

Nature Writing

EN 307, Spring Day Term, 2023

Syllabus

Instructor: James Kraus, PhD, Chaminade University

Course website: <https://courses1.edwebs.com/course/view.php?id=123>

Description

Nature Writing is an online 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 a place 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. Forum postings and essays normally 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.

Pre-requisite: EN 102

Online Course

This semester's course is being conducted as an asynchronous online course. As such, it requires internet access and email. Students are expected to engage in active online discussions and submit all assignments via the course website. Students are also expected to check email regularly.

- This online course uses a site called “Edwebs Moodle,” rather than Canvas. Students interested in taking the course should email the instructor for an enrollment key after creating an account on this system.
- Course url: 23(To open new account, click on “Create new account.”)
- Technical Requirements: Must have successfully opened account on course web site. Email instructor for enrolment key if necessary. Students must be able to view “Films on Demand” via Chaminade Library Web site. To test this, go to the following to this url: <https://login.ezproxy.chaminade.edu/login?url=https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.chaminade.edu/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=103281&xtid=210669>
 - If logging on to Films on Demand from off-campus, you will need your Chaminade ID and password.
- The course web site is mobile-accessible; however, access via personal computer is required for full participation in the course.
- Technical Support: Contact instructor first with all technical problems.

Learning Outcomes

- Compose regular entries in a personal nature writing journal.
- Post responses to discussion forums that link prompts relating journal entries to readings and course activities.
- Compose an essay, a short story or a poem that describes the origins of the environmental movement in the evolution of ideas about nature.
- Explain a personal understanding of the dynamic between faith and reason in the formation of environmental ideas.
- Working collaboratively with other class members, produce a presentation (multi-media or performance) that identifies two or more writers who have been influential in the formation of personal values related to living an environmentally responsible life.

This course fulfills the following English Program learning objectives:

- Produce non-fiction essays, short stories and poems.
- Define and apply various critical approaches to given texts.
- Analyze significant authors, texts, and issues from various global literary traditions.

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

- Explain the central importance of spirituality and worldviews in the “environmental movement.”
- Apply problem-solving skills from diverse disciplines for diverse populations.
- Write and speak with authority about environmental issues.
- Apply computer skills to presenting ideas about the environment.
- Analyze major environmental issues and their potential solutions.
- Explain the importance of the environment in our own health and well being.

Contact

- Mail: Humanities Division, 3140 Waiālae Ave., Honolulu, HI 96816
- Email: jkraus@chaminade.edu
- Office Hours: Monday, Friday, 9:30 – 10:30 am: 12:30 – 1:30 pm
- Humanities Division Front Desk: ph. 808-735-4827

Texts

The following texts are available via this web site.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature"
- Robert Frost, "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things"
- Jordan Fisher-Smith, "Field Observations: An Interview with Wendell Berry"
- Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of Pointed Firs*
- 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"
- John Wesley Powell, *Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*
- Audrey Sutherland, *Padding my own Canoe*
- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*
- Gary Snyder, various poems
- Walt Whitman, "Song of the Redwood Tree"
- E. O. Wilson, "Arousing Biophilia: A Conversation with E. O. Wilson"

Online References

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

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

[EBSCO Online Research](#)

[Environment Hawaii](#)

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

Requirements (see details below)

Participation (approximately 20%)

Journal (approximately 10%)

Essay (approximately 20%)

Quizzes and Miscellaneous Assignments (approximately 10%)

Final Portfolio (approximately 40%)

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 the required readings, field notes, notes on the writing process, short fictional sketches and poetry. 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. Graded journal reports are required at several times during the term.

Essay (approximately 20%)

One essay of 1500 - 2000 words is due during the term. The essay is 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 10%)

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 Portfolio (approximately 40%)

The Final Portfolio is an edited collection of writings completed over the semester. Final Portfolios should have an introduction, a table of contents and a list of works cited. More details about how to assemble portfolio will be provided during the final weeks of the term.

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.

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1 -- The Nature Journal

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

Week 2 -- Activism: from Thoreau to Greta Thurnberg

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

Week 3 – Activism: from John Muir to Julia Butterfly Hill

- Muir, "The American Forests"
- Sierra Club ' John Muir Exhibit
- Articles about Julia Butterfly Hill

Week 4 -- W. S. Merwin, Environmental Journalism

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

Week 5 -- Writing about "the Wild"

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

Week 6 -- Walking

Thoreau, "Walking"

Week 7 -- The Food Chain

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

Week 8 -- Exploration

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

Week 9 -- Going it Alone

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

Week 10 -- Wilderness vs. Civilization

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

Week 11 -- Versed in Country Things

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

Week 12 – Gary Snyder, Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson

- Snyder, Manifesto and other writings
- Leopold, Sand County Almanac
- Carson, Silent Spring
- Quiz 3

Week 12 -- The Environmental Movement

- Environmental Movement Timeline
- Ecology Hall of Fame
- Collaborative Project Due

Week 14 -- Extinction

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

Week 15 – Review and Final Portfolio Due

Marianist and Native Hawaiian Values

Education is an integral value in both Marianist and Native Hawaiian culture. Both recognize the transformative effect of a well-rounded, value-centered education on society, particularly in seeking justice for the marginalized, the forgotten, and the oppressed. See below for a more expansive description of Marianist Core Beliefs that was adopted by the Chaminade Faculty some years ago.

