Dr. Alaimo
Version 1.0, December 27 (the syllabus may be revised)
See page 8 for actual schedule of readings and assignments.

English 419 (22479) + 519 (22615): Contemporary Literary Theory:
Plant Studies, Animal Studies

Fall 2021. MW 12:00-1:20  Location: 203 CON (Condon Hall)

Dr. Alaimo, Professor of English, Core Faculty Member, Environmental Studies
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Office Hours: 1:45-2:45 Monday and Wednesday, in Office 205 PLC (please wear a
mask over your nose and mouth). If you are sick or have been exposed to covid, do not
come to office hours in person. Email me and we can zoom. Note: Some office hours
may be cancelled due to graduate exams and meetings; inquire with a quick email.

Course Description: What is it like to be another species? How do we know, how can
we speculate about, imagine, or represent the being of plant and animal species? How
can thinking with plants and animals enlarge our ethical and political terrains? How do
indigenous thought and Western philosophy differ on these questions? How can people
in the environmental humanities engage with the science of plants and animals? How
do our ideas about plants and animals affect how we define the human species? How
have race, gender, and dis/ability been constructed in relation to ideologies of “the
animal,” and how should we confront and transform those legacies? What visions of
environmental futures should we embrace and why? This course focuses on the
emerging transdisciplinary fields of animal studies, plant studies, and posthumanism,
along with science studies; race, gender, and disability studies; and indigenous studies.
We will focus mainly on theoretical, mixed genre, and experimental texts, but will also
discuss a few poems, a short story, and an animated film. The questions center not on
how to interpret literature, but rather on how to know, interpret, represent and speculate about other species and why all this can matter.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Demonstrate your understanding of the texts, concepts, theories, and questions of the course, through comparison, contrast, evaluation, elaboration, analysis, interpretation, application, and more. Develop your own ideas, arguments, and positions about the course material in your exams and final paper/project.
2. Create an original final paper/project that contributes to the central questions of the course, is based on independent research, and is structured in an effective manner.
3. Participate in class discussions, in an informed and productive manner, helping to create the content of the course, and developing oral communication skills.
4. Refine your argument, analysis and writing skills in the essay exams and the final paper/project. Revise your essays in such a way as to be clear, organized, convincing, precise, and concise--packing the most illuminating content into the word limits.

**Required Texts:** Please purchase all three books, ideally, paper versions; or borrow the books from the U of O library or another library.

- *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- Graduate students will also read the epistolary theoretical dialogue, *Through Vegetal Reading* by Michael Marder and Luce Irigaray
- Other texts will be available online, through internet links and through PDFs on our class Canvas page. It is best to print these out, so you can read them more carefully and bring them to class.

**Course Assessment 419 (Undergraduate)**

- Attendance at Kimmerer’s lecture, Reflection and Response: 5%
- First Exam: 25%
- Second Exam: 30%:
- Paper/Project: Proposal, 5%, Finished paper/project, 25%
- Participation: 10%. (Class participation throughout the term, presentation of final project, and attendance during week 10 presentations. Participation graded from A+ to F, in a holistic manner.)

[Students must complete all assignments and requirements in order to pass the class]
Course Assessment 519 (Graduate)

- Attendance at Kimmerer’s lecture, Reflection and Response Lecture: 5%
- First Exam: 20%
- Second Exam: 25%:
- Paper/Project: Proposal, 5%, Finished project, 35%
- Participation: 10%. (Class participation throughout the term, presentation of final project, and attendance during week 10 presentations. Participation graded from A+ to F, in a holistic manner.)

[Students must complete all assignments and requirements in order to pass the class]

Grading Scheme: See “Course Assessment,” above, which explains how each part of the class is weighted, in terms of the percentage of the grade. The class uses a standard grading scale, in which, A+ is 97-100, A is 94-96, A- is 90-93, B+ is 87-89, B is 84-86, B- is 80-83; etc., with Cs as 70s, Ds, as 60s, and F as 59 and below. Some of the grading mechanisms will depend on the ways that Canvas works. You must complete all of the assignments in order to pass the class. There is no extra credit. Assignments must be completed by their due dates and times.

Incomplete Policy: Incompletes will only be considered in emergency situations. If you find yourself in an emergency that keeps you from completing the work in the course, please consult with an official U of O Academic Advisor, the financial aid office, and AEC if appropriate, about your situation and then contact your instructors. The university strongly discourages instructors from granting incompletes.

Late exams and papers: Please submit all work by the deadlines. Late work may not be accepted; or the grade may be reduced by 10 points for each day it is late. If you have a true emergency, you’ll need to document it with your academic advisor and ask them to officially contact your instructors.

