**ENGL 2329 American Literature: Nature Writing**

**Spring 2014**

Instructor: Catherine Corder, Ph.D.

Office Hours: Tues 1-3pm, Wed 1-3pm, and by appointment

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**Course Information**

Course number: 2329-012

Room: PKH 109

Meeting times: TTh 9:30 – 10:50am

**Course Description**

The UTA Department of English describes sophomore literature as “an opportunity to help students in all majors become aware that literary studies are relevant to personal, social, and political life,” and as a way to “foster enjoyment of literature.” In this section of American literature, we will examine several different forms of American literature, such as poetry, short stories, excerpts from novels, and essays. The readings for this class will not only comprise writings from different times and places in American society; the texts will also reflect various authors’ interest in the natural world and in how we interact with it. We will be reading works from a variety of authors, including Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, Kate Chopin, and even John James Audubon.

One component of this class will be practice on observing behaviors, settings, and traits and characteristics, not only in our campus environment, but also in our own stories, as we examine various aspects of narrative (point of view, setting, plot, characterization, and theme) and other literary elements (tone, theme, figurative language, etc.). My hope is that, by exploring American literature as practicing naturalists through occasional field observations, outdoor activities, and close readings of selected texts, we may see the connections between our human stories and our own natural settings and learn to enjoy both.

**Goals**

* To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature, as students engage with ideas and beliefs in ways that extend beyond the English classroom.
* To help students recognize that literature does not occur as isolated literary events, but as a complex dialogue with cultural and historical contexts.
* To develop students’ ability to read critically by studying a variety of literary elements such as form, structure, and style.
* To enable students to demonstrate their understanding of literary texts and their ability to analyze such texts in writing, in online discussions, and through class discussions.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to do the following:

* Demonstrate their knowledge of a variety of literary terms and elements.
* Identify a variety of literary elements within literary texts.
* Explain and analyze how context shapes the composition, reception, and interpretation of texts.
* Demonstrate their ability to discuss literature using textual evidence to support assertions.
* Conduct research using the UTA Library resources.
* Use correct MLA documentations of primary and secondary sources.

**Required Texts**

*Norton Book of Nature Writing*, ed. by Robert Finch and John Elder. College Edition.

Other readings will be available on Blackboard.

**Class Resources**

On the Blackboard site for this class, you will find the course policies and procedures, the class syllabus, as well as assignment prompts, readings, and additional resources for studying literature.

**Grading**

Your final grade is based upon the following assignments. These assignments will give you the opportunity to practice skills that you learned in your first-year writing classes: writing good thesis statements, providing relevant textual evidence, constructing useful commentary on the evidence providence, and making clear connections between ideas.

Field Notes: The field notes are an opportunity for you to make use of your observation skills in an outdoor setting, whether that is a corner of the UTA campus, a park, a river bank, or a garden. I have provided a guide to field notes on Blackboard, with suggestions on how to approach these assignments.

Online Discussions: The discussion boards will ask you to respond to questions about one of the readings. Please think of your responses to the discussion prompts as mini-essays. Write them as correctly, coherently, and clearly as you can. Use complete sentences; use a topic or thesis sentence to unify your essay. In your responses to the prompts, please try to go into as much detail as possible. Frequently the prompt will seem like a barrage of questions. You don’t need to try and answer them all (and please don’t use them as a template to model your answer on), as they are meant to be helpful places to start and things to think about in drafting your response. I will be grading your responses not according to how close you come to what I think is the “right” answer, but on how much your responses indicate thoughtful and sensitive interactions with the texts that we are studying. In addition to your initial post, each prompt will ask you to respond to one other student’s post. In your response, you should go beyond simply saying “nice job” or “I agree.” Use this as an opportunity to continue the discussion raised in your classmates’ posts.

Quizzes: There will be ten short, unscheduled quizzes that will cover the reading assigned for that day.

Exams: There will be two take-home, multiple-choice or short-answer exams, which will cover the readings and discussions up to the date of the exam.

Essays: The three essays ask you to analyze/explicate an essay, short story, or poem that we have not covered in our class readings and discussions.

**Points**

Field notes (6) 150

Online class discussions (7) 175

Quizzes (10) 100

Exam 1 50

Exam 2 50

Essay 1 50

Essay 2 50

Essay 3 50

**Total possible points** **675**

590 – 675 = A

505 – 589 = B

420 – 504 = C

335 – 419 = D

Below 335 = F

Late Assignments. The online assignments (field notes and class discussions) are due on the date and time indicated on each prompt. I will not accept late online assignments, so you will not be able to access the assignment after the specified time.

The three essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date specified. Assignments turned in after the class has begun will receive a 10-point deduction unless the instructor has agreed to late submission in advance of the due date. For each calendar day following, the work will receive an additional 10-point deduction. **I will not accept essays after three late days.** If you must be absent, your work is still due on the assigned date.

**Syllabus and Schedule Changes**

I try to make my syllabus as complete as possible; however, during the course of the semester I may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies /assignments. Instructors reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary. I will inform students of any changes through email.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

NW = *Norton Book of Nature Writing*

BB = Blackboard

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Reading** | **Assignment Due** |
| Tues 1/14 | Introductions/course materials and assignments |  |
| Thurs 1/16 | Medieval monsters, maps, and nature  “Iroquois Creation Story” (BB) |  |
| Tues 1/21 | William Strachey, “A True Reportory of the Wreck…” (BB)  Edward Taylor, “Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold” (BB) |  |
| Thurs 1/23 | Gilbert White, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (NW) | Field Notes #1 |
| Tues 1/28 | William Bartram, *Travels Through North & South Carolina…* (NW)  Meriwether Lewis, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (NW) |  |
| Thurs 1/30 | John James Audubon, *Ornithological Biography* (NW) | Discussion #1 |
| Tues 2/4 | Philip Freneau, “The Wild Honeysuckle” (BB)  Charles Darwin, various excerpts (NW) |  |
| Thurs 2/6 | Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Rural Hours* (NW)  William Cullen Bryant, “To a Waterfowl” (BB) | Discussion #2 |
| Tues 2/11 | Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature” (NW) |  |
| Thurs 2/13 | Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (NW) | Field Notes #2 |
| Tues 2/18 | Henry David Thoreau, “Walking” (NW) |  |
| Thurs 2/20 | Walt Whitman, “Specimen Days and Collect” (NW)  Walt Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (BB) | **Essay #1** |
| Tues 2/25 | Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Chap 32 (BB) | Discussion #3 |
| Thurs 2/27 | Samuel Clemens, *Life on the Mississippi* (NW)  Samuel Clemens, Huckleberry Finn, Chaps 7-9 (BB) | **Take-home exam #1** |
| Tues 3/4 | Emily Dickinson: Poems (BB) |  |
| Thurs 3/6 | Sarah Orne Jewett, “A White Heron” (BB) | Field Notes #3 |
| Tues 3/11 | **Spring Break** |  |
| Thurs 3/13 | **Spring Break** |  |
| Tues 3/18 | Jack London, “To Build a Fire” (BB) | Discussion #4 |
| Thurs 3/20 | Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (NW) | Field Notes #4 |
| Tues 3/25 | Vladimir Nabokov, “Butterflies” (NW)  Robert Frost: Poems (BB) | **Essay #2** |
| Thurs 3/27 | Kate Chopin, “The Storm” (BB) |  |
| Tues 4/1 | E. B. White, “A Slight Sound at Evening” (NW)  Rachel Carson, “The Marginal World” (NW) | Discussion #5 |
| Thurs 4/3 | Loren Eiseley, “The Judgment of the Birds” (NW) | Field Notes #5 |
| Tues 4/8 | Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (NW)  Maxine Kumin, “Silver Snaffles” (NW) |  |
| Thurs 4/10 | Edward Abbey, “The Great American Desert” (NW) | Discussion #6 |
| Tues 4/15 | Ursula Le Guin, “A Very Warm Mountain” (NW) |  |
| Thurs 4/16 | Gary Snyder, “Ancient Forests of the Far West” (NW) and poetry (BB) | **Take-home exam #2** |
| Tues 4/22 | Wendell Berry, “An Entrance to the Woods” (NW) |  |
| Thurs 4/24 | N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (NW) | Field Notes #6 |
| Tues 4/29 | Barry Lopez, “The American Geographies” (NW) | Discussion #7 |
| Thurs 5/1 | Concluding Thoughts | **Essay #3** |