

# *Nature Writing/Environmental Literature*

## **Course Syllabus**

### ENG 491B

**Instructor:** Prof. Stephen G. Brown

**Office Hours/:** M-Th, 2:-3:00p (or by apt)

**Email:** Stephen.brown@unlv.edu

**Texts:** (in order covered)

Yeats, Select Poems (4) (Transcendentalist Perspective)

Lame Deer, *Seeker of Visions* (2 chs)

Muir, *Wild Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra* (selections)

**Hemingway, African Hunt, Wind River.**

Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (selections)

Abbey, Edward. *Desert Solitaire* (selections)

Blakesley, *American Wolf*

Carson, *Silent Spring* (selections)

**Handouts:** Selected Readings (to Xerox)

Brown: "The Wilderness Strikes Back,"

Hemingway: "African Story," "Wind River"

Skutch: "Questzal"

Carr/Safina: Turtle

### **Required Materials**

Journal: for reading responses, research, and writing

### **Course Description**

This course focuses on Nature Writing & Environmental Eco-Wars (past and present)—with a particular emphasis placed on American Nature Writing. Course readings reflect a sampling of canonical and contemporary works in the genre of Nature Writing/ Env. Literature. We will assess the scientific, literary, and polemical merits of these works, as well as their legacy. We will approach the theme of Nature from various perspectives: (Transcendentalist/Yeats; Native American/Lame Deer; Naturalist (Muir/Leopold); Radical Eco-Activist/ Abbey; Investigative Journalism/Blakesly; Biologist, Carson; Deep Ecology, in which inquiry is situated at the intersection of Nature and the Self, focusing on the dynamics of Identity formation. In the course of our exploration we will examine various eco-debates with local, regional, national, and global relevance, focusing on conflicts between the Environment and Big Oil, Big Timber, Big Mining, Big Fishing, and Big Recreation etc.

These readings will be supplemented with course lectures, discussions, and slide shows. The final week will be devoted to an on-line Eco-Colloquium, in which students give a 15 minute Zoom presentation on their Term Paper (voluntary, extra credit, 50 pts).

### **Course Goals:**

- To discover a strong, personal and analytical voice as a writer in response to the course readings and to the environmental issues raised during the course;
- To gain literacy as an active proponent of an environmental issue of your choice (with instructor's approval);
- To conduct effective, time-efficient research outside of class on selected writing topics;
- To conduct close textual analysis of course readings; to exhibit aesthetic awareness through the formation of a critical response to literature;
- To improve oral communication skills through participation in group and class discussions;
- To improve critical thinking and writing abilities;
- To improve editing and proof-reading skills;
- To join an environmental organization

### **Reading/Discussion Schedule:**

Week 1 Yeats (4 poems)

Week 2 Lane Deer (Chs 3, 7)

Week 3 Muir (*Wild Muir*, Chs 1-5), "Hetch Hetchy"

Week 4 Muir (*First Summer in Sierra* (selections)

Week 5 Leopold (*Sand County Almanac*)

Week 6 Leopold ("Wetland Elegy")

Brown ("In Defense of the Wetland Sublime," "The Wilderness Strikes Back,"

Week 7-9 Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (selections)

Week 10-12 Blakeley, *American Wolf*

Week 13-14 Carson (*Silent Spring*, 4 chs)

Week 15 Take Home Final Exam

### **Important Deadlines/TBA:**

Midterm Paper (8-10p/250 pts): End Weeks 7

Term Paper: (10-12p/300 pts): Last week of instruction

Rdg Response Journal (200 pts) Last week of instruction

Presentations (vol/50pts ec): Last week of instruction

Take Home Final (150 pts) Finals Week

### **Grading/ Evaluation:**

100-94%	A
93-90%	A-
89-87%	B+
86-84%	B
83-80%	B-
79-77%	C+
76-74%	C
73-70%	C-
69-67%	D+
66-64%	D
63-60%	D-
59% -	F

### Assignment Weight :

Participation/Attendance	100 pts
Midterm Paper	250 pts
Journal	200 pts
Term Paper	300 pts
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>150 pts</u>
Total	1000pts

### Writing Guidelines:

All papers turned in for evaluation must meet the following guidelines:

- Typed
- Double-spaced
- Title page
- 1" margins
- works cited (bibliography) page
- proper MLA citation format

### Assignments:

**Reading-Response Journal** (200 pts, due last week of class): *Each entry must be numbered and dated.* This is a course-dedicated journal in which you “explicate” (interpret) select passages from the course readings, as a means of generating material for our discussions (participation/ attendance, 100 pts), and for your midterm/ term papers (550 pts): by further developing the meanings of a given quote; searching for thematic or stylistic patterns; analyzing the causes/effects of a problem; analyzing/assessing the solutions proposed; dissecting the defining elements of a writer’s style; assessing the legacy or continuing influence of a writer etc.

These entries are a “running commentary” that you develop on each text, hopefully focusing on elements of the text you want to further develop in midterm, or term paper. Generating the close textual analysis that might become part of your papers. These responses are a chance to take “practice swings” at developing your own analysis/interpretation of a text. They are a means of discovering, developing, and honing your own critical voice, or “reading” of the texts. Critical writing springs from this habit

of “talking back” to a text, evolving from the “critical reading” that precedes it. These two interpretative acts (Critical Reading and Critical Writing) go hand in hand.

**Midterm Paper (250 pts, due end of week 7:** An 8-10p paper developing a reading of one or more of our texts to date, using at least four *outside sources*..

**Term Paper Project (300 pts, 10-12, last week of instruction):** A close textual analysis or comparative analysis of nature writing texts, or an in-depth analysis of the causes, effects, and solutions re: a eco-debate. (**6 outside sources min**). .

**Eco-Colloquium:** A 10-15 min. Zoom presentation of your Term Paper. (Last week of instruction 50 pts extra credit).

**Take Home Final:** A 2-4p explication of select passages from readings in the second half of the course, modeling your ability to conduct close textual analysis. Test will be provided one week prior to its due date during finals’ weeks. (150 pts).

### **Policies:**

**Attendance:** participation is based on attendance and involvement in class discussions (100 pts). Be prompt, as class will begin precisely on time. If you are absent, it is **your responsibility** to find out what was covered, handed out, or is due next time by contacting a classmate. Generally, the day’s handouts will be available in the pouch outside my ofc door.

**Deadlines:** All due-dates will only be extended with instructor’s **prior** approval. **No e-mail submissions of papers will be accepted. Papers must either be submitted in class or in the pouch on my ofc door (FDH 613). Permission for extension of a paper deadline may only be obtained face-to-face (no email requests).**

*Note: the penalty for a late submission of a paper without instructor’s prior approval will be one letter grade. No paper will be accepted for any reason that is turned in a week after its due date.*

### **Disability Resource Center:**

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the DRC for coordination of your academic accommodations, located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex, RM 137, Ph 895-0866.

**Electronic Devices:** Must be turned off during class. Refrain from using computers or other electronic devices during class.

**Plagiarism:** Defined as **any** use of another’s words in your mini-paper, midterm, or term paper without proper attribution (citation), both in the text and the works cited page. Even another’s paraphrased words must be given proper attribution, both in the text of your paper and on the works cited page. Documented incidents of plagiarism may result in the

following: a **“zero”** for the assignment; an **“F”** for the course; **referral** to Phil Bruns (Academic Integrity Office), and/or **expulsion** from the university.