Preparing for and participating in class: Your active, informed participation is crucial for your own ability to learn and for the success of the course. The class is primarily a discussion class in which students themselves create much of the content and determine the quality of the class. Carefully prepare for each class period by doing the reading in a rigorous and inquisitive manner. Take notes before, during, and after class. Ask questions! You will learn more, enjoy the course more, and perform better on your written work if you actively participate. Be sure to bring the appropriate texts and materials to class. This is crucial for English classes because we analyze and interpret specific passages from the texts, arguing about their meaning and significance.

If you come to class, be in class: Attending class means that your mind is actually in class with us. You need to be mentally --not just physically--here. So if you are sleeping, checking email, looking at websites, texting, or otherwise not paying attention, etc., you may be asked to stop, then asked to leave. Those behaviors not only signify that you are not really in class with us but they also detract from the ability of the other students to learn. No texting, no email, no social media, no online shopping, etc.
Attendance/Participation: Attendance is not graded per se, but attendance affects the participation grade as well as overall learning and performance. If you are actively participating you are helping to create the actual content of the class. Your ideas, interpretations, analyses, and questions are valuable. If you do miss a class, there is no need to tell me why you were absent, since there are no excused absences, because I don’t grade on attendance per se. While lecture outlines (Power Points) will usually be posted on Canvas, the experience of the in person lecture, class discussion, and small group work cannot be replicated. The participation grade will be determined by a holistic assessment of the quality and quantity of each student’s contributions to the class discussions, along with their presentation of final projects and attendance at their classmates’ presentations. Participation grades may range from A to F, from 100 to 0. Please note that participation may affect your final grade!

In case the professor has an emergency: If the professor is sick, quarantined, or cannot make it to class for some reason, please keep up with the readings and assignments. We may have class online on Zoom, or class may be cancelled. Please check your university email and our class Canvas account for instructions.

If you, the student, have an emergency: There is no need to inform me why you missed class or will be missing class since I don’t require attendance per se. And it is not possible for me to summarize an hour and a half long class in one email. Please follow all university procedures for anything covid-related, and/or talk with your academic advisor, and get help from counseling services. If you have to quarantine or isolate—and you have reported this to the university—and would like me to set up zoom for you to participate, please email me, with documentation.

Official University of Oregon Policies and Resources

Accessible Education - (see https://aec.uoregon.edu/best-practices-faculty for more information). “The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.”

[Usually AEC sends faculty an official notice. Because that notice is usually quite general, meant for all sorts of classes with all sorts of policies, I may email you for clarification as to which parts actually fit this class. Since the essay exams will be limited by the word count, not the time it takes to write the exam, and since the exams will not be limited to class time, accommodations for extra time shouldn’t be necessary. And since there is no attendance policy per se, that should not be an issue either, except in cases where the accommodations exempt the student from all attendance and participation. If that is the case, I will not count participation in the final grade and Canvas will determine the percentages. You may still wish to attend, however, since it is difficult to do well on the exams without being in class. Feel free to let me know how you think the AEC instructions pertain to the specific policies and procedures in this class. Dr. Alaimo]
Academic Misconduct - “The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.”

[I take plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct very seriously. Any time you use someone else’s ideas or words without giving them credit it is plagiarism. You must cite your sources properly. Dr. Alaimo.]

Inclement Weather “It is generally expected that class will meet unless the University is officially closed for inclement weather. If it becomes necessary to cancel class while the University remains open, this will be announced on Canvas and by email. Updates on inclement weather and closure are also communicated in other ways described here: https://hr.uoregon.edu/about-hr/campus-notifications/inclement-weather/inclement-weather-immediate-updates”

Academic Disruption due to Campus Emergency “In the event of a campus emergency that disrupts academic activities, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email, and on Canvas. If we are not able to meet face-to-face, students should immediately log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments. Students are also encouraged to continue the readings and other assignments as outlined in this syllabus or subsequent syllabi.”

[Yes—always keep up with the reading and the assignments, no matter what happens. If I need to cancel class or move class to Zoom, I will let you know as soon as I can. Check your campus email and Canvas accounts. Dr. Alaimo]

Reporting Obligations. The following is the recommended minimum language to include on syllabi: “I am a [designated reporter/student-directed employee]. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see Employee Reporting Obligations on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender-based violence, may seek information and resources at safe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, or investigations.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office/Office of Civil Rights Compliance (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24:7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect.”

UO COVID-19 Regulations & Prevention - (see https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/regulations and https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/prevention#If-sick-stay-home for more information)”The University of Oregon (UO), in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, Oregon Health Authority, and Lane County Public Health requires faculty, staff, students, visitors, and vendors across all UO locations to use face coverings when in UO owned, leased, or controlled buildings. This includes
classrooms. Please correctly wear a suitable face covering during class. Students unable to wear face coverings can work with the Accessible Education Center to find a reasonable accommodation. [The instructor will need to receive this AEC documentation to allow someone to be exempt from our community mask requirement.] Students refusing to wear a face covering will be asked to leave the class. Face coverings are not required for fully vaccinated instructors, provided there is 6 feet of distance to others and that all others in the class are masked. For full guidelines, which are subject to change, see the UO’s face covering regulations. Students should obtain wipes available outside of classrooms before they enter class and use them to wipe down the table and seat they will use. Please conduct regular symptom self-checks (https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/regulations#self-check-procedures) and do not come to class if you are experiencing symptoms. I will work with you to make sure you can stay caught up with the class. Use this self-check log: https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/sites/coronavirus1.uoregon.edu/files/2020-08/self-monitoring.pdf to track your symptoms. In addition, familiarize yourself with these exposure scenarios and guidelines to determine if you should come to class after suspected exposure to someone with the virus. https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/covid-exposure

From https://www.benidormseriously.com/face-masks-spain-questions-and-answers

**Mental Health and Wellness** "Life at college can be very complicated. Students often feel overwhelmed or stressed, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationships, or just need help navigating challenges in their life. If you’re facing such challenges, you don’t need to handle them on your own—there’s help and support on campus. As your instructor if I believe you may need
additional support, I will express my concerns, the reasons for them, and refer you to resources that might be helpful. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I care and that help is available. Getting help is a courageous thing to do—for yourself and those you care about. University Health Services help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at health.uoregon.edu/ducknest. University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).”

[Life is especially hard right now—please get the support and help you need. And learn some strategies and practices for mental and physical health. Dr. Alaimo]

**Basic Needs:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support. This UO webpage includes resources for food, housing, healthcare, childcare, transportation, technology, finances, and legal support: [https://blogs.uoregon.edu/basicneeds/food/](https://blogs.uoregon.edu/basicneeds/food/)

**Accommodation for Religious Observances:** The university makes reasonable accommodations, upon request, for students who are unable to attend a class for religious obligations or observance reasons, in accordance with the university discrimination policy which says “Any student who, because of religious beliefs, is unable to attend classes on a particular day shall be excused from attendance requirements and from any examination or other assignment on that day. The student shall make up the examination or other assignment missed because of the absence.” To request accommodations for this course for religious observance, visit the Office of the Registrar’s website ([https://registrar.uoregon.edu/calendars/religious-observances](https://registrar.uoregon.edu/calendars/religious-observances)) and complete and submit to the instructor the “Student Religious Accommodation Request” form prior to the end of the second week of the term.

[See “Attendance/Participation,” above. Attendance per se, is not required, so there are no excused absences. Focus on participating productively most of the time.]
Schedule

I may adjust this schedule, if necessary. Please read all the literature before class, bringing a copy to class, with interpretations, ideas, and questions. All readings, except for the required books, are available on Canvas.

Part I: Plant Studies

Week One. Jan. 3 and 5

Wednesday: Plant Science: Trewavas, Firn’s response, Trewavas’ response, Gagliano.

Week Two. Jan. 10 and 12

Wednesday: Plantlife International Manifesto; Stefano Mancuso, manifesto from The Nation of Plants, Michael Marder, “Epilogue: The Ethical of Shoots of Plant Thinking.”

[Thursday or Friday, Jan. 13 or 14: Extra class for graduate students: Discuss Irigaray and Marder, Through Vegetal Being]

Week Three. Jan. 17 and 19
Monday: Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass, first half, Preface, Planting, Tending, Picking

Wednesday: Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass, second half, Braiding, Burning, Epilogue

Week Four. Jan. 24 and 26
Monday: Robin Wall Kimmerer Event, required. No class. Short online reflection post due by Monday Jan. 24th at midnight and response to 4 other posts due by Tuesday the 25 at midnight. This must be done by the deadlines! See Canvas.

Wednesday: First Exam, on Canvas.
Part II: Animal Studies

Week Five. Jan. 31 and Feb. 2


Week Six. February 7 and 9.


Week Seven. February 14 and 16.

Wednesday: Brenda Schaughnessy, “There Was No Before;” Marina Zurkow, “Slurb” (2009), 17 minutes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8k_jY7xCPYY

Week Eight. February 21 and 23
Monday: Proposal for final projects due
Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Undrowned, first half

Wednesday: Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Undrowned, second half

Week Nine. February 28 and March 2nd
Monday: Second Exam on Canvas

Wednesday: No class: time to work on final projects, meet with professor.
Week Ten. March 7 and 9th. Final Projects
Monday: Final Paper/Projects due
Presentations of Final Paper/Projects

Wednesday: Presentations of Final Paper/Projects

No final exam!

Spring break: March 19-27

Please take the time to fill out the course evaluations. Thank you!