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Office Hours: T, 4-5:30pm; Th, 4-5:30pm

Environmental Literature

ENG 230
T/Th 12-1:20pm
Spring 2015

This class focuses on U.S. literature that explores the relationship between humans and their environments. We start this class with a consideration of the traditional canon of U.S. Nature Writing from Henry David Thoreau to Terry Tempest Williams. We consider the kinds of relationships to nature that such writing promotes. How does such writing define “nature” and the more-than-human world? How are ideas about masculinity, femininity, ability, and sexuality conveyed in this literature? Is Nature Writing an inclusive genre that invites contributions from all people? How do we understand the disproportionate presence of white writers in the genre? Where is the nature writing by people of color? The second part of the class responds to these questions by expanding what counts as environmental literature. This section of the course focuses on environmental literature written by Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latina/os. We consider writing about agriculture from the perspectives of both farm owners and farmworkers. We also consider fiction as a form of environmental literature, ending the class with two compelling contemporary novels, Linda Hogan’s *People of the Whale* and Helena Maria Viramontes’s *Under the Feet of Jesus*.

During this class, we will focus on closely reading particular passages in the text in relationship the works’ larger themes. This attention to the significance of particular passages will structure the midterm and final exam. Because we will be attending to language choices (word choice, syntax, figurative language, paragraph structure, etc.) it is important you have a copy (hard copy or on a tablet) of the text we are discussing in front of you during class.

This class will also involve practicing some of the techniques of environmental writing during class time. Rather than just discussing what is notable about a particular author’s writing style, you may be asked to practice writing in that style. This, at times, will involve leaving the classroom and observing something on campus. Through this creative writing praxis, we will become more insightful readers of environmental literature.

Learning Objectives:

1. Read U.S. environmental literature with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of its conventions.
2. Discuss the racial, gender, and sexual politics of U.S. environmental literature.
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of U.S. environmental literary texts.

Required Texts: Available at University of Oregon Bookstore

Edward Abbey. *Desert Solitaire*.
Linda Hogan, *People of the Whale*.
Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*.
Terry Tempest Williams. *Refuge*.

Course Assessment

- Attendance and Participation, 10%
 - To receive an A, you should attend every class, arrive on time, bring a copy of the readings, and contribute thoughtfully to the discussion. Contributing thoughtfully means that you pose questions and provide answers that reflect your careful reading of the material, including directly referencing passages in the reading. In responding to your peers' observations, questions, and interpretations, you engage with the substance of their ideas and model respectful disagreement. In your questions, comments, and critiques, you show a willingness to take intellectual risks. You remain focused and fully engage with any work (including group work) assigned during class. Your contributions develop bridges between different class sessions, contributing to a conversation that spans the quarter.
- Periodic Reading Quizzes, 5%
 - These brief multiple choice or short answer quizzes will be given at the start of class on days listed in the syllabus. No make-ups will be given for absences or late arrival. The lowest score will be dropped.
- Reading Reflection Journal, 20% (credit, .5 credit, no credit)
 - One of the primary goals of this class is to encourage you to read carefully, thoughtfully, and critically. To create a reflexive reading habit, this class has a reading reflection journal. Entries are due about once a week on dates listed in the syllabus. These are informal writing assignments. Journal entries should describe your reactions to the readings. They could note favorite passages, disagreements or agreements with the author, or any questions the reading raised for you. You could discuss your interpretations of certain passages or identify patterns, symbols, or themes in the text. What do you notice about the writer's style? How do you respond to the stylistic choices? How does the author depict nature or the environment? What assumptions about nature, the environment, or the reader are at work in the text? Your reflective reading journals could also discuss or document your experience practicing a particular move made by an author. For example, when reading Aldo Leopold, you could explain that your journal aims to express your environmental ethic by choosing a species or natural feature to "think like" such as "Thinking like the Willamette River." It should be clear from your reflection journal that you have completed the reading for each day. However, this is not the primary role of the journal entries. Journal entries are due on canvas before class on the day assigned. There are 10 journal entries due.
- Practice Exam Project, 5% (credit, .5 credit, no credit)
 - Instead of coming to class on Tuesday, 4/23, you will meet with a small group to which you have been assigned. Each group will be given two quotations and will need to respond to one. By the end of class, you will post your group's answer to Canvas, and it will be available for the full class to see. This will allow you to get feedback on my expectations for your midterm and final while the stakes are lower. The class will not see the grade I give your group, but they will see my feedback on your response. This is so that everyone can get a better sense of my expectations for responses on the midterm and final.
- Midterm, 20%
 - The midterm will list 4 quotations from texts from weeks 1-5. The author and title of each work will be given. You will need to discuss the significance of two of these quotations in relation to the larger work. The author and title of each work will be given. Each answer will be worth 10 points.
- Take Home Final, 40%
 - The final exam is divided into two parts. The first will include 4 quotations from texts from weeks 6-10. You will need to discuss the significance of two of these quotations in relation to the larger

work. The author and title of each work will be given. These questions will be worth 10 points each. The second part of the exam will ask you to produce your own short piece of environmental writing based on or responding to a piece we read in the class. For example, you could write “Thinking Like a Duck” or “Mt. Pigash Solitaire.” The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to think deeply and critically about your own relationship to nature and well as to consider issues of form, style, and theme in environmental literature. A short artist statement should accompany your creative piece contextualizing your work as environmental literature. The creative piece and artist statements are worth 20 points.

