

2014 September English 347 Off Campus Syllabus Overview
CORNELL WILDERNESS TERM Professor Leslie K. Hankins
English 347: Exploring Boundaries in the Arts and the Wild:
Site-Writing and Light-Writing: Journaling, Journeying, Meditation,
Inter-Arts, Writing, Photography/Journaling.



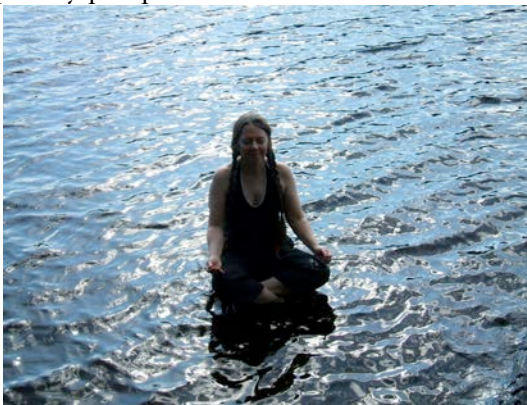
1-347 at the Boundary Waters (Wilderness Field Station, Ely, Minnesota)

Encounters with boundaries on the wild have shaped the boundaries of art and culture. What better way to study those encounters than on the boundary of the wilderness that inspired the writers and photographers? Therefore, the class will journey to the Boundary Waters of Minnesota, to the Coe College Wilderness Field Station, where we will immerse ourselves in the glorious September outdoors, study journals, literature and photography and consider the interplay between our own encounters with the wilderness and the artworks about the wilderness that we study. We will reflect upon art and meditation as ways of relating to the wilderness; to capture our own responses to the wilderness, we will keep journals/portfolios of projects involving writing, literary analysis, meditation, and photography (including a one-photo-a-day project inspired by Brandenburg's works). The class will consider photographers Jim Brandenburg, John Daido Loori and others who created art from their encounters with the wilderness. We will study the vibrant journals and paintings of Emily Carr, the Canadian wilderness writer and painter of the first half of the 20th century, and read fiction and essays by Thoreau and more contemporary fiction and essays by a variety of American women writers and discuss them over campfires and dinners, and by the lake. We will canoe around the Field Station on lovely Low Lake. You may be a seasoned camper, a neophyte, or something in between, but we will all work together to make the course and our trip, memorable as we interact with other courses at the Field Station for the Cornell Wilderness Term. The Field Station is primitive, rustic, and rather raw. Be ready to embrace the absence of electricity, laptops, social media,

cellphones, and the rest of the tech-distractions from full attention to *being*. We gain immersion in breathtaking beauty, stunning silence, physical challenges of hoisting and canoeing, and moments of sublime revelation—plus camaraderie. (“Wake up! Are those wolves howling?! There must be fifty of them!”)

Extended Description & Introduction

How do we, as early 21st century American readers, encounter both the wilderness and the ideologies and fiction about encounters with the wilderness? I suspect that for many of us, our first encounters with the wilderness have been mediated by the screen, whether through TV documentaries or through Disney. Therefore, the course will begin by considering such spectator roles and a formative classic: Disney’s *Bambi*. What messages did we get about the wilderness from such sagas? What do we need to jettison to encounter the wilderness afresh? Or, perhaps we learned all we know about the wilderness from writers like Hemingway, or films such as *Deliverance*, and consider the wilderness a macho, or at least a male, terrain. Or, do we come to the wild from the tales of mastery and daring-do of trekkers who boast of exploits of mastery, of “conquering” rivers and peaks? How are we affected by such narratives as youthful able-bodied super-specimens? Did we learn of science studying the wild? Did we learn about Ecology and scientists and activists preserving the wilderness in elementary school? We’ll do some reading to de-center those perspectives to make room for other ones. Or, we may have formed our relationship to the wilderness partly through LL. Bean, REI Outfitters, and the expedition industry with its catalogues and consumer lures. How do those portray the wilderness, and the human within it? Is it all about having the right outfit and equipment (not to mention being able to model it with a superbody, aged 20-3-? Interesting choices of narratives!! Though we will respect and need key equipment for our trip (don’t forget the flashlights and raingear!), we will consider, too, how those outfitters, scientists, sportsmen, and animators shape contemporary perspectives on the wilderness



