



South Portland, Maine 04106

Spring 2022

ENGL 245: Literature and the Environment

Online / Brightspace

email: rvettese@smcme.edu

Professor Robert Vettese

Office: Harborview Office #303

Course Description

This course explores the Fiction, Poetry, and Creative Nonfiction of the literary genre known as Nature Writing. Beginning with New England, we will read authors who explore the regions of the Great White North, Maine, the Pacific Northwest, and the Southwestern Desert. This class will examine how individuals have connected with Nature for inspiration, for retreat, to ignite revolution, and finally to test oneself against. Poets, filmmakers, and philosophers who consider Nature and Environmental issues in their work will also be considered. Lastly, we will engage in our own form of nature focused regional writing in course journals and discussions.

Course Objectives

1. To illustrate how literary visions of the land have influenced our attitudes toward Nature.
2. To consider why American authors have been so inspired by the idea of wilderness.
3. To analyze ways in which American literature has dealt with the physical environment
4. To enable students to read, think, and write critically about the literature
5. To maintain a Course Journal that engages in different styles of Nature Writing
6. To appreciate the value and intelligence of a variety of cultures
7. To harvest, collect, analyze and connect author ideas about nature, the environment, and human's connection to these forces

Writing Objectives

Show ability to communicate ideas clearly, with a specific purpose and to a specific audience

Utilize appropriate strategies for varying contexts and logical organization methods.

Apply revision methods to achieve polished final draft/presentation, using standard academic format and conventions of grammar.

When necessary, utilize proper MLA and/or APA documentation.

Use critical thinking and listening skills in written and oral communication as a tool for learning.

Required Texts

1. Norton Anthology of Nature Writing: ISBN 978-0-393-94634-5
2. The River by Peter Heller: ISBN 978-0525563532
3. Sisters of the Earth: ISBN 978-1400033218

Attendance Policy:

Since this is not a traditional on campus class the attendance policy is based on online participation. **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO LOG INTO THE CLASS EACH WEEK.** If you do not log in weekly you will miss assignments and discussions. If you miss two weeks in a row you may be dropped from the course. You should schedule two hours a week to complete weekly assignments. You will need to spend additional time offline reading and studying.

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Total Assignments</u>
Reading Responses	120	12
Close Reading Journal	100	1
Weekly Discussions	160	15
Final Course Essay	100	1
Total	480	

Course Assignments and Requirements

Reading Response Assignments – Worth 120 points

Read, read and then read some more. There will be a set of questions for each week's readings. The reading responses are challenging and lively take home reading questions that celebrate the knowledge you have gained by completing the reading. These assignments can be found in the Weekly Assignment Folder

The Close Reading Journal – Worth 100 points

Each week you will complete and compile a list of important quotes from the reading assignments. These quotes could be of any length and from anything we read in the class during the week. Once you have cited the quote you need to offer an analysis. Close reading helps to sharpen, specify, and develop observations about a text's subject matter. Close reading allows us to see what a text is offering in its content and style. Close reading allows a reader to understand what a student thought, connected to, or questioned while they were reading. Close readings will always include one or more of the following:

- **Paraphrase:** restatement of textual contents to show a reader their meaning and ambiguities or to foreground problems they raise;
- **Explanation** of an important or difficult component of the text relevant to your discussion;
- **Quotation AND explanation** of what you quote. That underlined “and” is important. Do not assume that others will understand and think about the words in the same way you do. We will all understand them a little differently. You must explain HOW you are understanding the words, tone, terms, images that you quote as working, or your reader may not follow your argument.

You are required to complete one close reading per week, but you could certainly complete more. These close readings will be completed and stored in the Close Reading Journal found in each weekly assignment. These Close Reading Journals are due on the Sunday at the end of each week.

This Close Reading Journal is intended to be one of your primary learning tools in this course.

Discussion Board Postings – Worth 160 points

Each you will need to complete a class discussion post that answers questions specific to the weekly readings. You’ll add 1 new posting to the bulletin board each week in response to the discussion questions. Also, you’ll reply to 1 posting by a classmate or the instructor. These responses should reflect your thoughts and ideas concerning the texts.

Presentation (meaning spelling, grammar, etc.) will be graded as well. It is hard to understand a person's ideas when spelling or grammar mistakes get in the way.

Discussion board assignments, like the quizzes, need to be finished by Sunday of each week. For example, Week 1's discussion board assignment needs to be completed by Sunday, JANUARY 23.

Final Essay - Worth 100 points

This essay will focus on the thematic connections between the various readings from the semester. The writing project will include work that has been completed for the reading response as well as the Close Reading Journal. Students will design a writing project that examines a Nature Writing common theme and compare and contrast author viewpoints.

Class Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1 – Course Introduction, Elements of Nature Writing, What is Nature Writing?

Readings Assigned:

Review History or Nature Writing PowerPoint, Read Elements of Nature Writing handout, Review the Nature Writing Timeline, Read “Apologia” by Barry Lopez (handout)

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal Introduction, Discussion 1 – Student Introduction, Reading Response 1 Due – “Apologia” Questions

Week 2 – Explorers

Readings Assigned:

The Journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark 96 – 104 NBNW (Norton Book of Nature Writing)

“Life on the Mississippi” by Samuel Clemens 237 – 239 NBNW

“An Entrance to the Woods” by Wendell Berry 718 - 728 NBNW

“A Word in Favor of Rootlessness” by John Daniel 984 - 990 NBNW

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 2, Reading Response 2

Week 3 – Working With The Land and Animals

Readings Assigned:

