction of 3% from your final grade, *per day*. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences... if you run into a situation where you must miss multiple classes, talk to me.

Computers and cell phones: **You may use a laptop to take notes**, read the handouts posted on Blackboard, and find information relevant to our discussion. You may NOT use your laptop for Facebooking, watching cat videos, or otherwise wasting time or distracting yourself during class. If this becomes a problem, I will disallow laptops in class for everyone. **No cell phones out during class.** Lectures and class discussions **may not be** recorded in any fashion by students.

Late work: Assignments are due at the start of class on the due date OR when indicated on Blackboard. One letter grade will be lost for every calendar day that an assignment is late. Class activities and quizzes cannot be made up at a later date.

FERPA: Due to FERPA regulations, I cannot discuss your grade via phone or email. If you would like to discuss your academic standing and progress in this class, I am happy to meet with you during my office hours.

Plagiarism: IF YOU ARE CAUGHT PLAGIARIZING, you will face academic sanctions including possible failure of this course and a letter sent to the appropriate campus offices. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty in this course, but if you have any questions or uncertainty about the issue, PLEASE ASK ME. I'm happy to talk about it.

Students with Disabilities:

If you need academic accommodations because of a learning, physical, or other disability, please contact Disability Support Resources at 331-2490. Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating this classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so I can develop a plan to assist you.

Course Schedule

****PLEASE REGARD THIS SCHEDULE AS SOMEWHAT FLUID. I may move some readings and assignments around if we fall behind, or due to weather****

Tu, Jan 10 -- Introductions, syllabus review, poetry of Wendell Berry

Th, Jan 12 – GVSU CLOSED DUE TO WEATHER

Tu, Jan 17 -- Stories of Creation (Judeo-Christian, Hopi, Maori)

Th, Jan 19 – Anglo-Saxon poetry: riddles and “The Wanderer” (Blackboard)

Tu, Jan 24 -- Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” (Blackboard)

Th, Jan 26 – William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, acts I-II **QUIZ**

Tu, Jan 31 – *Lear*, acts III-V

Th, Feb 2 – Simon Estok, “Dramatizing Environmental Fear: *King Lear*’s Unpredictable Natural Spaces and Domestic Places” (Blackboard)

Tu, Feb 7 – Early American nature poetry: Bryant, “The Prairies,” Emerson “Each and All,” Whitman, selections from “Song of Myself,” selections from Emily Dickinson (Blackboard)

Th, Feb 9 – continue discussion of poetry; Rueckert’s “Literature and Ecology”

Tu, Feb 14 – reading TBD; Neil Evernden, “The Pathetic Fallacy”

Th, Feb 16 -- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (pp. 3-43) **QUIZ**

Tu, Feb 21 – Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (pp. 44-98; 101-125)

Th, Feb 23 – peer review of paper #1

Tu, Feb 28 – Leopold, “Thinking Like a Mountain”; Tim B. Rogers, “Revisioning our Views of ‘Nature’ Through an Examination of Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*”

Th, Mar 2 – Carson, selections from *Edge of the Sea* and *Silent Spring* ; **PAPER #1 DUE**

SPRING BREAK (start reading *Oryx and Crake*)

Fri, Mar 10 – Last day to drop with “W” on transcript

Tu, Mar 14 -- Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* **QUIZ**

Th, Mar 16 – *Oryx and Crake*

Tu, Mar 21 – *Oryx and Crake*

Th, Mar 23 – *Oryx and Crake* **QUIZ**

Tu, Mar 28 – article on Atwood and environmental destruction / apocalypse

Th, Mar 30 – Claire Vaye Watkins, *Gold Fame Citrus*

Tu, Apr 4 – *Gold Fame Citrus* **QUIZ**

Th, Apr 6 – *Gold Fame Citrus*

Tu, Apr 11 – Linda Hogan, *Dwellings*

Th, Apr 13 – peer review for paper #2

Tu, Apr 18 – Linda Hogan, *Dwellings*

Th, Apr 20 -- final thoughts and summation. **Paper #2 DUE**

FINAL EXAM: Will be held Thursday, April 27, 4:00 pm - 5:50 pm, in our usual classroom.

Expect exam to include vocabulary / definitions, passage identifications, essay questions.