

MWF 11-11:50am

English 340: American Nature Writing
Simpkins 027

Spring 2017

Professor Amy Mossman

Office: Simpkins 217

Office Hours: Mon & Wed 1-2:30pm; Fri 1-2pm; and by appt.

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Please read this syllabus carefully. It is our contract to be followed for this class.

Course Description

In the introduction to one anthology of nature writing, the editors explain, “any tradition, if it is to remain vital, must continue to change and incorporate new elements.” Thus in this course, we will examine more traditional nature writing then move into new and emerging directions for the genre.

The writers we will read include scientists and natural historians as well as poets, farmers, park rangers, and activists—those who share a profound love of the natural world and deep “sense of place” (a concept we’ll also explore). We will cover diverse American writers—men and women representing different cultural backgrounds in the U.S. and different perspectives on the natural world and human engagement with it.

Course Goals

After this course, you should feel comfortable engaging the following questions:

- What seems to have defined more traditional nature writing?
- What themes characterize nature writing, and what do they tell us about American culture and Americans’ relationships to their environments?
- What are some of the critiques of nature writing today?
- What does it mean to be considered a nature writer?
- In what ways is today’s emerging body of nature writing resisting or extending the genre?

Required Texts

Barnett, Cynthia. *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*. NY: Broadway Books, 2015. ISBN 9780804137119

Deming, Alison Hawthorne and Lauret E. Savoy, eds. *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed, 2011. ISBN 9781571313195

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford UP, 1949. Commemorative Edition. ISBN 978-0195059281.

Pollan, Michael. *Second Nature: A Gardener’s Education*. NY: Grove P, 1991. ISBN 9780802140111

Wilson, Edward O. *The Future of Life*. New York: Vintage, 2002. ISBN 9780679768111

articles on Western Online and handouts

Grade and Assignment Breakdown

- 40 pts daily discussion prep and in-class writing
- 60 pts 3 essays (choose 3 of 5 to complete, 20 points each)
- 75 pts 5 tests (15 pts each)
- 25 pts take home essay exam

Note: 3 essays, final essay exam, and 5 tests must be completed to pass the course.

Grading

Qualitative	Letter Grade	Total Pts.
outstanding effort and/or achievement relative to level necessary to meet requirements and expectations at the graduate level; problems v. minor or nonexistent	A	189-200
	A-	180-188
strong effort and/or achievement relative to the level necessary to meet requirements and expectations at the graduate level; problems few	B+	174-179
	B	166-173
	B-	160-165
effort and/or achievement meets most requirements and expectations at the graduate level, but problems exist	C+	154-159
	C	146-153
	C-	140-145
effort and/or achievement worth credit even though fails to meet all requirements and expectations at the graduate level; serious problems	D+	134-139
	D	126-133
	D-	120-125
effort and/or achievement level unworthy of credit at the graduate level	F	<120

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

Responsible academic conduct is required in this and all other Western Illinois University courses. Plagiarism and cheating are serious infractions subject to University policy on academic integrity. Scholastic dishonesty in *any* portion of the work for this course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F for the assignment *or* an F for the entire course, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

It is crucial that you turn in your own work and that you document the sources for ideas that are not your own. If you are using material or ideas from another source, including the internet and any graphics, and have questions about how to properly document the material, you should consult a style manual for guidelines. If you remain unsure or if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please contact me before the assignment is due or test is given.

Please note that turning in work for this class that was prepared for another class or by another individual will be considered cheating. The policy on plagiarism and cheating applies to all drafts, as well as final products, turned in for this course.

For the university's policy on academic integrity, including plagiarism and cheating, refer to <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Incompletes

An incomplete ("I") grade will be given only in extraordinary circumstances (i.e., prolonged illness, death in family) at my discretion. It will not be considered unless the amount of work remaining in the course is limited (i.e., a single assignment) and you had a passing grade before the incomplete assignment. The assignment of an "I" requires a written agreement between me and you specifying the time and manner in which you will complete the required assignments. Failure to adhere to the contract could result in an F for the missing work and an F for the course.

Late or Missed Work

Generally, I don't accept late work. You can hand work in late only if approved by me and the work may be subject to a grade reduction. If you know you'll miss a class, turn in assignments early. If you are absent for a class meeting, you are responsible for finding out what you missed, if any changes to the syllabus/deadlines were made, and for getting your work to me on time through a friend, my mailbox, or email, as appropriate. For *true* emergencies, talk to me asap.

