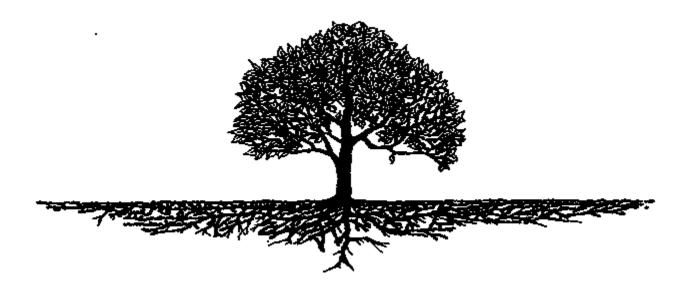
Course Syllabus

ENGL133 IMAGINING NATURE



Term: Spring 2025

Credits: 3

Course Times: Lecture: M/W 2:00-2:50 pm

Classroom: Lecture: Tawes 1100

Discussion Sections (all held in Tawes 0214):

Section 1: F 11:00 am - 11:50 am (0101) Section 2: F 12:00 pm - 12:50 pm (0102) Section 3: F 1:00 pm – 1:50 pm (0103) Section 4: F 2:00 pm-2:50 pm (0104)

Professor: Dr. Kellie Robertson

Pronouns: she, her Email: krobert@umd.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 3-4 pm in Tawes 3224: Thursday 2-3 pm virtually (https://umd.zoom.us/j/4785966466 \Rightarrow

(https://umd.zoom.us/j/4785966466)_); and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

-Sections 1 and 2: Niyanta Sangal: niyanta@umd.edu (mailto:niyanta@umd.edu)

Office hours: TBA

-Sections 3 and 4: Fernando Duran: fduran@umd.edu (mailto:fduran@umd.edu)

Office hours: TBA



1/30/25, 13:24

Course Description

What does it mean to speak for nature? One of the central tenets of contemporary environmental criticism is "thou shalt not anthropomorphize." To give a human voice to nature is, according to such critics, to reduce the nonhuman world to a mere reflection of our own needs and desires. And yet societies past and present have continually assumed nature's voice as a way to understand the complicated relationship between humans and the rest of the nonhuman world. From medieval European poets who personified nature's powers to the North American concept of Turtle Island, from Darwin's theory of natural selection to Indigenous ecological knowledges, people in every era have experimented with how to give nature a voice. This course traces the development of attitudes toward nature in Europe and North America by sampling a variety of artifacts—ethnographic, historical, literary, scientific, philosophical—that all seek to engage with nature. The course is transatlantic in scope, comparing early representations of nature on both continents and moving forward to chart both the effects of colonialism on ideas of nature in the North American context as well as how American ideas of nature in turn influenced European views of the environment.

The course's methodology is intentionally comparative and transhistorical. The European and Anglo-American traditions largely developed a binary concept of nature that separated out the human from the environment. In contrast to this model, Indigenous North American peoples often evolved non-binary models that foregrounded a shared participation in a wider landscape. This course is not just a survey of environmental literature but rather an inquiry into the pressures under which our modern ideas of nature evolved in the English and North American traditions. While Western approaches to nature writing tend to frame nature with respect to the human world, Indigenous practices of making nature visible often feature other-than-humans actors in the world, inviting them to collaborate on a shared social text.

Course Goals

By the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- -express how cultural paradigms-including Indigenous ways of knowing—inform humanity's shifting relationships with nature
- -analyze the conventions and strategies for representing nature and the environment from a diversity of sources (oral, written, material and environmental artifacts)
- -develop interpretations of writing, poetry, and other artistic works as aesthetic
- responses to local and global environmental circumstances
- -undertake comparative cultural work between diverse traditions
- -understand how our local landscape is shaped by historical and contemporary attitudes toward nature and the built environment
- -explain how knowledge of the long history of representing the natural world prepares us for negotiating today's environmental challenges

Required Texts

Readings marked "Canvas" are to be found on the course's homepage on the UMD Canvas site: https://elms.umd.edu/)

Butler, Octavia. Parable of the Sower (Grand Central Publishing; repr. 2019 [1993]). ISBN-13: 978-1538732182

