

ENGL 5343.003 Studies in Literary Criticism:

Ecocritical Theory

Thursdays 9:30-12:20 p.m. Room 360

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Office hours: 10:00-noon Tuesdays

Course Overview:

This course will explore the broad spectrum of critical and theoretical approaches to examining the ways “nature” and concepts of the natural are reflected, constructed, and deployed in American literature and culture, and how ideas about the natural differ historically and across ethnicities, gender and class boundaries. We will read some of the foundational texts of this contentious field, as well as newer works challenging the very definitions of ecocritical theory. Some questions that will guide our inquiries: How is the idea of the “natural” used in literature to construct categories of gender, race, class, and sexuality? What are the origins of various literary myths about nature, and what might the consequences be for the environment? ***This is a required course for students wishing to complete the graduate concentration in Literature, Social Justice, and Environment (LSJE).***

Learning Outcomes and Methods of Assessment

Assignments and Grading:

- You will write 10 short (2-3 pages) response papers engaging the text(s) scheduled to be discussed (10 points)
 - You will write one conference length essay (8 pages plus works cited) with an accompanying cover letter addressed to an actual conference (20 points)
 - You will write one article length essay (20-25 pages plus works cited) which may, if you choose, be an extension of your conference length essay, with an accompanying cover letter addressed to an actual journal or cfp for a critical anthology. (60 points)
 - You will make a formal presentation at a mock conference session as part of a panel. (10 points)
 - Total possible points: 100
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| 90-100 = A |
| 80-89 = B |
| 70-79 = C |
| 60-69 = D |
| < 59 = F |

Classroom Policies and Procedures:

- Check the course web page (address above) every day for discussion questions, information, updates, notices, etc.
- You will be expected to have completed the assigned readings each day before class. I will spend some time lecturing, but much of our class time will involve

- discussion of the texts so please be prepared to question, analyze, and engage our readings. Wildly differing opinions are welcome.
- You will each have the opportunity to lead part of a class discussion on one of the texts for the semester. This will involve a little research on your part as well as preparing discussion questions.
 - As with any graduate course regular attendance is vital, assignments are due on the dates listed below, plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated, and you may expect graded assignments to be returned to you in a timely manner.

Required texts available at Student Union Bookstore:

The Environmental Imagination. Laurence Buell, 1995.

Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature. Ed. William Cronon. 1996

A Sand County Almanac. Aldo Leopold.

Desert Solitaire. Edward Abbey (1968)

Xerophilia: Ecocritical Explorations in Southwestern Literature. Tom Lynch. Lubbock: TTU Press (2008).

Ceremony. Leslie Marmon Silko. (1977)

Of Wolves and Men. Barry Lopez, 1979

The Road. Cormac McCarthy.

The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America. Dana Phillips, Oxford University Press, 2003.

New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism. Ed. Rachel Stein. Rutgers University Press (2004)

Available on line at the following links:

Thoreau, Henry David. [Thoreau's Walden - an annotated edition](#) "Where I lived and what I lived for," "Solitude," and "The Bean Field"

Muir, John. [John Muir Writings - Books and Articles by John Muir](#) From *My First Summer in the Sierra* Chapter 2 "In Camp on the North Fork," Chapter 5 "The Yosemite" and Chapter 9 "Bloody Cañon and Mono Lake" and from *The Yosemite* Chapter 4 "Snow Banners," Chapter 7 "The Big Trees," Chapter 13 "Early History of the Valley."

Semester Calendar

Th 1/8 Intro to class, what is ecocritical theory, sign-up to be discussion leader. For 1/15 read Lawrence Buell Chapters 1-4 and on-line selections from *Walden* ([Thoreau's Walden - an annotated edition](#)) and write response paper.

Th 1/15 Class discussion Buell and Thoreau, and your response papers. For 1/22 read Buell chapters 10-11 and William Cronon's "Introduction" and "The Trouble with Wilderness" from *Uncommon Ground*.

- Th 1/22 Discussion Buell and Cronon and your response papers. For 1/29 read Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*.
- Th 1/29 Class discussion Buell, Cronon and Leopold and your response papers. For 2/5 read selections from [John Muir Writings - Books and Articles by John Muir](#), Carolyn Merchant's "Reinventing Eden" from *Uncommon Ground*, and Kenneth Olwig's "Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mt. Rushmore" from *Uncommon Ground*
- Th 2/5 Class discussion Muir, Merchant and Olwig and your response papers. For 2/12 bring in your conference length essay—no response paper due.
- Th 2/12 **Go over your conference length essay (and cover letter) due today.** For 2/19 read Buell chapter 5-9 and begin Ed Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*.
- Th 2/19 Class discussion Buell and Abbey and your response papers. For 2/26 finish *Desert Solitaire* and read Tom Lynch's *Xerophilia: Ecocritical Explorations in Southwestern Literature* "Introduction" and chapter 4.
- Th 2/26 Class discussion Abbey and Lynch and your response papers. For 3/5 read Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Lynch chapter 3.
- Th 3/5 Class discussion Silko and Lynch and your response papers. For 3/12 read Priscilla Solis Ybarra's "Lo que quiero is tierra" and Robert Verchick's "Feminist Theory and Environmental Justice" from *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice*. For 3/12 read Dana Phillips Chapter 1 from *The Truth of Ecology*.
- Th 3/12 Class discussion of Phillips and your response papers. For 3/26 read Barry Lopez's *Of Wolves and Men* and Phillips chapter 4.
- Th 3/19 **SPRING BREAK**
- Th 3/26 Class discussion of Lopez and Phillips and your response papers. For 4/2 read Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.
- Th 4/2 Class discussion of McCarthy and your response papers. For 4/9 bring in a 1-2 page prospectus of your essay, including an annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources from outside of this class.
- Th 4/9 Class discussion of your prospectus.
- Th 4/16 *Conference Presentations*
- Th 4/23 *Conference Presentations* **Essay due today. LAST DAY OF CLASSES**