Participation, Preparation, and Peer Feedback

Bring any required materials to class (e.g., textbook, essay draft) and be prepared to discuss readings and work on materials as assigned or noted in the syllabus or the previous class. ***If you come to class unprepared, I may ask you to leave and it will be considered an unexcused absence*** (see “Attendance” section). You will lose points from your overall grade for not being prepared with a draft for writing workshops.

Professionalism and Respect

Respect and care should be shown in your behavior in class, contributions to discussion, interactions with me and your classmates, and the work you do for class assignments. ***During class time, turn off and keep out of sight MP3 players, cell phones, and other things that beep, ring, or vibrate.*** If you read, nap, text, or engage in other distracting behavior during class, you may receive a grade reduction. Disruptive, discourteous, threatening, or harassing behavior will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from class. If you must have a cell phone on, please speak with me the first day.

Title IX

“University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.”

Students with Disabilities

“In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.”

Tardiness

Tardiness disrupts lectures and discussions, and is discourteous to your classmates and professor. You are expected to arrive on time and remain for the duration of class. ***A pattern of tardiness, like absences, may result in a reduction of your overall course grade.***

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Full Policy: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

Remember that your grade in this (and any) class is your responsibility to earn. If you find at any time during the term that you are having difficulties meeting the requirements for this course, please speak with me immediately.

Office Hours

I encourage you to make appointments or stop by my office to discuss the course, assignments, and any concerns you may have. If you can't make it to office hours, email me to set up an appointment.

Tips for Success in this Course

- Come to class and participate
- Keep up with the readings and stay on schedule with all assignments
- Read syllabus & handouts carefully; note where to go for policies & other information
- Read the guidelines & evaluation criteria for all assignments carefully
- Check your email and WesternOnline frequently (at least 3 times a week, especially before class or if you miss)
- Talk with me about any questions or concerns as they arise, and meet with me for feedback on your work

Guidelines for Writing

Page requirements are based on MLA format: papers must be typed, double-spaced, Times 12 font, with 1 inch margins and following MLA style format for page numbers, heading, header, citations, and references. I am happy to have you print your papers double-sided, or on the reverse side of previously used or recycled paper. Be sure to properly document all sources (from the course and otherwise). *Your obligation to pay your “intellectual debt” by clearly documenting borrowed language and ideas extends to sources found on the web.*

Use the *Pocket Style Manual* to help you with citations and paper formatting.

Your essays should have a thesis or controlling idea, be carefully structured, clearly written, and meticulously proofread. Actively attempt to persuade your readers that your idea, understanding, or interpretation is valid and useful. Poor presentation in your paper is more than simply a matter of cosmetics: it damages your credibility with your audience by suggesting that you don't care enough about your own ideas to work hard to convey them. Because clarity is vital to the effectiveness of your argument, a poorly written essay is a poor essay, however brilliant conceptually. For help in any stage of the writing process, visit one of the three University Writing Center locations (www.wiu.edu/uwc).

Brief Assignment Descriptions (for complete descriptions, see the full assignment sheets)

Daily Discussion Prep/In-class writing. Discussion Prep: On days when readings are due, come to class prepared for discussion with notes on the following: 1) passage for discussion (page number and first few words okay); 2) question for discussion; 3) a paragraph response to the reading in the larger context of the course. Handwritten or typed. In-class writing: film worksheets, freewrites, etc.

Essays (3). You will be given an assignment sheet for each essay. The essays will be connected to the course material and may require some outside research as well. There are 5 essays scheduled during the semester (1 per unit). You only need to complete 3 of the 5 possible essay assignments.

Tests (5). These tests will review the main themes and concepts we emphasized from the readings and films for each unit. You will have the questions in advance. The tests are meant to help you make connections and think critically about the course material.

Take Home Essay Exam. You'll write an essay in response to a prompt that will ask you to draw on literary and scholarly works from the semester (no outside sources). Your class notes and daily discussion preps should be helpful when it comes time to write the essay for the take home exam.

See assignment sheets for more details.

Technology Snafus: How to Avoid Them

First, don't leave things to the very last minute—your risk of a problem is magnified!

