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EVST 505.01: The Literature of Nature Writing

Phil Condon

University of Montana, Missoula, phil.condon@umontana.edu

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THE LITERATURE OF NATURE WRITING

Blessed Wild Unrest & Dilemmas: Food, Future, Coal, Nature

EVST 505.01 Fall 2008 Phil Condon M/W 11:10-12:30pm ED 312

Rankin 104 Hrs: M/W 2-3pm, T/Th 12-1pm, & appt. **Contact:** phil.condon@mso.umt.edu 243.2904

Books: *Norton Anthology of Nature Writing*. Eds. Finch & Elder. Norton 2002.

The Future of Nature: Writing Toward a Human Ecology. Orion, 2007.

Blessed Unrest. Paul Hawken, 2007.

Lost Mountain. Erik Reece, 2006.

Coal: A Human History. Barbara Freese, 2003.

Omnivore's Dilemma: Michael Pollan, 2006.

Wild: An Elemental Journey. Jay Griffiths, 2006.

Recommended: *Pocket Style Manual*, 4th Ed, Hacker.

Purposes & Outcomes: To acquire a background familiarity with the tradition, concerns, forms, and diversity of American Nature Writing; to relate and orient that understanding to ideas and approaches in 6 powerful 21st-century environmental books with very different subjects and perspectives; to reflect and express in a portfolio that includes several forms of writing the inquiry, delight, insight and/or misgivings discovered in these readings and our discussions. Secondly, to write brief amateur natural history Field Notes from individual outside field trips for KUFM broadcast, and to hear the spoken word of contemporary nature & environmental writing at various University and community venues.

Major Writing: a course portfolio (minimum total of 7000 words) that includes 6 different specific writing assignments. Students can combine these assignments in varying proportions to suit their interests and to reach the minimum overall length. The assignments, described in detail in separate handout, include KUFM Field Notes (500-600 wds), a letter to one of the book authors (300-1K wds), an analytical response to one or more works (1500-4K wds), an original environmental essay arising from and rooted in individual experience (1500-4K wds), a summary of specific investigations of and interactions with worldwide organizations and activists via www.wiserearth.org (300-1K wds), and responses to at least 3 live reading events (300-1K wds total). Students will present from their portfolio work in class between 11/19-12/3, and all work is due by Mon 12/8/08. Through Wed 11/5, students can turn in drafts of any project any time for instructor response and suggestion before revision.

Format: Unless otherwise specified--Titled, double spaced, 1" margins, 12pt font, numbered pages, word count included, and proofread and edited according to Hacker *PSM* or similar style guide.

Reading: Approximately 1700 pgs, averaging about 80 pgs per class. See full schedule on reverse.

Other Work: Keep an informal active reading journal on all course readings; present and facilitate class discussion with partners as per assigned schedule (made from your preferences wherever possible).

Course Grades: Written Portfolio \equiv 3/4

Attendance, participation, preparation, presentations \equiv 1/4

1) Field Notes (500-600 wds): Write a 2-page, 4-minute piece for KUFM radio program, *Field Notes* (airs **Thur 9:30pm, Sun 9pm**). I'll provide previous FN manuscripts, invited topics, and broadcast tapes. FN focus can be any plant or animal species or any natural feature or phenomenon (geological, hydrological, astronomical, meteorological, etc.). Sometime during semester when you're outside, nearby or faraway (in MT only—for listening audience), take notes of your experience of species or feature and then do some research (general, popular audience level), and write FN. Send it to me first; when I return, send it to MT Natural History Center Editor Caroline Kurz (editor@montananaturalist.org). She will arrange a taping time with you. **Due Date: Wed 11/5**

2) Letter to Author (300-1000 wds): Pick one living writer of any of the assigned readings, and write her/him a letter that responds, appreciates, critiques, questions, expands on the work you read in any way you think most effective and most productive for you and for the author. Assuming you can find contact info for the writer, mail or email the letter. Please let me and class know if you get a response. **DD: 12/8**

3) Analytical Response (1500-4000 wds): Choose any of the books or essays in assigned reading, and write an expository essay that includes some elements of analysis & critique of author's approach, presentation, form, &/or argument. Our class discussions of readings will offer multiple possibilities for this, as will your own reading experience. Use more than one author or work if you wish. **DD: 12/8**

4) Original Environmental Essay (1500-4000 wds): Write an environmental or nature essay (at least one major element of essay is something in the beyond-human world) that arises from your own experience. The essay can refer to your reading (as part of your experience), but it should be rooted in your physical experience in or with the beyond-human world. Use any of the course readings as models if that works, or simply explore experiences you may have been wanting to write about but haven't had the time or space for. Experiment. Enjoy. **DD: 12/8**

5) Summaries of Worldwide Investigations &/or Interactions (300-1000 wds). Find organizations & activists in *Blessed Unrest* appendix & www.wiserearth.org & investigate, interact, and follow up. This is an experimental assignment based on the possibilities that Hawken's book & website offer, so my expectations are wide open and I hope yours are, too. Center your inquiry on one of the 3 categories below that you choose. Each is relevant to our course, beyond coming from Hawken's book, in terms of arts/lit as focus of our course, MTR as topic of Reece's book, and agriculture/farming as subject of Pollan's book. Go online, explore, contact, and see where it leads you. Then write a summary account of what you found, did, heard, learned, and think. **DD: 12/8**

- a) with any group(s) in the Arts/Literature list of organization
- b) with any group(s) in the Mining/Mountaintop Removal list of organizations
- c) with any group(s) in the Agriculture & Farming (any sublist) of organizations

6) Responses to at least 3 outside readings (300-1000 wds for total of 3): Attend some live readings outside of class and write short responses. Ideally, these would be of environmental or nature writing, but any good writing will do if need be. Hearing the written word aloud, especially from the writer, adds dimension to literature study that nothing else can provide. Plan on TT Williams Th 9/25 8pm on campus as one reading. Also MT Festival of the Book is 10/24-25. Watch event schedules on campus and at Fact & Fiction bookstore for others, and I'll announce EVST grad writing thesis readings and others I hear of. **DD: 12/8**

For any or all of this work, turn in individual mss. any time thru Wed 11/5 for my response & suggestion. For #1 & #5 particularly, check in with class anytime on your progress, as this will likely help others.