“Friends, Foes, and Working Animals” by Gretel Ehrlich 944 – 949 NBNW

“The Gifts” by Richard K Nelson 797 - 811 NBNW

“Living Like Weasels” by Annie Dillard 876 – 879 NBNW

“Of Moose and a Moose Hunter” by Franklin Burroughs 819 – 832 NBNW

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 3, Reading Response 3

Week 4 – Henry David Thoreau

Readings Assigned:

From “The Maine Woods” by Henry David Thoreau 205 – 211 NBNW

From “Walden; Or, Life in the Woods” by Henry David Thoreau 172 – 180 NBNW

From “Journals” by Henry David Thoreau 200 – 210 NBNW

From “A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers” by Henry David Thoreau 170 – 172 NBNW

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 4, Reading Response 4

Week 5 – John Muir

Readings Assigned: All are handouts

“A Wind-storm in the Forests” by John Muir 251 - 258 NBNW

“The Water-Ouzel” by John Muir 258 - 268 NBNW

“Nut Time in Squirrelville” by John Muir

“Stickeen vs. the Glacier” by John Muir

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 5, Reading Response 5

Week 6 – Sarah Orne Jewett

Readings Assigned:

The Country of Pointed Firs by Sarah Orne Jewett chapters 1 – 16, 21 (handouts)

Documentary “An Island” directed by D’Arcy Marsh

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 6, Reading Response 6

Week 7 - Mary Austin

Readings Assigned

"The Land of Little Rain" 321 - 326 NBNW

"The Scavengers" Handout

Mary Austin chapter from Writing Wild: Women Poets, Ramblers, and Mavericks Who Shape How We See the Natural World

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 7, Reading Response 7

Week 8 – Edward Abbey

Readings Assigned:

Selections from Desert Solitaire by Edward Abbey

Literature Criticism Selections (handout)

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 8, Reading Response 8

Spring Break March 13 - 20

Week 9 – Sisters of the Earth

Reading Assigned:

Preface to the first and second editions, selections from Her Wildness section

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 9, Reading Response 9

Week 10 – Sisters of the Earth

Student chosen Sisters of the Earth Project reading assignment

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 10 Reading Response 10

Week 11 – Sisters of the Earth Project

Assignments Due: Sisters of the Earth Project Discussion Assignment 11

Week 12 - The River by Peter Heller

Assignments Due: Discussion 12

Week 13 - The River by Peter Heller

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 13, Reading Response 11

Week 14 - Current Nature Essays

"The Wood Wide Web" by Robert MacFarland:

"The Death of an Innocent" by John Krakauer

"The Miseducation of John Muir" by Justin Temple:

“The Marsh at the End of the World” by Elizabeth Rush

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 14, Reading Response 12

Week 15 - Final Essay Proposals / Development

Assignments Due: Close Reading Journal, Discussion 15

Week 16 - Final Essay Due

Assignments Due: Final Essay Due, Course Evaluations

Attendance and Participation

Since this is a course taught exclusively online, your attendance and participation will be measured by the time you spend on the course website, as well as the time you spend with the reading material. **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO LOG INTO THE COURSE WEBSITE EACH WEEK.** There are weekly journal, discussion and reading response questions that are due, some of which cannot be submitted after the due date. Each week of the course will run from Sunday through the following Sunday, meaning the first week of the course runs from Tuesday January 18 until Sunday January 23.

Your Participation online is also crucial to your success in the course. This participation can take form in many different ways. Active discussion, journaling, and active reading are all ways in which a student can participate.

Late Assignments

In general, late assignments will not be accepted. Major assignments that are not turned in on time will automatically be reduced by 20% on the final assignment grade.

Plagiarism

Everything you submit must be your own work. I will assume that everything you pass in is your own writing unless otherwise properly documented. Anyone who attempts to submit someone else’s work as his or her own may be subject to an F on the assignment and possibly in the course. We are here to become strong readers and strong writers. This takes effort and work. Copying and Pasting from the Internet is fairly easy to check on so please do not put yourself in a situation where you jeopardize your grade.

Disability Services.

Southern Maine Community College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and employer. For more information, please call [207-741-5798](tel:207-741-5798). If you have a disabling condition and wish to request accommodations in order to have reasonable access to the programs and services offered by SMCC, you must register with the Disability Services Coordinator, Sandra Lynham, who can be reached at 741-5923. Further information about services for students with disabilities and the accommodation process is available upon request at this number. Course policies about online testing are modified to suit each individual’s accommodations.

End-of-Course Evaluation:

In order to gain access to final course grades, students must complete evaluations for each course attended at SMCC. Evaluations are submitted online and can be accessed through the student portal site. Students can access the course evaluation report beginning two weeks before the end of classes. The deadline for submission of evaluations occurs 24 hours after the last day of classes each semester. Instructors will announce when the online course evaluation is available.

Add-Drop Policy:

Students who drop a course during the one-week “add/drop” period in the fall and spring semesters and the first three days of summer sessions receive a 100% refund of the tuition and associated fees for that course. Please note any course that meets for less than the traditional semester length, i.e., 15 weeks, has a pro-rated add/drop period. There is no refund for non-attendance.

Withdrawal Policy:

A student may withdraw from a course only during the semester in which s/he is registered for that course. The withdrawal period is the second through twelfth week of the fall and spring semesters and the second through ninth week of twelve-week summer courses. This period is pro-rated for shorter-length courses. To withdraw from a course, a student must complete and submit the appropriate course withdrawal form, available at the Enrollment Service Center (no phone calls, please). The designation “W” will appear on the transcript after a student has officially withdrawn. A course withdrawal is an uncompleted course and may adversely affect financial aid eligibility. Failure to attend or ceasing to attend class does not constitute withdrawal from the course. There is no refund associated with a withdrawal.