COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides students with an overview of the literary production of the Far North. Through a study of novels, poems, autobiographies, travel writing, and film, we will investigate how the North has been imaginatively created as a transnational space and a mythic extension of Turner’s frontier. The course fulfills the “diversity” component of Core 2.0. Thus, our readings and discussions will examine the diverse ways in which the North has been figured by a wide range of writers, residents, and travelers. The course books are listed below. Please note that all books are available at the MSU Bookstore until mid-semester. You are REQUIRED to purchase all of the books for the class before that time and BRING the assigned reading with you every class meeting. We will spend a lot of time in small groups, which requires that you bring your text with you each time we meet. I have also placed some readings on e-reserve in the university library. You’ll also need to bring those readings to class on the day we discuss them.

Please note that the books and the films we will watch for this class are for mature audiences and may contain unsettling material as well as disturbing themes. Due to the structure and themes often found in contemporary literature and film in general, such issues are largely unavoidable. If you are the type of person who is easily offended by such material, you should probably look for another class to take this semester.

Anne Hanley and Carolyn Kremers, eds. The Alaska Reader: Voices from the North
William T. Vollman, The Rifles
Jon Krakauer, Into the Wild
Elizabeth Pinson, Alaska’s Daughter: An Eskimo Memoir of the Early Twentieth Century
Heather Lende, If You Lived Here, I’d Know Your Name: News From Small-Town Alaska
Susan Kollin, Nature’s State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier

Course requirements include an exam, a creative project, and two papers (all 25% of final grade). The creative project will involve locating images from found objects in culture that highlight the major themes and theories we discuss in class regarding the social construction of the Far North. For this project, you will need to buy poster board, glue sticks, and sharpies. You will also need to begin collecting your found objects (travel and nature magazines, outdoor catalogues, on-line ads, etc.) at least two weeks before the assignment is due. I cannot accept papers through e-mail, so come to class on the day the assignment is due to turn in your work to me in person.

WEEK ONE

Thurs. January 18  Introductions and Overview

WEEK TWO

Tues. January 23  Discuss The Alaska Reader, pp. ix-46
Thurs. January 25  Discuss The Alaska Reader, pp. 49-103

WEEK THREE

Tues. January 30  Discuss The Alaska Reader, pp. 107-156
Assign Creative Project

Thurs. February 1  Watch film / *The Fast Runner*

WEEK FOUR

Tues. February 6  Watch film / *The Fast Runner*
Thurs. February 8  Discuss *The Fast Runner*

WEEK FIVE

Tues. February 13  Discuss *Alaska’s Daughter*, pp. vii-80
Thurs. February 15  Discuss *Alaska’s Daughter*, pp. 81-154

Discuss exam and creative project

WEEK SIX

Tues. February 20  Discuss *Alaska’s Daughter*, pp. 155-205
Thurs. February 22  **EXAM – Remember to bring a blue book to the exam.**

WEEK SEVEN

Tues. February 27  Discuss *The Rifles*, pp. 4-111
Thurs. March 1  Discuss *The Rifles*, pp. 112-229

WEEK EIGHT

Tues. March 6  Discuss *The Rifles*, pp. 230-338
Thurs. March 8  Discuss *The Rifles*, pp. 339-408

WEEK NINE

SPRING BREAK

WEEK TEN

Tues. March 20  Creative Projects Due—First Group
Thurs. March 22  Creative Projects Due—Second Group

WEEK ELEVEN

Tues. March 27  Discuss *Into the Wild*
Assign Paper #1
Thurs. March 29  Discuss *Into the Wild*
WEEK TWELVE
Watch and Discuss Film / Into the Wild
Thurs. April 5
Discuss Nature’s State, pp. 2-89

WEEK THIRTEEN
Tues. April 10
Discuss Nature’s State, pp. 92-160
E-reserve: Alaska Native poetry (selections by Nora Dauenhauer, Robert Davis, and Mary TallMountain)
Thurs. April 12
Discuss Nature’s State, all
Paper #1 Due

WEEK FOURTEEN
Tues. April 17
Discuss If You Lived Here…, pp. 1-111
Thurs. April 19
Discuss If You Lived Here…, pp. 113-229

WEEK FIFTEEN
Tues. April 24
Discuss If You Lived Here . . . , pp. 230-281
Thurs. April 26
Watch and Discuss Film / Grizzly Man
Assign Paper #2

WEEK SIXTEEN
Tues. May 1
Discuss Grizzly Man
Thurs. May 3
Course Wrap Up and Evaluations
PAPER #2 DUE/Finals Week