Rod MacIver watercolor

What other ways might there be to meet with the wilderness? We will consider such alternative practices as Zen meditation, including silence and sitting in stillness, and we will explore the practice of art-making, particularly journaling and photography, with its parallel focus on looking deeply. We will have a class on meditation from college chaplain, Reverend Catherine Quehl-Engel. And, we will consider intersections between the arts, such as the visual arts and/ literature, as another way of relating to the world of the wild. We are also open to music and dance (ecochoreography) as the spirit moves us. We will consider photographs and films by photographers and artists who approaches the wilderness with camera and paintbrush, such as Emily Carr, the brilliant Canadian wilderness writer and artist of the first half of the 20th century. We will examine innovative contemporary boundary crossing interactive photographers Tokihiro Sato, nature writer/photographer Jim Brandenburg and Zen writer/photographer John Daido Looi. At the Boundary Waters, we will read journals, short stories and poetry primarily, immerse ourselves in the wilderness, track that immersion in journal/portfolio projects, and draft responses to the literature we read.

Disabilities and Accommodation. We would like all students to succeed at the college. If you have a disability that requires special accommodation, please visit the Cornell College registrar and the website about Disabilities Services; please alert the professor and consult the website if you think you require accommodation because of a disability. The student must have appropriate documentation on file at the Registrar's Office in order to be eligible for accommodation, and must request accommodation within the first three days of each term in order to be eligible for accommodation.

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WEEK ONE: Week One is planned to help us gather the materials we need and to prepare us for our trip up north to the Field Station. We will prepare by thinking about art and its meaning and value in culture (and in the wild), learning about meditation, looking at paintings and photography books and surfing the web for vital websites that will provide information and images that we can digest in the weeks ahead. And, we will plan and pack and prepare!

Monday September 1: [at Cornell] (Health insurance card copies)

Afternoon: 1-3 Beginnings. Introduction to the course, discussing needed items, such as cameras, journals, and so on. Sample journals shown (not spiral books or flimsy short ones). Discuss what a journal is (not a diary, but a thoughtful intersection between the personal and the academic. How is a journal like and unlike a series of papers? What does a journal allow a writer to do? What are the strengths of a good journal? What are the pitfalls of a weak journal? Talk about the arts and sciences and public policy and the WILD.

Screen: *Chased By the Light* and slide show of *Looking for the Summer*.

Do some investigatory sleuthing through wilderness catalogues and gear sources (such as Cabelas, REI, Patagonia, Boundary Waters journal and other materials. What messages about the wild do you get from each? Think about the way people are presented in the websites/catalogues. What are the demographics? Consider gender, race, age, ability, weight, attractiveness, class or income level, etc. Think about how these sites populate the wild. *Science and the Wild*; *Outfitters and the wild*: Prepare interview questions for Field Station cohorts in other classes.

Consider catalogues; discuss the messages in catalogues and websites; begin brainstorming about this topic.] Using the articles as an inspiration, think of interview questions you might ask Field Station cohorts from other classes. Bring in a few questions to class tomorrow. Samples: What do you see as the role of the sciences and ecology? Public policy? The arts? What do you think is most important? Why?

What is your major? What do you think is perceived as more difficult: Ecological Science course, Ecological Public Policy Course; Ecological Arts course. Why?

Assign: Read Kabat-Zinn sections to prepare for the meditation training by Chaplain Catherine Quehl-Engel

Wherever You Go, There You are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life.

New York: Hyperion Press, 1994. (and CDs on Reserve)

Especially: PART 2: The Heart of Practice, 103-169. Pay special attention to sitting, lying down, and walking meditation practices, and Lake Meditation.

Also on Reserve: Listen to the CD collection disks On Reserve in the Library that contains Mountain Meditation and Lake Meditation

Assign: *Ecocriticism Reader*, articles by Evernden, Rueckert and Le Guin. Also read Audre Lorde "Poetry is not a Luxury." Think deeply about the relationship between the wild and art, and the arts and culture. What does art have to do with the wild?

