

English 389R: Special Topic: Nature Writing  
Spring 2004  
Dr. Christine Loflin  
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Office Hours: MW 9:30-10:30 TTh 11:30-12 and by appointment

Course Description: What is our relationship to the natural world? Is our relationship biological only, or also spiritual, emotional, social and psychological? What do we *see* when we look at nature? In this course, we will read a selection of (primarily American) essays on nature and the environment. We will be reading works from the early colonial period, from the American Romantics, and from 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century writers who explore issues of ecology, development, cultural practices, religion, pollution, “greenscapes” and other contemporary issues in relation to the environment.

The local environment will also be a “text” in this class; by considering the geology, ecology, region and historical environment in which we live we will work on developing a sense of place: what it means to be *here*, at Oxford College. Your journal entries and some of your other writing will require your attentiveness to all aspects of the local natural world. To broaden this experience, we will be part of a journal project with an Environmental Writing class at Allegheny College in northwestern Pennsylvania. Through an exchange of journal assignments, we will discover what links our experience of the natural world with others, and what is unique to this local environment. Through these assignments, you will develop your ability to write in different modes about the natural world.

Course requirements:

1. Short responses to readings.
2. Two essays analyzing the rhetoric of selected authors.
3. A research project
4. A journal of your own work, both notes in response to readings and your own writing about a natural space. You will be required to choose a natural area and visit it several times over the course of the semester, recording your observations and responses to the landscape. You will also be asked to write short pieces using the style of writers we will read.

Texts:

The Norton Anthology of Nature Writing  
Ecology of a Cracker Childhood

## Policies:

**Attendance:** You should be present for every class and prepared to participate. If you are absent, you are responsible for informing yourself about any missed assignments or announcements, and for material covered during that class. All absences should be for good reason; however, you may miss two classes without explanation. I will lower your grade for every unexcused absence after these two. Excessive absences (more than five) may be cause for dropping you from the class.

**Class Participation:** This will count for 15% of your grade. For full credit, you will need to attend every class ready to participate. This means not just responding when called on, but coming to class with questions from the reading and topics for discussion, responding to other students' comments on the text, and taking active responsibility for the liveliness and pertinence of discussion.

**Plagiarism:** In this course, as in all other courses, you are bound by the Honor Code. Therefore, the work you submit for this class must be your own. If you use any outside sources in your writing for this course, you must acknowledge them by using the MLA system of documentation, which is presented in detail in *The Bedford Handbook*. **All Websites or other Internet sources must be acknowledged and documented.** If you have any questions regarding the Honor Code as it applies to this course, please consult me or pages 98-101 of the Oxford College catalog.

## Grade breakdown:

Journals	20%
Two essays	20%
Research Project	25%
Class Participation	15%
Final Exam	20%

All grades for this course will be recorded using the plus/minus scale described on page 32 of the Oxford College catalog.

## Weekly Outline of Reading:

January 15	Introduction and Objectives
Jan 20	<u>Ecology of a Cracker Childhood</u> 1-33
Jan 22	Emerson (all selections) 140; Thoreau, from <i>Walden</i> 172
Jan 27-29	Thoreau, from <i>Walking</i> 180, Bass from <i>Wolves</i> 1114 Abbey (handout)

February 3-5	Leopold “The Land Ethic” 382. Farming: Crevecoeur “On the Situations, Feelings and Pleasures of an American Farmer” 52; Berry “The Making of a Marginal Farm” 728; Masumoto “Planting Seeds” 1048
Feb 10-12	TBA
Feb 17-19	Native American: Momaday “The Way to Rainy Mountain” 737; Erdrich “Big Grass” 1043; Silko “Landscape” 1003, Ray 33-97.
Feb 24-26	Oxford history readings from archives Tentative: visit to Special Collections at Emory’s Woodruff Library
March 2-4	Explorers and Naturalists: Bartram from <i>Travels</i> 64; Clare (all), 122; Muir “A Wind-Storm in the Forests” 251; Darwin (all), 151.
March 8-12	Spring Recess
March 16-18	Ray 99-165; Walker “Am I Blue?” 863
March 23-25	Dillard 867; Lopez 900
March 30-April 1	Ray 166-209; David Abram 1101
April 6-8	Finish Ray
April 13-15	Georgia/Southern readings TBA
April 20-22	Georgia/Southern readings TBA
April 27	Review