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Fall 9-1-2021

### LIT 280L.80: Ecology of Literature (Honors)

Louise E. Economides

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## LIT 280H: "Wild Things" (The Ecology of Literature)

Tues/Thurs. LA 207 4-5:20pm

Fall 2021

Professor Louise Economides

e-mail: [louise.economides@mso.umt.edu](mailto:louise.economides@mso.umt.edu)

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs. 11am-12noon *via zoom* (and by appointment)

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In this course, we'll explore the historical and current relevance of Thoreau's famous assertion that "in Wildness is the preservation of the world." Given that our present cultural moment seems increasingly dominated by politics and technologies of control (cyber surveillance, government-sponsored violation of privacy, police profiling, mass deportation, synthetic biology and geoengineering) what value (if any) might there be in calling for the preservation of "wildness" today? How is valorizing "wildness" conceptually linked with *wilderness's* meanings in modern thought? In this course, we'll examine how Romantic-era thinkers changed our cultural understanding of the "wild" and consider the political and aesthetic legacies of this transformation. We'll also address contemporary literature and environmental movements (such as re-wilding) that celebrate wildness even (and especially) in the context of Anthropocene culture.

### Required texts:

- *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*, College Edition (Robert Finch and John Elder, eds)
- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Norton Critical Edition: 5<sup>th</sup> edition)
- Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*.
- Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation*.

### COURSE POLICIES

**1. An important requirement of this class is that you have with you in class a physical paper copy of the literature we're reading for each day.** This includes the required texts listed just above and all the poems/short stories listed on our schedule. Any texts accessed from Moodle *need to be printed out and brought to class on the day(s) they'll be discussed*. Our culture is on the cusp of print and electronic technologies, but until electronic texts can allow us to mark them up with the same facility as we can *annotate* a paper text with a pencil they're not sufficient for our purposes. A physical text is a basic tool that can enable you to read literature more engagingly.

**Annotation:** Some of the major writing assignments for the course *will require you to turn in a photocopy of your annotations of the literary text you are working with* (points will be deducted for not doing this). I will also be making notes regarding students whose texts don't show annotations during in-class group work. If you do not annotate this will reduce your "participation" grade for the class. So please get in the habit of *always annotating* what you read for this course.

**2. No electronic devices are allowed during class time.** Please turn off your phones and leave other electronic devices at home. If you have special needs that require you to type out class notes on a computer, please see me in advance so that we can make arrangements for this (you may be asked to provide doctor's evidence re. a disability, etc.). Bringing electronic devices to class and attempting to use them will reduce your grade for the course.

**3. Revising writing assignments:** opportunities to revise your writing are part of this course. Successful approaches to the revision process are *active* rather than passive. That is, you must be willing to carefully *read, think about and act upon* your instructor's feedback on drafts of papers. If your instructor indicates you are having difficulty with grammar, punctuation, citation or other basic writing skills you must look up information about these issues. You should also come to office hours if you have questions about such issues and/or about other feedback on your drafts. First drafts will receive a grade in order to indicate how successful your initial attempt has been to meet the assignment requirements, *so always take the time to put forward your best first attempt*. Final drafts will also receive a grade, and will reflect how effective your revisions have been. Be sure to turn in your first and final draft for Essay #1.

**4. Participation and Attendance:** Exploring literature in the company of other readers is an opportunity to learn about the texts in ways that we never could as solitary individuals. Our classes will be successful to the extent that each of you keeps up with the readings and contributes to our discussions. *Regular attendance* (no more than **2** absences) and active participation are vital to your success in this course. If you miss more than 2 classes this session, you can expect a maximum grade of “C” for your participation grade (less if you failed to meet participation guidelines listed here). *Successful participation includes:* 1) coming to class having carefully read and *annotated* assigned texts 2) sharing your thoughts about the readings during our class discussions 3) asking focused questions concerning the readings 4) responding at length to questions posed by your peers and/or instructor 5) actively participating in group work 6) coming to office hours to discuss issues we don’t have time to cover in class.

**5. Late Papers:** Papers turned in more than **one class period** late will not be accepted. Late papers may result in you receiving less feedback from your instructor, so please try to turn in your work on time.