Assign: Read “Bambi” by David Payne, Xerox of a chapter in the book on Reserve, *From Mouse to Mermaid*. Also go to this website and read the short article:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/books/23bambi.html?_r=3&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

Tuesday Sept 2: [at Cornell]

**Morning: Meditation workshops with Father Catherine in 2 groups.
9:30-11.**



Afternoon 1-3. Screen Bambi (69 min) and discuss our cultural assumptions/ideologies of the wild. Ecocriticism Articles and interview ideas. What is the wild? Whose wild? Discuss Cabelas, Bambi, outfitters, “Hull Speed Decreasing” and ideologies and expectations about being in the wild and encountering the field Station

Assign: journal entries: Write notes on *Bambi* and the articles. Consider how the film presents the wilderness and nature—you can flesh these out into journal entries later.

Assign: “Hull Speed Decreasing”

Wednesday Sept 3:

afternoon: 1-3 meet in classroom. Discuss wilderness ideologies, Bambi entries, etc.

Brainstorming: Discuss ways film, video, camcorders, digital cameras, and other tools can shape your encounters with the wild. Consider ways to experiment with “fresh seeing” that bring your creativity to the wilderness.

Inspiration from the Moving Camera:

Screen: gorgeous trailer for John Daido Loori’s *Water Speaking Water* film, go to:

http://www.johndaidoloori.org/jdl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=49

Dance and film: nature, art, and dance. Screen Maya Deren “Choreography for Camera” You may wish to write more if you are packed and organized for the trip!

Thinking ahead about Photography

Recommended Assign: See *Chased by the Light* by Brandenburg: website : http://www.jimbrandenburg.com/gallery/90%20day%20images/chased_by_the_light.html
Especially examine the Jim Brandenburg project, which inspired our class project!
See also Photographs by Tokihiro Sato Photo-Respiration. See <http://photoarts.com/gallery/sato/satoexh.html>

Journal Questions: what do art and meditation have in common? Journal about the meditation process so far. Do they give you ideas about what you would like to do in your own intersection of art and the wild?

Assign: Begin to read Thoreau *Walden* selections: “Solitude” “Brute Neighbors” “Higher Laws” and “Conclusion.” Good reading for the van trip—or as you get settled in.

Thursday September 4: Sign up for Presentations, individual and group.

Pack! Get organized. Be sure all of your gear and class materials are manageable. Be packed by the evening, so you can get a good night’s sleep and still be up at 5. You should be ready with all your gear, neatly organized, to be at the Commons circle by 5:45-6 a.m. **WE HAVE TO GET AN EARLY START SO WE DON’T FACE DRIVING IN DARK/STORMY CONDITIONS AND ARRIVING LATE AT THE FIELD STATION. SET ALARMS! ARRANGE WAKE UP CALLS.]**

Friday September 5 [DRIVE UP to Field Station] 10 hours. Whew!

Meet absolutely no later than 6 a.m. at the Commons Loop. We would like to drive off at 6, and must pack the gear, so be early if possible, but for sure, don’t be late. Bring \$\$ to pay for meals on the trek up, and credit cards or whatever to pay for anything you may wish to purchase at Cabelas, the outfitting store we stop at outside of the Twin Cities. (This is your chance to purchase that flashlight or headlamp or Nalgene bottle you may have neglected to pack.) Bring reading materials for the trip—or whatever. We will arrive (hopefully) around dinnertime and with luck dinner will be ready for us. If it is still light (if we are efficient in our leaving Cornell & driving) we can look around, and get settled in.

Note: while at the Field Station, times and assignments will be flexible. We may shift projects/assignments around due to weather and travel, and we aren’t limited to the 9-11, 1-3 class times, so we can play around with those. We may break up class with canoe adventures, or meditation experiments, or art times. We may schedule a day of total silence, if that seems promising. We’ll see how it unfolds.

The schedule below is a draft because the weather day by day will re-arrange our plans. Meditation will be a part of various classes; perhaps we will meditate for 5 minutes at the beginning of class, or at break. We will regularly share our journal entries or ideas. Some days we may seize the weather and trek, and other days, we may do two class days in one if the weather is less beckoning. Please be flexible, and read ahead if you can.

Saturday September 6: at Field Station

Canoe training with Craig Allin & Andy McCullen

Class times variable depending on training. Pick out a few meditation spots that feel meaningful to you. Find a tree you really like. Meditate. Consider how you might devise a Paddling Meditation or a tree meditation.