Course Policies

Preferred First Name: The University of Oregon has a preferred first name policy. According to this policy, a student or employee’s preferred first name will be used in university communications and reporting except where the use of the legal name is required for university purposes. If you have reasons to believe your preferred first name may not be listed correctly in the roster or you do not feel comfortable taking advantage of UO’s preferred first name policy, please communicate to me the name you wish to use. The preferred first name policy can be accessed here: <http://policies.uoregon.edu/node/216>

Accessible Education: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if aspects of the instruction or course design results in barriers to your participation. Students are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (AEC) 541-346-1155; <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>. AEC helps provide services including sign language interpreting, computer-based note-taking, classroom relocation, exam modifications, and alternative text conversion. Please request that the Accessible Education Center send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

Teaching and Learning Center: You are encouraged to take advantage of the resources offered by the Teaching and Learning Center. They offer individual and small group tutoring, writing assistance, and a variety of other support programs. <http://tlc.uoregon.edu>, 541-346-3226, 68 PLC

Late Work: All work is to be handed in on time. Late work will not receive credit.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to adhere to University of Oregon’s standards of academic integrity. All work should be your own, and all sources should be appropriately acknowledged. Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, duplicate submission, cheating on examinations, and false citations. Please do not hesitate to speak to me if you have any questions about use of sources or citations. It is far better to ask than to unintentionally plagiarize. Please refer to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers as a citation style-guide. Please read the Academic Misconduct Code in full. It can be accessed at: <http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx>

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is mandatory and constitutes part of your grade. You may miss two class meetings without penalty. Your final grade will drop one-third of a letter grade for each subsequent absence.

Missing four classes is grounds for failure. Exceptions to this policy may be made for those with adequate excuse and sufficient documentation. Please contact me to discuss. You are responsible for all assigned materials in the class and ensuring that your work is turned in on time. Additionally, attendance alone is not adequate. You are expected to come to class prepared, having read the material and engaged critically with it. You should attend class ready to share your thoughts about the readings. I expect you to contribute meaningfully during each session.

Title IX Policy and Reporting Responsibilities: The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Consequently, all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Students seeking to discuss a situation without talking to a mandatory reporter may call 541-346-SAFE. This 24/7 hotline is staffed by confidential, trained counselors. For confidential help, students may also contact University Health Services (<http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu/>) or Sexual Assault Support Services (<http://sass-lane.org/>).

Inclement Weather: In the event of inclement weather, the UO home webpage (<http://www.uoregon.edu/>) will include a banner at the top of the page displaying information about delay, cancellation, or closure decisions for the Eugene campus. Additionally, the UO Alerts blog will be updated with the latest updates and bulletins. Local television and radio stations will also broadcast delay and cancellation information. Classes will not be held if cancelled by the university. Additionally, members of the campus community are expected to use their best judgment in assessing the risk of coming to campus and returning home, based on individual circumstances. Those who believe the road conditions from home are dangerous are urged and even expected to stay there to prevent injury.

Class Communication: The primary means of communication outside of class in this course will be through your UO email account. Please check this account regularly. I am also most readily available through email. I will respond much more rapidly to email than to a telephone call. Generally, you can expect an email response from me within two working days. You should also check Canvas, our new course management system, at least once prior to each class session.

Classroom Electronic Communications Policies: Cell phone use during class is prohibited. Tablets are permitted only to access the reading. Laptops are permitted only with express permission or during class activities requiring laptop use.

Class Outline and Schedule

Week One

Tuesday, March 30: What is Environmental Literature?

Thursday, April 2: bell hooks, "Kentucky is my fate," *belonging: a culture of places*; H.D. Thoreau, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," *Walden*. Readings available on Canvas. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Week Two

Tuesday, April 7: John Muir, "Through the Foothills with a Flock of Sheep," "In Camp on the North Fork of the Merced," "To the High Mountains," *My First Summer in the Sierra*. Readings available on Canvas. **Reading Quiz*

Thursday, April 9: Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" and "The Land Ethic" from *The Sand County Almanac*. Readings available on Canvas. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Week Three

Tuesday, April 14: Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, xi-81. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Thursday, April 16: Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, 82-136. **Reading Quiz*

Week Four

Tuesday, April 21: Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, 137-205. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Thursday, April 23: Prof. Wald @ AAAS. Practice Exam Group Assignment.

Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, 205-269.

Week Five

Tuesday, April 28: Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge*, 1-90. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Thursday, April 30: Williams, *Refuge*, 90-159. *Reading Quiz

Week Six

Tuesday, May 5: **Mid-Term**

Thursday, May 7th: No Class

Instead of attending class, you are required to attend one session of the symposium Rethinking Race and the Anthropocene taking place May 7th-9th. Please find me at the event to sign up and verify your attendance. The conference schedule will be posted on Canvas.

Week Seven

Tuesday, May 12: Williams, *Refuge*, 159-290. *Reading Quiz

Thursday, May 14: Robin Well Kimmerer, "Learning the Grammar of Animacy," *The Colors of Nature*;

Enrique Salmon, "Sharing Breath: Some Links Between Land, Plants, and People," *The Colors of Nature*;

Winonna La Duke, "Klamath Land and Life," *Recovering the Sacred*. Readings on Canvas. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Week Eight

Tuesday, May 19: Linda Hogan, *People of the Whale*. Part One. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Thursday, May 21: Linda Hogan, *People of the Whale*. Part Two. *Reading Quiz

Week Nine

Tuesday, May 26: Linda Hogan, *People of the Whale*. Part Three. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Thursday, May 28: Camille Dungy, "Tales from a Black Girl on Fire," *The Colors of Nature*, David Mas Masumoto; "Belonging to the Land," *The Colors of Nature*; Martin Espada, "Fedrico's Ghost." Readings on Canvas. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Week Ten

Tuesday, June 2: Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* Part 1-3. *Reflection Journal Entry Due

Thursday, June 4: Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* Part 4-5. *Reading Quiz

Take Home Final Exam, Due Monday June 8th @ 8am on Canvas