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan. Revised ed. The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series. London: Bloomsbury, 2011. ISBN-10: 1408133474 / ISBN-13: 978-1408133477

Ward, Jesmyn. Salvage the Bones. Bloomsbury, 2012. ISBN-10: 1608196267 / ISBN-13: 978-1608196265

If you'd like to purchase these materials from the University Book Store, here is the link:

https://umcp.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/TBListView?
catalogId=10001&storeId=15551&langId=-1&courseXml=<textbookorder><courses><course dept="ENGL"
num="133" sect="0101" term="W25"/></courses></textbookorder>

Course Expectations and Assignments

Engagement. The success of this course (and your enjoyment of it) will derive significantly from your investment in it. You will get the most out of the lectures and discussion sections if you have read the texts in advance, thought about them, and come willing to share your thoughts and respectfully listen to those of your classmates. Before each class, please complete the assigned readings and come with some notes on passages or moments you would like to write about (during the lectures) or discuss (in the Friday sections).

Writing. One of the goals of this course is to give you space to work on your writing as an extension of critical thinking. To that end, this course requires two papers (a 3-4 pp. rhetorical analysis and 5-6 pp. final essay) along with a series of Tiny Ecology discussion posts. There will also be weekly in-class writing assignments that will count toward the Engagement percentage of your grade.

Everyone can use some help sharpening their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting Writing Center (http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter/schedule) in Tawes 1205. There you can schedule a virtual or face-to-face appointment with a tutor to discuss your assignment drafts.

Tiny Ecologies Project. At the beginning of the term, you will be asked to choose a local spot near you that you pass most days near your home or on your way to school or work. This can be anything from a single tree and surroundings, a fountain and nearby plantings, or even a pot with weeds growing out of it. You'll be aske this spot over the course of the term and it will be the basis for a series of short writing assignments. This is exercise in sustained attention to our local environment. You'll have a chance to think about the many forces that have historically shaped that spot and how human and beyond-human visitors use it on a regular basis.

Examinations: There will be a midterm and final exam (see the Reading Schedule for dates). These assignments will cover the major vocabulary and concepts discussed in the course, drawing from lectures, discussion sections, and readings.

Grading

Grades will be posted on the course Canvas page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email your TA to schedule a time to meet and discuss.

Should you have further questions about an assignment grade, please email krobert@umd.edu (mailto:krobert@umd.edu). Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

For fairness's sake, the course will use the following grading standard. They will be applied consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (unfortunately, $89.99 \neq 90.00$).

Final Grade Cutoffs

+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%	+	
Α	94.00%	В	84.00%	С	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%	-	

Grade distribution

Engagement:

Preparedness, Participation, and In-class Work	15 %
Tiny Ecologies assignments	15%
Midterm examination	15%
Writing assignment 1	15%
Writing assignment 2	20%



Final examination 20%

Reading Schedule

Below is the tentative course schedule and readings. This syllabus is subject to change depending on our progress. All readings should be completed before coming to class on the assigned day. Always bring your text with you, whether in digital or hard copy, to both lecture and discussion section.

1. Nature's Early Voices: Europe and North America

Week 1: Who Speaks for Nature?

M 27 Jan Course Introduction

[No required reading]

W 29 Jan

Reading:

The Green Children of Woolpit (Canvas)

Williams, "Nature" (Canvas)

Buell, "What Is An Environmental Text?" (Canvas)

F 31 Jan Discussion

Week 2: Creation Stories and Cosmogenies

M 3 Feb

Reading:

Indigenous Creation Stories (Canvas)

Kimmerer, "Skywoman Falling" from Braiding Sweetgrass (Canvas)

Lee Maracle, "Oratory on Oratory" (Canvas)

W 5 Feb



Reading:

European Creation Stories: Plato, Aristotle, Genesis, Alan of Lille's *Complaint of Nature*, and Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose* (Canvas)

Images of Medieval and Early Modern Nature: Or, How Nature Lost Her Clothes (Canvas)

F 7 Feb Discussion

Assignment: Tiny Ecologies #1 due by 5 pm on Canvas

Week 3: Animacy, Animal Voices, and Anthropomorphism

M 10 Feb

Reading:

