

Chaminade University

**Syllabus: EN 307, Nature Writing
Spring Day Term, 2017
Instructor, James Kraus**

Note: This is an online course that uses both Canvas and a site called “Edwebs Moodle.”

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Humanities Division Front Desk: ph. 808-735-4827

Course Pre-requisite: EN 102, Expository Writing

Technical Requirements: Must have successfully opened account on course web site. Also, students must be able to view “Films on Demand” via Chaminade Library Web site. To test this, go to the following to this url <http://www.chaminade.edu/library/> then click on the “Films” tab and enter “The Story of English” in the search field. If logging on from off-campus, you will need your Chaminade ID and password.

The course web site is mobile-accessible; however, access via personal computer or tablet (iPad or equivalent) is required for full participation in the course.

Technical Support: Contact instructor first with all technical problems.

Course Description

In its essence, Nature Writing is a multi- and inter-disciplinary course about how we humans have learned to create names for, and describe the relationships among, the parts of the natural world. Its aim is to provide an arena within which students are able to develop and refine a concept of "the whole person" as one who is integrally linked to landscape, seascape and cityscape that together manifest as "the environment." Central to the course is the notion of an environmental ethic that is both personal and social and which, like nature itself, is continually evolving. The course's persistent prompting of writing assignments with questions like "What makes a place sacred?" or "What makes it ominous?" or "What (if anything) separates man from nature?" serve to keep students focused on the use of and refinement of language as a tool for self-examination, critical thinking and personal spiritual development.

Additionally, Nature Writing explores the various intellectual histories out of which today's environmental movement continues to critically examine itself and the broader social values from which new environmental policies are emerging. One important theme in this regard is the critical examination of the emergent emphasis on philosophical Pragmatism in the field of environmental ethics.

All participants in the course keep journals in which they record their observations of class sessions, field trips, readings and independent outings. Essays generally consist of edited material from journals and are submitted via the course website to the entire class.

Students who take the course as part of an Environmental Studies curriculum may earn course credit for the completion of simulated environmental proposals, assessments or research project reports.

In sum, the course provides opportunity for practice in a wide range of both professional/technical and non-professional environmental writing through which students can explore, develop and refine a variety of ways of writing about the environment.

Diversity

[Chaminade's "Core Beliefs Statement"](#) says, "Students, both traditional and non-traditional, bring a variety of talents, traditions, cultures and abilities. This diversity brings a special opportunity to the Chaminade community, which can then nurture and guide each student to the fullest realization of potential." Consequently, this course encompasses readings that reflect and examine the diversity of our literary, cultural and environmental heritage. Additionally, the course puts special attention on the problems faced by authors seeking to write from unique personal or cultural perspectives to readers who may not share the same perspectives or cultural background.

Summary of Course Objectives:

- Provide students with a basic understanding of how language has been used to name the parts of the natural world
- Develop and refine a personalized concept of the "whole person" as integrally linked to the environment
- Provide an understanding of philosophical Pragmatism in relation to environmentalism
- Provide a general knowledge of "topistics" as a way of understanding the human environment
- Understand the origins of the environmental movement
- Understand the relation of poetry to the development of environmental ideas
- Understand the place of Emerson ("Nature") and Thoreau ("Walden" and "Walking") in the development of ideas about nature
- Understand the role of religion in the formation of environmental values
- Identify the key writers working today in the area of nature writing
- To help students become independent learners

This course fulfills the following English Program learning objectives:

- A proficiency in writing through the production of non-fiction essays.
- The ability to define various literary critical approaches and apply them to given texts.
- The ability to define, identify, and articulate major movements/periods in British and American literature.
- The ability to critically analyze significant authors, texts, and issues in British and American Literature.

This course also fulfills the following Environmental Studies Program learning outcomes.

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of :

- The central importance of spirituality and worldviews in the “environmental movement”
- Problem-solving skills from diverse disciplines for diverse populations
- Relevant written and oral communication skills
- Computer literacy
- The major environmental issues and their potential solutions
- The importance of the environment in our own health and well being
- Career opportunities in the environment

Texts

The following required texts are available via this web site.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "[Nature](#)"

Jordan Fisher-Smith, "[Field Observations: An Interview with Wendell Berry](#)"

Aldo Leopold, excerpts from "The Land Ethic" and *Sand County Almanac*

Barry Lopez, [A Literature of Place](#)

Steven M. Meyer, "[End of the Wild: The extinction crisis is over. We lost.](#)"

John Muir, "[The American Forests](#)"

Powell, John Wesley. *Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*

Thoreau, "[Walking](#)"

E. O. Wilson, "[Arousing Biophilia: A Conversation with E. O. Wilson](#)"

Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of Pointed Firs*

[Robert Frost, "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things"](#)

Gary Snyder, various poems

Walt Whitman, "[Song of the Redwood Tree](#)"

Online References

[Online searching and research help from Sullivan Library, Chaminade University](#)

[Online searching of University of Hawai'i Libraries](#)

[EBSCO Online Research](#)

- Login: Sullivan
- Password: ahinahina

[Literature Resource Center](#)

- Password: ahinahina

[Environment Hawaii](#)

[Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment](#)

Requirements (see details below)

Participation / Attendance (approximately 20%)

Journal (approximately 10%)

Essays (approximately 30%)

Quizzes, Q&A Exercises and Miscellaneous Assignments (approximately 20%)

Final Exam (approximately 20%)

Participation / Attendance (approximately 20%)

Since this is an online class, students are required to regularly participate by posting responses to questions presented in the course outline. Each student's first posting should be a direct response to the discussion question itself; it should be an original response based on the student's individual understanding of the question. Follow-up postings should consist of reactions to other students' postings; students are expected

to post at least one follow-up response for each discussion question. Students should keep in mind that the best responses often culminate in the assertion of further topical questions.

