

English 4/898, Sec. 2  
Place Conscious Literature: US West & Australian Outback  
Spring 2008  
T/R 9:30-10:45  
Andrews 35

Tom Lynch  
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Office Hours: TR 11-12:30 or by appt.  
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#### TEXTS IN BOOKSTORE

John Jakes: *A Century of Great Western Stories*  
Agnes Morley Cleaveland: *No Life for a Lady*  
Ann Ronald: *Oh, Give Me a Home*  
Louis Owens: *Dark River*  
William Kittredge: *Hole in the Sky*  
Mrs. Anneas (Jeannie) Gunn: *We of the Never-Never*  
Doris Pilkington: *Rabbit Proof Fence*  
Robin Davidson: *Tracks*

#### PRIMARY READINGS ON BLACKBOARD

Selections from Banjo Paterson (online)  
Selections from Henry Lawson (online)  
Libby Robin, et al: *Strata* (online)  
Kim Mahood, from *Craft for a Dry Lake* as pdf  
Barry Hill, from *The Rock: Travelling to Uluru* as pdf

A SELECTION OF SECONDARY READINGS WILL ALSO BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD. 800-level students will be responsible for giving presentations on these.

Outback Film Series: *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Walkabout*, *Wake in Fright*, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Bush Mechanics*, *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, *We of the Never-Never*

#### OVERVIEW

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the concept of place-conscious approaches to literary studies. Students will learn to apply several critical approaches, including ecocritical, postcolonial, and gender theory to an interpretation of literature from these two mythic places: the American West and the Australian Outback. The course will also expose students to some of the literary traditions of these two very distant yet in some ways very similar places. They are both arid and semi-arid regions that have been colonized by English-speaking settlers who sought to displace the indigenous residents and subsequently attempted to impose cultural ideas and modes of living that evolved in, and are arguably better suited for, much wetter climates. In both places, the settler-colonial societies sought to alter the new environments to suit their cultural preferences but are now gradually learning to adapt to the contingencies of that environment and, in some cases, seeking to restore the damage caused by prior settlement patterns. All of this activity has been productive of a rich literary tradition.

In this class we will read works of poetry, fiction and literary non-fiction from throughout the recent history of these two regions, including works by women and by indigenous authors. We

will also watch a number of films. In doing so, we will seek to understand and to question the power of the cultural representations of these two iconic, frontiering, colonial, and nation-defining regions.

The class will combine lectures, discussions of the assigned readings, and student presentations. Relevant AV and internet resources will be used when applicable. Some required readings, and a variety of suggested material, will be posted on Blackboard.

#### REQUIREMENTS:

##### **All students:**

- Attendance and participation
- Reading response journals
- Written response to 3 of the Outback films

##### **Students taking class for 498 credit:**

- Take-home final exam or 5-6 page comparative research paper.

##### **Students taking class for 898 credit:**

- 2 short class presentations, one on a scholarly article and one a conference-length paper (with powerpoint) as part of a panel presenting summaries of research projects.
- Research paper: a 15-20 page comparative research paper on any topic of your choosing pertinent to this class, to be determined in consultation with me. Subject must include *both* U.S. West and Australian Outback elements.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** The English Department policy statement on class attendance reads as follows: “Students who miss more than 20% of the scheduled class meetings of a course (for us that would be 6 classes) will ordinarily fail the course for that reason alone, except that (1) if the absences occur before the Withdrawal Passing period ends, the student may receive a “W” grade, and (2) if the absences are excused by the instructor or approved UNL policy and a large majority of them occur after the work of the course has been substantially completed, the student may receive an Incomplete (“I”) grade.” NOTE: illnesses, car trouble, etc., are not ordinarily excused absences; these are covered by your 6 freebies.

I expect you to attend all classes, to arrive on time, to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and to stay for the entire class period. More than 3 absences will result in a proportional grade penalty. If you stop coming to class, you must also officially drop it. This is YOUR responsibility.

Bring your books to class; we will refer to them frequently.

**READING-RESPONSES:** You will maintain an informal (but graded) series of responses to the readings. These will be due every few weeks, as indicated on the schedule. These will usually be comparative in nature, and will be written in response to one or several prompts I will provide.

**CLASS PRESENTATIONS:** Students enrolled for 898 credit will do two short class presentations. The first presentation will be a summary of a scholarly article pertaining to a topic we are dealing with in class. The second presentation will be a conference length paper (as part of a panel) based on your research project, that will also include powerpoint.

