

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for HUMN 6

NATURE AND CULTURE

Effective: Fall 2010

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

HUMN 6 — NATURE AND CULTURE — 3.00 units

An examination of the aesthetic value of the natural environment leading to the development of an individual critical aesthetic of the natural world. Studies in visual art, including painting, photography, sculpture, land art, mixed media, film, literature, and music.

3.00 Units Lecture

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

	<u>MIN</u>
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	54.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- A. evaluate and critique theories of environmental aesthetics;
- B. identify relationships among aesthetics, ethics and public policy;
- C. survey significant literary texts in the genre of nature writing;
- D. analyze how visual artists, including painters, sculptors, land artists, and filmmakers express their relationship to the natural world;
- E. practice actively listening to soundscapes, both man-made works and sounds created by nature;
- F. demonstrate creatively an individual critical aesthetic of the natural world.

V. CONTENT:

- A. Theories of environmental aesthetics
 - 1. Definitions of natural as opposed to man-made beauty
 - a. Sample readings:
 - 1. Arnold Berleant. "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature"
 - 2. Stan Godlovitch. "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics"
 - 2. History of aesthetic theories regarding natural environments
 - a. Sample readings:
 - 1. Ronald Hepburn. "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty"
 - 2. Allen Carlson. "Appreciation and the Natural Environment"
 - 3. Relationship environmental aesthetics, ethics, and public policy
 - a. Sample readings:
 - 1. Joan Iverson Nassauer. "Cultural Sustainability: Aligning Aesthetics and Ecology"
 - 2. Holmes Rolston III. "From Beauty to Duty: Aesthetics of Nature and Environmental Ethics"
 - 4. Development of an individual critical aesthetic of the natural world
 - a. Sample readings:
 - 1. Yuriko Saito. "Appreciating Nature on its Own Terms"
 - 2. Emily Brady. "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature"
- B. Literature
 - 1. Travel Narratives
 - a. Sample readings:
 - 1. The Journals of Lewis and Clark
 - 2. John James Audubon. Ornithological Biography
 - 3. Isabella Bird. A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains
 - 2. Essays
 - a. Sample readings:
 - 1. Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Nature"
 - 2. Henry David Thoreau. "Walking"
 - 3. Wendell Berry. "An Entrance to the Woods"
 - 3. Non-fiction books
 - a. Sample readings:

1. Aldo Leopold. A Sand County Almanac
2. Annie Dillard. Pilgrim at Tinker Creek
3. Edward Abbey. Desert Solitaire
4. Poetry
 - a. Sample readings:
 1. "This Newly Created World" (Winnebago)
 2. Anne Bradstreet. "Contemplations"
 3. William Cullen Bryant. "Thanatopsis"
 4. Robinson Jeffers. "The Place for No Story"
 5. Wendy Rose. "Throat Song: the Rotary Earth"
- C. Visual Arts
 1. Paintings
 - a. Sample paintings:
 1. Chinese landscape paintings
 2. Thomas Cole. The Oxbow
 3. Asher Durand. Kindred Spirits
 4. Albert Bierstadt. Sunrise, Yosemite Valley
 5. Frederic Church. Thunderstorm in the Rockies
 6. Thomas Moran. The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
 2. Photography
 - a. Sample photographs:
 1. Carleton E. Watkins. Yosemite Mirror View of the North Dome
 2. Timothy O'Sullivan. Ancient Ruins in Canon de Chelle, NM
 3. Ansel Adams. Moon and Mount McKinley
 4. Edward Weston. Dunes, Oceano, 1936
 3. Sculpture, land art, and mixed media
 - a. Sample works:
 1. Christo. Running Fence
 2. Andy Goldsworthy. Spire (at San Francisco Presidio)
 3. Robert Smithson. Spiral Jetty
 4. James Turrell. Roden Crater Project
 4. Documentary and feature films
 - a. Sample works:
 1. Christo. Running Fence
 2. Ken Burns. The National Parks: America's Best Idea
 3. Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working with Time
 4. Stagecoach
 5. Lawrence of Arabia
- D. Man-made Music and Natural Sound
 1. Man-made
 - a. Sample selections:
 1. Ludwig van Beethoven. Symphony No. 6 in F Major
 2. William Henry Fry. Niagra Symphony
 3. Aaron Copland. Appalachian Spring
 4. Ferde Grofe. Grand Canyon Suite
 5. Alan Hovhaness. Mysterious Mountains
 6. R. Carlos Nakai. Canyon Trilogy
 7. George Frederic McKay. From a Moonlit Ceremony
 2. Naturally occurring sounds