Sunday September 7:

More canoe training and adventures

Read more Thoreau. Pick out and write about key passages and ideas.

Discuss Thoreau. Groups lead discussion.

Check out your meditation spots. Meditate solo and with group. Experiment with meditation practices such as walking meditation, paddling meditation, journaling meditation. Write in your journal. Share journal writings

PERHAPS MOONLIGHT CANOE AROUND LOW LAKE WEATHER PERMITTING.

WEEK TWO: SCHEDULING TENTATIVE!**Monday September 8th: Full Moon.**

Discussions of Thoreau. Perhaps read some aloud. Do Kabat-Zinn meditations.

PERHAPS MOONLIGHT CANOE AROUND LOW LAKE WEATHER PERMITTING.

Tuesday September 9:

PERHAPS MOONLIGHT CANOE AROUND LOW LAKE WEATHER PERMITTING.

During our time up at the Field Station, we have scheduled a visit to the International Wolf Center, September 11th or 10th (exact date TBA)



We are also planning a drive/canoe trek into the actual BWCA in 3 groups, tentatively scheduled for Sept 14 or 15th. For that we will have to break into 3 groups, because only 9 people at a time, or 3 canoes, can be together within the BWCA. We plan to paddle and portage to go see the Hegman Lake pictographs, ancient paintings on cliffs, sacred to the Ojibwe people. On site we will be respectful, taking pictures or making sketches, but not using flash photography, and not touching the sites. Be aware of these sites as powerful portals across time.



PRESENTATIONS/CAMPFIRES
LEADING THE CLASS IN DISCUSSION/INSIGHTS

Henry David Thoreau EACH GROUP WILL LEAD DISCUSSION OF ONE PART OF *WALDEN*.

“Solitude” _____

“Brute Neighbors” _____

“Higher Laws” _____

“Conclusion” _____

Emily Carr: Each group will present on her paintings and her journals. Sign up to choose and present one painting and to read aloud and discuss selections from the journal.

SOLO PRESENTATIONS: Sign up to lead a discussion (campfire or after dinner or in class) on one of the following. Journal several pages about your plans for the presentation, and your reflections on the piece. Be prepared with detailed discussion questions and observations. We may begin each session by reading aloud the selection or portions of the selection.

INDIVIDUALS WILL EACH LEAD THE DISCUSSION OF ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

Sisters of the Earth: Women’s Prose and Poetry about Nature, 2nd ed. Ed. Lorraine Anderson. 1991, 2003.

Joy Harjo “Fire” (poem) & music from her CD, *Native Joy* (p. 3) _____

Opal Whiteley “The Joy Song of Nature” (diary fragment) (p. 7-9) _____

Zora Neale Hurston “The Pear Tree” (snippet from novel) (p. 12-14) _____

Sarah Orne Jewett “A White Heron” (p. 23-35) _____

Sally Carrighar “Home to the Wilderness” (p. 37-45) _____

Leslie Marmon Silko “Love Poem” (108) _____

Gretchen Legler “Gabimichigami” (from essay) (114-117) _____

Martha Reben “Night Song” (fragment) (144-5) _____

Ellen Meloy “The Angry Lunch Café” (161-5) _____

Julia Butterfly Hill “The Storm” (166-169) _____

Willa Cather “The Ancient People” (excerpt from novel) (174-185) _____

Edna Warner “Journal Entries” (186-191) _____

Mary Wilkins Freeman “The Balsam Fir” (212-222) _____

Diana Kappel-Smith “Dance of the Giants” (essay selection) (288-294) _____

Anne Labastille “Among my closest friends” (essay selection) (295-300) _____

Hildegarde Flanner “The Old Cherry Tree” (300-310) _____

Mary Austin “The Last Antelope” (317-327) _____

Terry Tempest Williams “Clear Cut” (371-374) _____

Ursula Le Guin “May’s Lion” (425-435) _____

Linda Hogan “What Holds the Water, What holds the Light” (403-408). _____

Kim Blaeser Selected poems

“Alaskan Mountain stories, Transfiguration” from *Trailing You*.

“zen for traveling bards” & “Of Landscape and Narrative” in *Absentee Indians & Other Poems*. _____