? **“I emailed you—didn't you get it?”** I will verify receipt of emails, especially of papers. If you do not receive a confirmation from me, you are free to pester me for one. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to make sure your email or paper arrives in a timely manner.

■ **“My computer crashed.”** Save, save, and save often—on USB/thumb drive, CD-ROM, flash drive, zip disk, in email attachment, whatever. This way, you'll be able to salvage something, even if it is not a finished, polished draft.

☞ **“The computer wouldn't read my file.”** Most computers on campus read Microsoft Word. When in doubt, especially if you are navigating computer labs, try saving as text only or RTF.

☞ **“My printer ran out of ink.”** In a pinch, I will accept papers in any color ink if it is legible (not yellow), so if your black ink cartridge dies, try the color one. You should always have a spare cartridge on hand.

☞ **“I couldn't find a computer lab to print/I couldn't print in the lab.”** Email it to me.

☐☐ **“I couldn't access WesternOnline to download the document.”** If this happens, contact me immediately and I can email you any document you might need.

Attendance

Attendance is required at all class meetings, just as showing up to work is required in any workplace. If you will miss class, you should notify me beforehand via email or phone, just as you would in the workplace. The reasons below may be considered excused in this class, provided you submit written documentation as soon as possible to me:

- Verified (documented) illness for which you were hospitalized or received emergency care (i.e., a note from a doctor saying you were at Beu Health Center during class is not sufficient)
- Participation in athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University (provide documentation ahead of the absence)
- Serious family emergencies (contact me within 24 hours of the absence)
- Subpoenas and jury duty (provide documentation ahead of the absence when possible)
- Military service and religious observances within your faith (provide documentation ahead of the absence)

While I cannot anticipate all scenarios, experience has shown me that responsible students make every effort to attend class and when they cannot, they contact me as soon as possible (even before class) and are very conscientious about making up work. *Ultimately, I reserve the right to determine whether an absence will affect your grade for the course.*

You are permitted 3 unexcused absences—consider it one personal day and two sick days. Each subsequent unexcused absence will cost you 15 points from your overall grade. In order not to lose the points, you can choose to complete an extra assignment (assigned by me) for each unexcused absence; the assignment must be turned in by a designated date and be of B quality or better. After 6 total unexcused absences, this option will be retracted.

Should a real emergency (e.g., protracted illness or family crisis) cause you to miss more than six class periods, or if you have an excessive number of excused and unexcused absences, you must contact me immediately to determine whether or not you will be able to complete the minimum work required to pass the course or whether you have other options (such as a withdrawal).

**University Student Absence Policy Clarification (see also
http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/student_development_office/current/absencepolicy.php)**

Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled except in cases of illness or other serious emergency. Each faculty member determines his or her own policy dealing with class attendance. Therefore, if a student misses a class or classes, the student is expected to discuss the matter with the instructor, and it is up to the discretion of the instructor whether to allow a student to make up any missed assignments, exams, or projects.

If a student knows he or she is going to miss a class, the student is advised and is expected to discuss the situation with the appropriate faculty member in advance and in accordance with that faculty member's guidelines for class attendance. If documentation of the reason or reasons for an absence is desired by the faculty member, the student should inquire of the faculty member what would suffice for that purpose (e.g., medical documentation, proof of court appearance, etc.).

If a student needs medical documentation, he or she should contact the proper medical source directly for whatever material is needed. Neither the Student Development Office nor the Beu Health Center issue excuses for not attending class, but a student may obtain a form indicating the date and time of a completed medical appointment at the Health Center, for example, should a faculty member desire or require such evidence.

If a student makes a decision not to attend a class because of a non-emergency illness or injury (e.g., sore throat, cold, sprained ankle, etc.), it is the responsibility of the student to discuss the absence with the faculty member should the student desire to make up any academic work missed because of the absence. Depending upon such factors as the faculty member's class attendance policy, the reasons for the absence, and the student's prior record of class attendance, the faculty member may or may not grant the request to make up work that has been missed. It is emphasized that it is the individual faculty member's decision whether or not to grant the request.

The Student Development Office will serve as a contact resource for a student in extreme/emergency cases when the student is unable to make contact with a faculty member. Accidents/hospitalizations that occur out of town, death of an immediate family member (mother, father, sister, brother), serious emotional/psychological problems, serious physical injuries or trauma, and medically prescribed inpatient treatment for substance abuse are examples of situations where the Office of Student Development and Orientation might appropriately be contacted and called upon for assistance.