Minimum total for combined 6 assignments is 7,000 words. The minimums listed above total 4,400 wds; the maximums total 11,600 words; so you should be able to mix and match lengths to emphasize the projects that most interest you. You can turn in work any time, but all work is due 12/8 with exception of FN due on 11/5.

Wk#	Dates	Readings / Discussion	(xx) ≡ #pgs	FN ≡ Future of Nature
1	m 8/25 w 8/27	Go over Syllabus & Schedule, Questions, Introductions Wild Relations?-- Norton : Clare, Standing Bear, Snyder (33); FN : Duncan (18)		
2	m 9/1 w 9/3	NO CLASS—LABOR DAY Wild : Earth & Ice (150)		
3	m 9/8 w 9/10	Hawken's History + -- Norton : Emerson, Thoreau (66); FN : Lopez, Jensen (9) Blessed Unrest thru Chap 5 "Emerson's Savants" (86)		
4	m 9/15 w 9/17	Blessed Unrest thru p194 (108) (& Look at Appendix & go to wiserearth.com) Writing Place #1-- Norton : Muir, Austin (24); FN : Reece, Solnit (28)		
5	m 9/22 w 9/24	Wild : Water & Fire (104) Terry Tempest Williams TBA		Public Reading Tomorrow Night Th 9/25
6	m 9/29 w 10/1	O Dilemma : Intro & Part I (119) O Dilemma : Part II (153)		
7	m 10/6 w 10/8	O Dilemma : Part III (134) Before Pollan -- Norton : Crevccouer 51-4, 59-63, Cooper, M.O.Wright, Berry x 2 (36)		
8	m 10/13 w 10/15	Coal : thru Chap 5 (128) Coal : thru end (120)		
9	m 10/20 w 10/22	Wild : Air & Mind (89) Writing Place #2 – FN : Daniel, Sanders, Landretti; Norton : McKibben (39)		
10	m 10/27 w 10/29	Portfolio Previews—Readings from PF work in progress Natural History + -- Norton : Carson, Eiseley, Ackerman; FN : Pyle (30)		
11	m 11/3 w 11/5	Lost Mtn : thru "Acts of God" (120) Lost Mtn : thru end (123)		
12	m 11/10 w 11/12	Women Writing Now #1 -- Norton : Walker, Dillard, Grover, Meloy (47) Women Writing Now #2 -- Norton : Hogan, Russell, Evelyn White, Ray (49)		
13	m 11/17 w 11/19	Writing Place #3 – Norton : Beston, J. Johnson, Kittredge, Lopez-Geographies (40) 3/4 Presentations from Portfolios (20 min ea.: approx. 10 min writer & 10 min Q's)		
14	m 11/24 w 11/26	3/4 Presentations from Portfolios NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING		
15	m 12/1 w 12/3	3/4 Presentations from Portfolios 3 Presentations from Portfolios; Class Evaluations		
Finals Week		All Portfolio & Course Work due in Rankin mailbox/office by Mon 12/8/08 5pm		

EVST 505 Spring 2008

Schedule for leading reading discussion of readings

Everyone will be scheduled 2x (once on 2 different days). We need 4 volunteers today for 9/3 & 9/10.

See semester reading schedule for exact description of the readings for open dates below. Then sign your name on this page in your top 3 choices (*sign once on 3 different days*), depending on your particular interests and your semester planning.

Return to me by Wed 9/3. I'll collate requests & do my best to match preferences as I fill the schedule.

Once you have your dates, contact your partner for that day; discuss how you will divide readings and/or collaborate to lead discussion. I welcome your initiative and creativity in approach. Key discussion questions, directed group activities, & relevant information from outside the readings are often helpful in focusing discussion, widening interest, and enlivening class. Connecting and/or contrasting the readings with previous course readings and discussion is often a good way to expand our thinking and talking. I also encourage presenters to share and/or read briefly from their ongoing portfolio work-in-progress anything that might have any relevance or connection to the day's reading and discussion.

1 w 9/3: Wild I	<u>volunteer</u>	<u>volunteer</u>
2 w 9/10: BU I	<u>volunteer</u>	<u>volunteer</u>
3 m 9/15 BU II	_____	_____
4 m 9/22 Wild II	_____	_____
5 m 9/29 OD I	_____	_____
6 w 10/1 OD II	_____	_____
7 m 10/6 OD III	_____	_____
8 m 10/13 Coal I	_____	_____
9 w 10/15 Coal II	_____	_____
10 m 10/20 Wild III	_____	_____
11 m 10/29 Nat Hist	_____	_____
12 m 11/3 LM I	_____	_____
13 w 11/5 LM II	_____	_____
14 m 11/10 WW Now	_____	_____
15 w 11/12 WW Now	_____	_____