Disability Access

Sample statement: If you need individual accommodations to meet course outcomes because of a documented disability, please speak with me to discuss your needs as soon as possible so that we can ensure your full participation in class and fair assessment of your work. Students with special needs who meet criteria for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions must provide written documentation of the need for accommodations from the Counseling Center by the end of week three of the class, in order for instructors to plan accordingly. If a student would like to determine if they meet the criteria for accommodations, they should contact the Counseling Center at (808) 735-4845 for further information.

Title IX Compliance

Chaminade University of Honolulu recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse will NOT be tolerated at CUH. If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse, we encourage you to report this matter promptly. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and healthy environment, and should I learn of any sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse, I must report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources by visiting Campus Ministry, the Dean of Students Office, the Counseling Center, or the Office for Compliance and Personnel Services.

Chaminade University

Core
Academic
Beliefs

Our role as Professionals at Chaminade University is defined by our core academic beliefs. These beliefs are formed in turn by our role as professionals at a Catholic, Marianist University, as mentors to the students we serve, as teachers and scholars as colleagues, and as servants to the community.

As
Professionals
at a Catholic,
Marianist
University

An education in the
Marianist tradition
is marked by five principles

Education for Formation in Faith

In our community, reason and personal faith are seen as mutually complementary roads to truth. Together, we invite all scholars to join our community of faith, hope, and love.

Integral, Quality Education

We are committed to an integral, quality education which begins with respect for the complexity and diversity of each person. This means that the faculty member attempts to engage the whole person with quality courses and activities that challenge the intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, physical, and ethical dimensions that make up each student's life experience.

Education and the Family Spirit

Our community is a second family which encourages the personal development of each of its members. Mutual respect for all members of our family allows the Marianist-based scholarly community to share responsibility for decision making at all levels.

Education for Service, Peace, and Justice

All members of the community must expect to dispense and receive justice to and from each other and to and from the community in which the university is situated. Teachers and administrators within our community prepare students to view their own world with a critical eye in order to discern between the just and unjust.

Education for Adaptation and Change

True to the tradition of faith, a Marianist-founded education prepares students for tomorrow and adapts to its time. Our scholarly community regards technology as a critical aid in the quest for understanding in our changing world.

As Mentors
of
the Students
We Serve

Our students, both traditional and non-traditional, bring us 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.

Each student's educational goal is to prepare for professional careers and personal growth in an educational environment based in the liberal arts tradition and enriched by Marlanist values.

We recognize that knowledge connecting various approaches and ways of thinking is vastly superior to compartmentalized knowledge. This is why we believe that it is the scholarly community's responsibility to explore and encourage connections between disciplines and to provide the various experiences necessary to make those connections. This implies intense, dedicated collaboration among colleagues and students.

As Teachers
and
Scholars

We teach best when we conduct ourselves with personal integrity, perhaps the most powerful educational tool we can possess. We serve as mentors and role models; the way in which we interact with students enables them to work with others in a like manner.

We educate and train for servant leadership within the university and in the communities beyond our campus.

Our philosophy of education encourages continuous learning and develops the capacity for change.

The nurturing and guidance of our students often takes place outside the classroom. Therefore, our availability beyond classroom hours distinguishes Chaminade from other institutions.

Our definition of scholarship includes the scholarship of integration, application, and teaching as well as research and publication.

We recognize that collaboration with allied fields enhances our learning and that we become more integrated by learning to look through other eyes, by viewing knowledge from different perspectives. Our goal is wholeness; only through collaboration can we approach the ideal of full understanding.

As
Professional
Colleagues

We recognize that faculty are at their best in the classroom and that we should make every effort to experience each others' finest moments. The consequences of this effort are to gain respect for each other as well as to gain insight from different perspectives, methodologies, and skills. This will lay important groundwork for unifying and integrating our curriculum. We thus demonstrate to our students the truth that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

We believe in staying the course through difficult periods. Patience, self discipline and sacrifice are necessary to build a strong community. We look within ourselves for solutions and the resolve to work through difficulties.

We believe in a more extensive view of hospitality, meaning a cordiality to the ideas and talents of others. Listening with an open mind enhances our integrity and reasserts our humanity.

As Servants
to the
Community

As a Marianist institution, we are charged with promoting human rights and dignity, alleviating the suffering of the disadvantaged and providing service to the community. We hold fast to this abiding charge no matter what the political climate or transient social ethos.

Strong social consciousness must clearly distinguish us from other institutions; it must expressly permeate all curricula.

We seek justice for our co-workers in all areas of university life. By our teaching, our personal example, and our regard for our fellow Chaminade employees, we impart a humanity to our students to conduct their lives with integrity, ethics, and compassion.

We strive to be a community that looks beyond itself through public service, which enriches the life of the wider community.

Chaminade University
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This version of Chaminade University's Core Beliefs Statement is by Heather Dozier and Jim Kraus.