If the president issues a "University Advisory" because of an emergency condition (such as inclement weather) and classes are not canceled, students should arrange with faculty to complete academic course requirements missed during the time of the advisory. Individual faculty members are responsible for their academic course requirements and it is the individual faculty member's decision whether or not to grant a request to make up work that has been missed as a result of a "University Advisory". If classes are canceled, faculty members will inform students at a later time how missed course activities will be satisfied.

Course Schedule

(subject to revision; readings may be added or deleted with advance notice; WO = Western Online)

Date	In-Class Activity	Reading Due That Day	Writing Due That Day
W 1/18	Course Introduction		
F 1/20		WO: Glotfelty, "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" Lyon, "A Taxonomy of Nature Writing"	
M 1/23		WO: Thoreau and Muir selections	
W 1/25		<i>A Sand County Almanac</i> : Foreword, Intro, and January through June	
F 1/27		<i>A Sand County Almanac</i> : July through December	
M 1/30		<i>A Sand County Almanac</i> : Part II Sketches Here and There	
W 2/1		<i>A Sand County Almanac</i> : Part III The Upshot	
F 2/3		WO: Abbey and Lopez selections	
M 2/6	Film: <i>Wild by Law</i>		
W 2/8			Essay 1 due
F 2/10	Test 1		
M 2/13		NO CLASS (Lincoln's Birthday Observed)	
W 2/15		WO: Intro to the Norton Book of Nature Writing Barnhill, "Surveying the Landscape: A New Approach to Nature Writing"	
F 2/17		WO: Berry, McKibben, Sanders selections	
M 2/20		<i>Second Nature</i> : Intro through Ch. 4	
W 2/22		<i>Second Nature</i> : Ch. 5 through Ch. 7	
F 2/24		<i>Second Nature</i> : Ch. 8 through Ch. 10	
M 2/27		<i>Second Nature</i> : finish book	
W 3/1	Test 2		
F 3/3			Essay 2 due
M 3/6		WO: Buni, "Toward a Wider View of Nature Writing"	
W 3/8		<i>Colors</i> : "Widening the Frame," "In History," "Tales From a Black Girl..." and "Crossing Boundaries"	
F 3/10		<i>Colors</i> : "Notes on the New World," "Invoking the Ancestors," "Hope and Feathers..." and "Confronting Environmental Racism..."	

**** SPRING BREAK 3/11 – 3/19 NO CLASSES ****

Date	In-Class Activity	Reading Due That Day	Writing Due That Day
M 3/20		<i>Colors</i> : “70117,” “Mujeres de Maíz...,” “Hazardous Cargo,” and “Silent Parrot Blues”	
W 3/22		<i>Colors</i> : “The Art Gallery,” “The Thinking Men,” “Learning the Grammar of Animacy,” and “Listening for the Ancient Tones...”	
F 3/24		<i>Colors</i> : “earthbound: on solid ground,” “This Weight of Small Bodies,” “Burning the Shelter,” and “A Tapestry of Browns and Greens”	
M 3/27		<i>Colors</i> : “Porphyry Rings” and “Belonging to the Land”	
W 3/29	Test 3		
F 3/31			Essay 3 due
M 4/3		<i>Future of Life</i> : Prologue through Ch. 2	
W 4/5		<i>Future of Life</i> : Ch. 3 through Ch. 5	
F 4/7		<i>Future of Life</i> : finish book	
M 4/10		WO: <i>The Monarchs</i> (poems)	
W 4/12	Test 4		
F 4/14			Essay 4 due
M 4/17		WO: Williams and Carson selections	
W 4/19		WO: article TBA <i>Rain</i> : Prologue	
F 4/21		<i>Rain</i> : Section I	
M 4/24		<i>Rain</i> : Section II	
W 4/26		<i>Rain</i> : Section III	
F 4/28		<i>Rain</i> : Section IV	
M 5/1		<i>Rain</i> : Section V (including Epilogue)	
W 5/3	Test 5		
F 5/5			Essay 5 due
W 5/10 @ 10am	EXAM DAY		Take home essay exam due by noon