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Group discussion
- C. **Student Presentations** -
- D. Journal keeping
- E. Exam
- F. Course text readings

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Lecture
 1. "The Land before Us: A History of Travel Narratives"
 2. "Development of the Hudson River School of Landscape Painting"
- B. Group discussion
 1. Following the style of Annie Dillard in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, write a passage describing a small area of campus; share your passage with the group and together, work to construct a larger description of the campus.
 2. As a group, closely examine Albert Bierstadt's Sunrise Yosemite Valley. What characteristics does it have that are typical of nineteenth-century American landscape paintings?
- C. Course text readings
 1. Read "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau, and be prepared to discuss his ideas concerning the importance of wilderness.
 2. Read Aldo Leopold's A "Taste for Country" and be prepared to discuss your personal experiences in light of Leopold's observations on the following terms: "land" and "country"; "natural history"; "recreation."
- D. Journal keeping
 1. In a folder, students will keep daily or weekly assignments, both in-class and take-home
 - a. Typical assignment: You will need a notebook and perhaps a tape recorder and/or sketchpad. Go outside and find a place somewhat removed from people (You do not have to be completely alone, but far enough from others so that they do not distract you.) where you can sit comfortably. Take a few minutes to relax, and then begin to notice what you see and hear – sounds, smells, texture. Record your observations in at least two ways – notes, tape, or sketches that you can put into your folder. 20 points possible.
- E. Midterm exam – short answer and essay
 1. Typical questions:
 - a. Short answer: Listed below are eight authors and eight titles. Choose six and match them with the correct text; then briefly describe the main ideas of each text. 30 points possible, total – five on each answer. b. Essay: Using William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis," Asher Durand's Kindred Spirits, and the first movement of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, explain what the three works express about the human-nature relationship.
- F. Student Final Projects and Presentations
 1. Each student will be expected to create some project that creatively expresses his/her individual critical aesthetic of the natural world. It may be any of the following or a combination of the following: a research essay, a personal essay, a piece of fiction, a poem, a video, a series of photographs, a painting, a sculpture, a mixed media work, earth art work, music, a play, a dance – the format is flexible. Each student will present the project to the class. The major requirement is that the work be

inspired by direct contact with nature, whether that is a place as simple as your backyard or neighborhood park or as grand as Yosemite. The final work should demonstrate the student's individual critical nature aesthetic and must reflect thorough familiarity with and understanding of the many sources the student has been exposed to throughout the course.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

1. Other:
 - a. Following the instructor's guidelines for textual analysis, group discussions include written group accounts which are evaluated according to the depth of the analysis, critical insights, and ability to put the work into context.
 - b. Student presentations
 - c. Exams

B. **Frequency**

1. Group discussions occur weekly throughout the course.
2. One midterm exam will be given.
3. Journal writing will occur daily or weekly and will be collected several times during the term.
4. Student final projects and presentations will occur at the end of the term.

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Eds. Allen Carlson and Sheila Lintott *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty.*, Columbia UP, 2008.
2. Eds. Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments.*, Broadview Pr, 2004.
3. Eds. Robert Finch and John Elder *The Norton Book of Nature Writing. College Edition.*, Norton, 2002.
4. Garrard, Greg *Ecocriticism.*, Routledge, 2004.
5. Novak, Barbara *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875.* 3rd ed., Oxford UP, 2007.
6. Phillips, Dana *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America.*, Oxford UP, 2003.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: