

Writing Seminar II: Writing the Environment
Spring 2008, TTh 9:30-10:45
715 B'way, Room 401

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Writing the Environment. In this class, we will look at ways of imagining and approaching the natural environment through writing. Beginning with the Romantic engagement with the natural sublime, we will examine writing about nature in its various manifestations, from travelogue to activism. Topics for reading and writing might include global warming, ecofeminism, sustainable engineering and architecture, and species extinction. Readings will include Wordsworth, Thoreau, Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, and Al Gore, as well as other contemporary nature and environmental writing. Papers will center on description and critical analysis, and the final research paper will be on a related topic of the student's own choosing. In addition to our analysis of the themes and structures of the readings, we will devote significant class time to the practice and mechanics of writing, including writing in stages, workshoping, and doing research.

Course Information

Required Texts: All texts are available at the NYU Book Center.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods.* 1854. NY: Dover Thrift Editions, 1995.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring.* 1962. Boston: Mariner Books, 2002.

Finch, Robert and John Elder. *The Norton Book of Nature Writing.* NY: Norton, 2002.

Office Hours: My office hours are Tuesday from 11-12, or by appointment. I encourage you to meet with me outside of class, and there will be at least one mandatory conference.

Course requirements:

Attendance and participation (20%). Your active participation is an important part of the course and will be included in your final grade. This includes keeping up with the assignments and participating in class discussions and other in-class activities such as in-class writing and workshops. Regular attendance is expected, and excessive unexcused absences (more than 2 classes) or chronic lateness will adversely affect your grade. If you do need to be absent, please email me about in-class work and assignments.

Writing assignments (80%). There will be three short papers (3-5 pages) and a final research essay (8-10 pages). The papers will be written in stages, with in-class writing, workshops, and revisions all part of the process. There will be also be response papers and in-class writing keyed to various reading assignments.

You will frequently be asked to share your work with your peers, and to provide thoughtful responses to their essays and drafts.

Late work will be accepted only at my discretion and will be penalized by a grade reduction. Please note that plagiarism is a serious offense which will result in failure.

Syllabus:

1/22 Introduction.

1/24 Wordsworth, "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,"

<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww138.html> ; "My heart leaps up,"

<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww194.html> ; "I wandered lonely as a cloud,"

<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww260.html> ; Shelley, "Mont Blanc,"

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/mont-blanc>

1/29 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Economy," p. 1-52

1/31 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," p. 53-64; "Sounds," p. 72-84;

"Solitude," p. 84-90; "The Bean-Field," p. 100-108

- 2/5 **Draft of first essay due.** In-class workshop. Thoreau, *Walden*, "The Ponds," p. 112-130.
- 2/7 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Winter Animals," "The Pond in Winter," "Spring," "Conclusion," p. 175-216.
- 2/12 **First essay due.** Muir, "A Wind-Storm in the Forests," "The Water-Ouzel", *NBNW*, p. 250-268.
- 2/14 Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac*, *NBNW*, p. 376-397.
- 2/19 Carson, *Silent Spring*, p. 1-83.
- 2/21 Carson, *Silent Spring*, p. 85-152.
- 2/26 **Draft of second essay due.** In-class workshop. Carson, *Silent Spring*, p. 155-216.
- 2/28 Carson, *Silent Spring*, p. 219-297.
- 3/4 **Second essay due.** Abbey, "The Serpents of Paradise," "The Great American Desert," *NBNW*, p. 614-627.
- 3/6 Snyder, "Ancient Forests of the Far West," *NBNW*, p. 662-683; John McPhee, "Under the Snow," *NBNW*, p. 684-690.
- 3/11 Momaday, "The Way to Rainy Mountain," *NBNW*, p. 737-742; Moon, "Under Old Nell's Skirt," "Hop the Mound," *NBNW*, p. 773-781; Silko, "Landscape, History and the Pueblo Imagination," *NBNW*, p. 1003-1014.
- 3/13 House, "In Salmon's Water," *NBNW*, p. 766-772; Grover, "Cutover," *NBNW*, p. 891-899.
- Spring Recess
- 3/25 **Draft of third essay due.** In-class workshop.
- 3/27 Dillard, "Heaven and Earth in Jest," "Living Like Weasels," "Total Eclipse," *NBNW*, p. 867-891; Lopez, from *Arctic Dreams*, "The American Geographies," *NBNW*, p. 900-923.
- 4/1 **Third essay due.** research paper topic due. In-class workshop.
- 4/3 Pollan, "Weeds Are Us," *NBNW*, p. 1078-1090; Williams, "Clan of One-Breasted Women," *NBNW*, p. 1091-1098.
- 4/8 **Annotated bibliography, argument and outline due for research paper.** McKibben, from *The End of Nature*, *NBNW*, p. 1120-1130; Gore, Nobel Prize acceptance speech (handout).
- 4/10 Reading TBD (current issues).
- 4/15 Reading TBD (current issues).
- 4/17 **Research paper drafts due.** In-class workshop. Film: *An Inconvenient Truth*.
- 4/22 **Response to research paper drafts due.** Film: *An Inconvenient Truth* (conclusion).
- 4/24 Presentations.
- 4/29 Presentations.
- 5/1 Last day of class. **Research paper due.**