**FINAL EXAM/RESEARCH PAPER**

Students taking the class for 498 credit will have the option of taking a take-home final exam, or writing a 6-8 page comparative research paper.

#### RESEARCH PAPER

Students taking the class for 898 credit will write a substantial research project, generally in the 15-20 page range.

#### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

**CELL PHONES:** This may be a surprise to some of you, but, believe it or not, phones do not belong in the classroom. If you are unable to liberate yourself from the tentacles of the telecommunications industry, and feel compelled to carry a phone to class, be sure to turn it off! If your phone repeatedly interrupts class, I will feel free to drop you from the course as a disruptive influence.

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism means representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. This includes quoting or paraphrasing from published sources (yes, including the internet) without acknowledging/citing the source of your information, or presenting quoted materials as your own words. You must be very clear about attribution of sources and you must know how to cite sources in a paper. Students who are unfamiliar with how to cite sources should purchase a style manual such as the MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook (or find similar material on the internet). Neither ignorance nor extenuating circumstances justify plagiarism. (That is, I don't want to hear any excuses; tears will avail you not.) I will be glad to discuss any citation concerns you may have. I will, and nearly every semester I do, fail students for plagiarism. In such cases, appeals from parents will not be considered.

If you find yourself falling behind in your work due to extenuating circumstances, and feel tempted to plagiarize, DON'T. Instead, talk to me about your difficulties. We can arrange for projects to be turned in late, and, if circumstances warrant, we can even arrange for an incomplete grade in the class. If need be, I can be very generous concerning late work, but I am unforgiving of plagiarism. Take your pick.

**DISABILITIES:** Students with disabilities that may affect your performance in class are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of your individual needs for academic accomodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accomodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accomodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 or TTY.

**DEADLINES:** Unless arranged otherwise, assignments are due at the time listed on the schedule. Late assignments will be accepted, but will suffer a proportional grade penalty. No assignment will be accepted more than 2 weeks after the due date.

## INITIAL SCHEDULE

### January

15 Introductions

17 Overview, The West: Read “Becoming West” by Cronon, Miles, Gitlin, online pdf.

22 Overview, The Outback. Read “Australian History and Culture” online pdf and “Travels to a Distant Past: Mythology of the Outback,” Ann McGrath, online pdf.

24 “The Western.” Read in Jakes: Introduction and Preface and stories by L’Amour (23), Wister (79), Bower (105), Kelton (132), and Curry (170).

29 “The Western.” Read in Jakes: stories by Rhodes (179), Schaeffer (222), Haycox (413), and Grey (491)

31 Bush Ballads and Tales. Read Banjo Paterson, from *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*: “The Man from Snowy River” and “Clancy of the Overflow.” Also read the three “Waltzing Matilda” sites. From “Bush controversy” read “Borderline” (Lawson), “In Defense of the Bush” (Paterson), “In Answer to Banjo” (Lawson), and “An Answer to Various Bards” (Paterson) (all online)

### February

5 Bush Ballads and Tales. Read Lawson, from *While the Billy Boils* first series: “That There Dog of Mine,” “The Union Buries Its Dead,” “On the Edge of the Plain,” and from second series: “The Drover’s Wife.”

7 Bush Ballads and Tales. Read Lawson, from *Joe Wilson and His Mates*: “Joe Wilson’s Courtship,” Brighten’s Sister-in-Law,” “Water Them Geraniums” I & II, “A Double Buggy at Lahey’s Creek I, II, III, & IV and “Telling Mrs. Baker.”

### **Reading Responses on Westerns and Bush Ballads & Tales Due**

12 *No Life for a Lady*

14 *No Life for a Lady*

19 *We of the Never-Never*

21 *We of the Never-Never*

26 **Reading Responses Due**

28 *Hole in the Sky*

### March

4 *Hole in the Sky*

6 *Tracks*

11 *Tracks*

13 **Reading Responses Due**

### SPRING BREAK

25 *Dark River*

27 *Dark River*

April

1 *Rabbit-Proof Fence*

3 *Rabbit-Proof Fence*

8 **Reading Responses Due**

10 *Oh, Give Me a Home*

11 LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW

15 *Oh, Give Me a Home*

17 from *Craft for a Dry Lake*

22 from *The Rock: Travelling to Uluru*

24 *Strata*

**Reading Responses Due**

29 Presentations

May

1 Presentations

FINALS WEEK