Chaucer, Parliament of Fowls (Canvas)

Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" (Canvas)

Plumwood, Excerpt from Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason (Canvas)

W 12 Feb

Reading:

Algonquin Animal Stories (Canvas)

Kimmerer, "Learning the Grammar of Animacy" from Braiding Sweetgrass (Canvas)

Deloria, "Kinship with the World" (Canvas)

F 14 Feb Discussion

Week 4: Origins, Monsters, and Becoming Human

M 17 Feb

Reading:

Medieval Bestiaries

https://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastalphashort.htm (https://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastalphashort.htm)

Read at least: pelican, phoenix, manticore, mandrake and magnet

Darwin, Excerpts from Origin of Species (Canvas)



White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" (Canvas)

W 19 Feb

Reading:

Daniel Heath Justice, "How Do We Learn to be Human?" (Canvas)

Robin Wall Kimmerer, "In The Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place" (Canvas)

F 21 Feb Discussion

Assignment: Tiny Ecologies #2 due by 5 pm on Canvas

2. Transatlantic Ecologies

Week 5: Ecological Knowledges

M 24 Feb

Reading:

Alexander von Humboldt, Excerpt from Views of Nature

W 26 Feb

Reading:

Kimmerer, "Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass" (Canvas)

Cruikshank, "Are Glaciers 'Good to Think With'? Recognising Indigenous Environmental Knowledge" (Canvas)

Australian Bark Painting

https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/ (https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/)

F 28 Feb Discussion

Week 6: Nature as Spectacle

M 3 Mar



Reading:

British Romanticism (Canvas)

Coleridge, "To Nature" and "Frost at Midnight"

Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," "My Heart Leaps Up," "The World is Too Much With Us," and "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"

Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind"

W 5 Mar

Reading:

American Transcendentalism (Canvas)

Emerson, "My Garden," "The Rhodora," "Song of Nature" and excerpt from "Nature"

Thoreau, Excerpt from Walden (Canvas)

Morton, "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Ecological Criticism" (Canvas)

F 7 Mar Discussion--Midterm Examination--

Week 7: The Myth of Wilderness

M 10 Mar

Reading:

Longfellow, Excerpt from The Song of Hiawatha (Canvas)

Johnston Schoolcraft, Writings (Canvas)

Nature and American Art (Canvas)

W 12 Mar

Reading:

Muir, Excerpt from The Mountains of California (Canvas)

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Canvas)

Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (Canvas)

Dowie, "The Myth of a Wilderness Without Humans"



https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-myth-of-a-wilderness-without-humans/ [] (https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-myth-of-a-wilderness-without-humans/)

F 14 Mar Discussion

F 14 Mar--Writing Assignment due: Transatlantic Ecologies—

17-21 Mar—Week 8. Spring break—No class meetings

3. Narrating Natural Disaster: Storm Time

Week 9: Storms and the Colonial Imagination

M 24 Mar

Reading:

Shakespeare, The Tempest (Acts 1-3)

Ghosh, Excerpt from The Great Derangement (Canvas)

W 26 Mar

Reading:

Shakespeare, The Tempest (Acts 4-5)

Jourdain, A Discovery of the Bermudas (Canvas)

Strachey, Excerpt from The True Reportory of the Wracke and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates (Canvas)

F 28 Mar Discussion

Assignment: Tiny Ecologies #3 due by 5 pm on Canvas

Week 10: Moralizing the Weather

M 31 Mar



Reading:
Defoe, Excerpt from <i>The Storm</i> (Canvas)
W 2 Apr
Reading:
Defoe, The Lay-Man's Sermon upon the Late Storm (Canvas)
Defoe, "An Essay on the Late Storm" (Canvas)
F 4 Apr Discussion
Week 11: Katrina and Anthropocene Thinking
M 7 Apr
Reading:
Ward, Salvage the Bones (1-57)
Smith, Selections from <i>Blood Dazzler</i> (Canvas)
Meneley and Taylor, Introduction to Anthropocene Reading (Canvas)
W 9 Apr
Reading:
Ward, Salvage the Bones (58-130)
F 11 Apr Discussion
Week 12: The Anthropocene and Its Discontents
M 14 Apr
Reading:
Ward, Salvage the Bones (131-193)
Yusoff, Excerpt from A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None (Canvas)

