

English 104

Introduction to Fiction: Humanizing Stories of Environmental Injustices Spring 2022

Instructor: Sarah Preston

Office: PLC 210

Phone: 541-346-1520

Email: spreston@uoregon.edu

Class time: TR 4:00 pm - 5:20 pm, 300 Villard

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

Wednesdays 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm, or by
appointment

Course Description:

This introduction to fiction course, Humanizing Stories of Environmental Injustices, will explore the questions, why does fiction matter? What function does fiction serve that cannot be served otherwise, either by other genres or other disciplines such as social and hard sciences? How do authors craft their stories in such a way as to make them effective for these purposes? What makes some fiction more impactful than others? For whom? To explore these questions, we will be reading the short stories and well-known contemporary Chicana, Native American, Asian American, and African American novels of Helena María Viramontes, Thomas King, Ruth Ozeki, and Mat Johnson as they are a part of, and represent in their literature, communities who are at a high risk of being harmed by environmental injustices. We will explore the ways these stories reveal the physical, emotional, and economic costs of environmental toxicities in the unique way only fiction can. By the end of the course you should be able to break down the fundamental components of fiction and appreciate what makes a good story work. You will also have sharpened your writing skills.

Required Texts

All texts available at the U of O Bookstore, unless otherwise noted

- Viramontes, Helena María. *Under the Feet of Jesus* (Available as eBook through our library as well)
- King, Thomas. *The Back of the Turtle*
- Ozeki, Ruth. *My Year of Meats*
- Johnson, Mat. *Pym*

Other readings available on Canvas

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, the successful student will be able to:

- Discuss texts with the goal of collaboratively creating knowledge
- Learn and use discipline specific terminology and concepts to describe the texts
- Develop close reading and analysis skills
- Understand the cultural context of a work
- Craft focused, sustained analysis

- Learn to discuss literature in large and small groups as well as in writing
- Develop an appreciation for and understanding of fiction

E-Handbooks

The following electronic handbook will be available for grammar and citation reference during this course. You can find all of these handbooks on the Library Resource link of the Canvas course site: *Purdue OWL* (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>)

Formatting Guidelines for Written Work

All written work should be typed and double-spaced, using 12- point Times New Roman font and 1" margins. Use MLA format for quoting and citing sources.

Assignments and Course Work

Expected Workload: This is a 4-credit undergraduate course. Expected student engagement hours are approximately 120 per quarter. The breakdown according to assignments and requirements are as follows: 1) Attendance: 30 hours; 2) Reading/viewing, discussion questions and preparation: 75 hours; 3) Micro essay: 5 hours; 3) Midterm and Final Project (including prep): 10 hours.

Read, Read, Read: My main requirement is that students read. The reading for this course is both engaging and intensive. However, falling behind in the reading will spoil the endings and put you at a disadvantage during class discussions. If I feel that people are falling behind in the reading, I reserve the right to give reading quizzes. I would prefer to spend our time in class discussing these interesting and provocative texts. However, I will not hesitate to give reading quizzes, the points of which will be applied to the Engagement grade.

Attendance: Attendance and preparation are mandatory. Attendance will be taken regularly in class. Students are allowed two absences without excuse. Three absences will result in the loss of a quarter of the attendance grade. Four absences will result in the loss of half the attendance grade. More than four absences will result in the complete loss of the attendance grade.

Late Work: All assigned work is due on Canvas at the same time each week (see Schedule below). Please let me know as soon as possible if you will be turning in a late assignment. Late work will drop a half letter grade for each day it is late. ***I will not accept any work later than one full week past the due date*** as this interferes with learning goals.

Participation: In addition to attending, students are expected to arrive to class prepared, to bring the daily reading to class, to complete in-class projects, and to contribute to discussion.

Discussion Questions: For each reading, students will be responsible for posting one discussion question and responding to one of their classmate's questions on Canvas. The question must address the assigned reading(s) and be intended to inspire discussion. We will discuss this assignment in more detail.

Micro Essay: During the quarter students will write one 500- to 800-word essay and upload it to Canvas. This essay will help students to strengthen their critical reading, writing, and analysis skills, and to develop ideas about the course themes. We will discuss the essay guidelines.

Exam: One Midterm to demonstrate gained knowledge and understanding of course materials via multiple choice and short answer responses.

Final Project: For the final project, students can choose to either turn in a creative project with a short write-up or write a 1,500 word essay. We will discuss the guidelines for each choice.

Course Grading Breakdown (1,000 points total)

Engagement/Attendance	100 points
Discussion Board	250 points
Micro Essay	150 points
Midterm Exam	200 points
Final Project	300 points
Total	1,000 points

Grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric:

A+ 98-100	B+ 87.6-89.5	C+ 77.6-79.5	D+ 67.6-69.5	F <59.5
A 93.6-97.9	B 83.6-87.5	C 73.6-77.5	D 63.6-67.5	
A- 89.6-93.5	B- 79.6-83.5	C- 69.6-73.5	D- 59.6-63.5	

Course Policies

Respect: Respect for each other is necessary to facilitate discussion and to create a safe space that allows students to share their thoughts. Active participation includes listening carefully to others and being considerate in your own comments. There are times when discomfort can be productive, and it is important to have our ideas challenged, but at no time will we tolerate sexist, racist, homophobic, or transphobic statements in class. I reserve the right to ask any student to leave if he or she does not adhere to these guidelines.

Sensitive material: Many of the readings for this class feature disturbing language and images. Students are responsible for all course readings; there are no substitute readings. Take the time to look over the course material and ensure that the violence, sexuality, and mature themes included in many readings will not prevent you from succeeding in the course.

Punctuality: Please arrive on time for class. Alert me beforehand if you will be late, or if you need to leave early. Missing more than 15 minutes of class may result in a loss of attendance for the day.

Phones, laptops, tablets: When in class, personal devices like laptops or tablets must be used for the sole purpose of accessing our readings or taking notes. Phones must be off, or on silent. Use of

phones, laptops, or tablets for anything not related to the class may result in a loss of attendance for the day.

Accessibility Statement: The University of Oregon seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) works to create and sustain physical, curricular, and informational environments that are informed by and responsive to the diverse characteristics and experiences of students with disabilities and variations of ability. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. If you will need accommodations in the class, you are encouraged to contact the AEC in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu. The AEC will work with you and I will gladly make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the AEC.

Personal Responsibility Statement: Each student will be responsible for the grades that she or he earns in this course. Except under exceptional, documented conditions, no requests for grade modification (including those for a grade of "Incomplete") for personal circumstances outside the purview of the course (e.g., probationary standing, financial aid eligibility, scholarship status, etc.) will be considered. Grade modification requests must be made in writing. Please monitor your grades carefully throughout the quarter. If extra-credit opportunities are offered during the quarter, you will be encouraged to take advantage of them. No additional extra-credit opportunities will be allowed on an individual basis.

Contact: Students can contact me by email; I will answer within 48 hours. Please make an appointment if you cannot make my normally scheduled office hours.

Canvas: Students are responsible for effectively utilizing email and Canvas in order to submit assignments and participate in the course. To access Canvas, go to <http://canvas.uoregon.edu/>

Academic Integrity: Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Any academic misconduct will be dealt with according to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. 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, such as plagiarism. 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. 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. Additional information about plagiarism is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

Syllabus: The instructor retains the right to vary the syllabus and schedule for the course. Students will be notified in a timely fashion if changes do occur.

TIMELINE

*For each class starting with our first novel, **come to class with a passage that stood out to you.**
 *Starting in Week 2, All Initial Discussion Posts will be **due Tuesdays by 2pm**; Responses to posts will be **due Thursdays by 2pm.**

<u>Week 1: Introduction</u>	<u>Ready by This Date:</u>
Tuesday 3/29	Introduction; Syllabus
Thursday 3/31 *Survey/Response Due by noon	Read: Julie Sze, "From Environmental Justice Literature to the Literature of Environmental Justice" (link on Canvas)
<u>Week 2: Why EJ Literature?</u>	
Tuesday 4/5	Read: Rob Nixon, excerpt from "Introduction" from <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i> (link on Canvas)
Thursday 4/7	Read: Helena María Viramontes, <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> pp. 3 – 46 (or up to chapter 2)
<u>Week 3: Local EJ & Focalization</u>	
Tuesday 4/12	<i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> pp. 49-130 (or up to Chapter 4)
Thursday 4/14	<i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> pp. 133-end.
<u>Week 4: Crossing Borders & Time Setting</u>	
Tuesday 4/19	Read: Thomas King, <i>The Back of the Turtle</i> pp. 1-104 (or up to Ch. 17)
Thursday 4/21	<i>The Back of the Turtle</i> pp. 105-173 (or up to Ch. 29)
Saturday 4/23	Micro Essay due on Canvas by 11:59pm
<u>Week 5:</u>	
Tuesday 4/26	<i>The Back of the Turtle</i> pp. 174-277 (or up to Ch. 49)
Thursday 4/28	<i>The Back of the Turtle</i> pp. 278-350 (or up to Ch. 62)
<u>Week 6:</u>	
Tuesday 5/3	<i>The Back of the Turtle</i> pp. 351-453 (or up to Ch. 84)
Thursday 5/5	<i>The Back of the Turtle</i> pp. 454-end.
Saturday 5/7	Midterm Exam due on Canvas by 11:59pm
<u>Week 7: Transnational Toxins/Genre</u>	
Tuesday 5/10	Read: Ruth Ozeki, <i>My Year of Meats</i> pp. 1-119 (or up to Ch. 6)
Thursday 5/12	<i>My Year of Meats</i> pp. 123-167 (or up to Ch. 8)
<u>Week 8:</u>	
Tuesday 5/17	<i>My Year of Meats</i> pp. 171-284 (or up to Ch. 11)
Thursday 5/19	<i>My Year of Meats</i> pp. 287-end.
<u>Week 9: Global Matters and Satirical Fantasy</u>	
Tuesday 5/24	Read: Mat Johnson, <i>Pym</i> Preface-pp. 108 (or up to Ch. IX)
Thursday 5/26	<i>Pym</i> pp. 109-173 (or up to Ch. XIII)
<u>Week 10:</u>	
Tuesday 5/31	<i>Pym</i> pp. 174-270 (or up to Ch. XXI)
Thursday 6/2	<i>Pym</i> pp. 271-end.
<u>Week 11: Finals Week</u>	
Wednesday 6/7	FINAL PROJECTS DUE by Wednesday, June 8th at 12:00pm on Canvas (no in-class final)