Participation in online discussions and submission of other assignments will constitute attendance in this class. Consequently, failure to regularly participate in discussions or submit assignments in a timely way will constitute absence. Because the online environment provides considerable latitude in terms of when and where attendance takes place, there is no distinction between in this course between excused and unexcused absence. All students are expected to participate in a timely way. The instructor reserves the right to penalize students for late submission of assignments. If extensions of due dates are necessary, students are advised to email the instructor prior to due dates in order to request extensions.

Consistent with University policies, students who do not participate in the course for two consecutive weeks may be administratively dropped from the course.

Journal (approximately 10%)

The course also requires keeping a journal in a conventional bound paper notebook. Entries should be dated in order to reflect regular writing practice throughout the term. Entries should consist of responses to prompts in the course outline, as well as free-form responses to the required readings, notes on the writing process and short fictional sketches. The requirement for the journal is a minimum of 30 pages (4500 words minimum) for the term. Journals may be checked periodically during the term and will be checked at the final exam.

Essays (approximately 30%)

Two essays of 1500 - 2000 words each (a minimum total of 3500 words for both) are due during the term. The two essays are submitted via the course web site. Document format should be in accord with MLA guidelines. In general, written work is evaluated with regard to organization, clarity, correctness, conciseness, and creativity. See "Essay Guidelines" on course website for details.

Quizzes and Miscellaneous Assignments (approximately 20%)

Online quizzes, Q&A exercises and other assignments are due throughout the term. They are intended to pace the student through the course's required readings and to provide a useful index of the student's comprehension of course content. Submission of quizzes is required; they are automatically graded and should be seen as preparation for the objective section of the final exam, as described below. Completion of "Question and Answer Exercises" is also required and other miscellaneous assignments may from time to time be added to the course study guide.

Final Exam (approximately 20%)

The Final Exam is a timed, online essay exam. The exam will consist of three essay-style questions randomly selected from a set of 5 or more study questions that will be distributed during the last two weeks of the course.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

All material submitted in fulfillment of course requirements must be written by the registered student during the term.

Work written for other courses is unacceptable in this one. There may be limited exceptions; approval by the instructor early in the term is required.

While students are strongly encouraged to consult sources outside the required reading of the course, they are also responsible for clearly stating the nature of their sources. Statements of "common knowledge" are generally exempt from this scholarly requirement.

Plagiarism is defined as the presentation of someone else's ideas as your own. Plagiarism in this course will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment and possible failure for the course.

If the instructor suspects plagiarism, the burden of proof of the originality of the writing lies with the student. Evidence of originality would include copies of early drafts of the writing, research and interview notes, as well as the ability to discuss the themes of the writing with the instructor. Students should consider their instructor's vigilance in such matters a normal part of the academic process and should be prepared to present evidence of originality if requested.

Students are strongly advised to save files of early drafts of essays, along with outlines, research notes and other supporting documentation, as the instructor may at any time require that they be presented.

Tentative Course Outline

Unit 1 -- The Nature Journal

- Thoreau's Journals
- Thoreau, "The Ponds," *Walden*

Unit 2 -- Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman and Muir

- Thoreau, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"
- Emerson, selection from "Nature"
- Whitman, "The Redwood Tree," "This Compost"
- Muir, "The American Forests"

Unit 3 -- W. S. Merwin, Environmental Journalism

- Merwin, *The Rain in the Trees*
- *Environment Hawai'i*

Unit 4 -- Writing about "the Wild"

- Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*
- Quiz 1

Unit 5 -- Walking

- Thoreau, "Walking"

Unit 6 -- The Food Chain

- Thoreau, "Reading," "Solitude," "Higher Laws"

Unit 7 -- Exploration

- John Wesley Powell, *The Colorado River and its Canyons*

Unit 8 -- Going it Alone

- Audrey Sutherland, *Paddling My Own Canoe*
- Field Trip Report Due

Unit 9 -- Wilderness vs. Civilization

- Thoreau, "The Bean Field," "The Village," "Brute Neighbors," "The Pond in Winter"
- Quiz 2

Unit 10 -- Versed in Country Things

- Robert Frost, "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things"
- Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of Poitned Firs*
- Haiku

Unit 11 -- Gary Snyder

- Snyder, "Four Changes," selected poems

Unit 12 -- Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson

- Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*
- Carson, *Silent Spring*
- Quiz 3

Unit 13 -- Contemporary Nature Writing

- Interview with Wendell Berry
- Barry Lopez, *A Literature of Place*
- E.O. Wilson, "Arousing Biophilia"

Unit 14 -- The Environmental Movement

- Environmental Movement Timeline
- Ecology Hall of Fame

Unit 15 -- Extinction

- Steven M. Meyer, "End of the Wild: The Extinction Crisis is Over. We Lost."
- Essay 2 Due
- Quiz 4
- Final Exam