W 16 Apr
Reading:
Ward, Salvage the Bones (194-258)
F 18 Apr Discussion
Assignment: Tiny Ecologies #4 due by 5 pm on Canvas
4. <u>Nature's Present and Futures</u>
Week 13: The Literature of Environmentalism and Climate Apocalypse
M 21 Apr
Reading:
Carson, Excerpt from Silent Spring (Canvas)
Butler, Parable of the Sower
W 23
Reading:
Butler, Parable of the Sower
F 25 Apr Discussion
Week 14: Apocalypse Now (and Then)
M 28 Apr
Reading:
Butler, Parable of the Sower
W 30 Apr
Butler, Parable of the Sower

F 2 May Discussion

F 2 May Writing Assignment due to Canvas by 5 pm

Week 15: The Rights of Nature

M 5 May

Reading:

The 2016 Paris Climate Agreement (Canvas)

Pope Francis, "Laudato Si" (Canvas)

W 7 May

Reading:

"Should Rivers have the Same Rights as People?"

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/25/rivers-around-the-world-rivers-are-gaining-the-same-legal-rights-as-people (https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/25/rivers-around-the-world-rivers-are-gaining-the-same-legal-rights-as-people)

"New Zealand Gives Mount Taranaki Same Legal Rights as a Person"

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/22/new-zealand-gives-mount-taranaki-same-legal-rights-as-a-person (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/22/new-zealand-gives-mount-taranaki-same-legal-rights-as-a-person)

Grear, "It's Wrongheaded to Protect Nature with Human-Style Rights"

https://aeon.co/ideas/its-wrongheaded-to-protect-nature-with-human-style-rights (https://aeon.co/ideas/its-wrongheaded-to-protect-nature-with-human-style-rights)

F 9 May Discussion

Week 16: Concluding discussion: Who Speaks for Nature Now?

M 12 May

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M 19 May 4-6 pm-- Final Examination--

Course Policies

Lecture and Section etiquette. Teaching will be by a combination of weekly lectures and small-group sections. Class attendance and its handmaid, participation, are inevitably reflected in your grade. We expect you to attend all lectures and discussion sections.

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications. The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity.

Visit trans.umd.edu/) to learn more. Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Investment. Course investment comprises part of your final grade. Your investment in the course is reflected in your participation, preparedness, and a willingness to express your views and to engage respectfully with the views of others. If you cannot attend a given seminar, please let the professor and section leader know in advance; post-hoc rationales for absence will generally be ignored. If you miss two or more consecutive section meetings, you will usually be asked to withdraw from the class.

If you miss a class on account of grave illness or serious affliction, please be prepared to make up the work as soon as possible. Absence for religious observances will always be excused; please notify your section leader during the first two weeks of the term for any subsequent planned absences.

If you miss a class meeting (for whatever reason), please do not email the professor or section leader asking whether or not you "missed" anything. Invariably, you will have. Therefore, you should contact a classmate to see what you have missed and to make arrangements to copy notes. Up-to-date reading and assignment information will always be found on our Canvas site. Once you have gotten the notes from a classmate and done the reading, feel free to reach out to the professor and section leader with any further questions.

Weekly Readings. All readings should be completed by the date on the syllabus and in a timely enough fashion to allow you to reflect on them before our class meetings. Always bring a copy of the readings to class with reading is designated as appearing on our course Canvas site, please read them thoroughly and bring y with you to class in either print or digital format.

Deadlines. Please be aware of deadlines as late assignments will be penalized on a per day basis (one letter grade per day). Exceptions will only be granted in the case of grave illness or serious affliction, cases which necessitate either medical documentation or a dean's excuse. Remember that truancy on the class prior to a deadline does not predispose the grader in your favor. All assignments are to be turned in via our Canvas site unless otherwise noted.

Academic Integrity. It is always unacceptable to pass off someone else's work as your own. You know it; I know it; don't do it. All of the assignments in this class will be subject to the University's Honor Code. Please familiarize yourself with the approved Code of Academic Integrity (http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/HonorPledgeInformation.aspx). All suspected cases of plagiarism or other honor code violations will be reported to the Honor Council.

Students with Special Needs. If you have a registered disability, please come to me to discuss accommodation. Disabilities can be registered through the Disability Support Service Office (4-7682 or dissup@umd.edu (mailto:dissup@umd.edu).).

Inclusive Classroom Environment. UMD English considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be critical to its educational mission and expects every member of the community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture in the classroom, work environment, and at campus events. It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs be well served by this course and that the diversity students bring to class be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include, for instance, intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, military service, political affiliation, marital or family status, and education. I endeavor to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Please let me know of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you or other students or student groups.

If you experience issues or have suggestions related to diversity and inclusion in your English courses or as part of the English department community, please contact the Chair of our CAARES Committee (Committee of Anti-Racism, Accessibility, Respect, Equity and Social Justice) at englishcaares@umd.edu.

In short: Be present. Take space/ make space. Be curious and be bold.

Course Communication. Email is generally the best way to communicate with your instructors. If you need to reach out and communicate with me, please email me at krobert@umd.edu (mailto:krobert@umd.edu). For questions specific to your discussion section, please email your TA directly. Please consult your syllabus and Canv for questions about course mechanics (such as: when is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.).

DO reach out about personal, academic, and intellectual concerns/questions.

Important announcements will be sent out via Canvas messaging. It is your responsibility to make sure that your email & announcement notifications (including changes in assignments and/or due dates) are enabled in Canvas so you do not miss any messages. You are responsible for checking your email and Canvas/ELMS inbox with regular frequency.

Al Policy. Every course has different expectations around Al use. For this course, Al is to be used in accordance with classroom assignment policies and in specific contexts. Al can be used only as indicated in assignment guidelines. It is **never** permitted on examinations. Course goals include improving independent research and critical thinkings skills as well as developing proficiency in using Al effectively. We will work on Al literacy, including examining Al-produced texts for bias; marking up an Al-produced explanation to show what is accurate, vague, or inaccurate; and considering the benefits and limitations of Al as a basis for literary historical exploration.

Any use of AI must be cited. The citation should include the program and how it was used (i.e. "This assignment was completed using AI. ChatGPT was used for checking grammar and punctuation in the final draft."). For policy questions or potential exceptions, please email me at krobert@umd.edu (mailto:krobert@umd.edu) before using AI tools and I would be happy to discuss further.

Campus Policies

For a full description of campus policies on academic integrity, conduct, accessibility, and grades and appeals, please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html) for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies. Follow up with me if you have questions.

Accessibility and Disability Services. The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at adsfrontdesk@umd.edu. Information about sharing your accommodations with instructors, note taking assistance and more is available from the Counseling Center.

Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit UMD's Student Academic Support Services website (http://tutoring.umd.edu) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (UMD's Student Resources and Services website (https://sph.umd.edu/content/student-resources-and-services) may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit UMD's Counseling Center (https://tltc.umd.edu/ www.counseling.umd.edu/) or one of the many other mental health resources on campus (https://tltc.umd.edu/ instructors/teaching-topics/supporting-whole-student).

Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit Live://www.live://www.nc-needs-security) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Veteran Resources

UMD provides some additional supports to our student veterans. You can access those resources at the office of Veteran Student life and the Counseling Center (https://www.counseling.umd.edu/aboutus/). Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due	
Fri Feb 7, 2025	Tiny Ecologies 1 (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091812)	due by 5pm	
Fri Feb 21, 2025	Tiny Ecologies 2 (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091813)	due by 5pm	
Fri Mar 7, 2025	Writing Assignment 1 (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091904)	? 5pm	

Date	Details	Due	
	Midterm (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091816)	due by 11:59pm	
Fri Mar 28, 2025	Tiny Ecologies 3 (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091814)	due by 5pm	
Fri Apr 18, 2025	Tiny Ecologies 4 (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091815)	due by 5pm	
Fri May 2, 2025	Writing Assignment 2 (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091946)	due by 5pm	
Mon May 19, 2025	Final Examination (https:// umd.instructure.com/courses/1379432/ assignments/7091947)	due by 11:59pm	