**6. Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism is a violation of trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper and may receive an “F” for the course.

**7. Accommodation:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

**8. Covid-19 Policies:** For the safety of students and your instructor, the following university-wide policies will be in place this semester. Please see me if you have questions or concerns about any of these policies.

- Mask use is required within the classroom and for any interactions outside of class with your instructor.
- Classrooms may have one-way entrances / exits to minimize crowding
- Students should be discouraged from congregating outside the classroom before and after class
- Specific seating arrangements will be used to ensure social distancing and support contact tracing efforts
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom (which requires mask removal)
- If the class is being recorded, students will be notified of the recording
- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms
- If you are sick or displaying symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330
- Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana
- UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>
- UM COVID-19 Fall 2020 website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php>

**Specific objectives of the course (aka “Course Outcomes”):**

1. To gain an appreciation for literature’s social and aesthetic merits.
2. To gain understanding of the distinguishing characteristics of the major literary genres (poetry, fiction, non-fiction) and to analyze specific examples in light of these characteristics.
3. To learn how to perform a meaningful, interesting close reading of a literary text.
4. To engage thoughtfully with a range of different perspectives concerning the central ideas and aesthetic characteristics of a literary text. Ability to synthesize these perspectives in your own prose to craft coherent arguments.
5. To gain an understanding of wilderness’s historical contingency and evolving meanings within European, Anglo-American, Native American and other world cultures.
6. To learn the stylistic conventions of formatting an essay.
7. To gain proficiency writing well-reasoned and grammatically sound prose.

<b>Graded Work:</b>	Essay #1	300
	Essay #2	300
	Group Presentation	250
	Participation and Attendance	150
		1000 total possible

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## WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF CLASSES (subject to changes)

“Moodle”: This is where I’ll post copies of poems we’ll be reading, assignment sheets, etc. Here is one route to Moodle: go to UM’s main web page and click on “MY” on the top bar. Click on UMOOnline/Moodle on the top bar. Log-in with your NetID. Look for our course in your list of courses on the left side of the page. All readings on Moodle will be designated with an (M) on the weekly reading schedule.

**According to the pace of our discussions, we will deviate from the following schedule from time to time.** Each class I will confirm the assignment for the next class. It's important that you exchange contact information with one of your classmates. Anytime you miss a class you should get in touch with that person to learn if there have been any changes to the schedule.

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Norton Book of Nature Writing = **NBNW**; Readings on Moodle = **M**

### WEEK ONE: **Wildness/Wilderness in American Culture**

Tues. 8/31: Course Introduction; opening lecture  
 Thurs. 9/2: **no class**

### WEEK TWO: **Romanticism and the Sublime**

Tues. 9/7: Thoreau, “Walking” (NBNW)  
 Thurs. 9/9: Lecture on the Sublime; Shelley, “Mont Blanc” (M)

WEEK THREE: **No class**

### WEEK FOUR: **Wilderness Debates and the Sublime**

Tues. 9/21: Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness” (M)  
 Thurs. 9/23: Hitt, “Toward an Ecological Sublime” (M); in-class debate

### WEEK FIVE: **Wilderness, Sublimity and Identity**

Tues. 9/28: Dillard, “Total Eclipse” (NBNW); Thoreau, “Ktaadn” from *The Maine Woods* (NBNW)  
 Wed. 9/30: Wordsworth, “Nutting” (M); Bate, “Toward Green Romanticism” (M)

### WEEK SIX: **Wilderness and Identity**

Tues 10/5: White, “Black Women and the Wilderness” (NBNW)  
 Thurs 10/7: Barrington, “Poetry and Prejudice” (M); **FIRST DRAFT ESSAY#1 DUE**

### WEEK SEVEN: **Wilderness and Identity, Continued**

Tues. 10/12: Silko, “Landscape, History and the Pueblo Imagination” (NBNW) – **PRES. GROUP#1**  
 Thurs. 10/14: Silko, “Lullaby” (M)

**WEEK EIGHT: Contemporary Wilderness and the Legacy of Romanticism**

Tues 10/19: Krakauer, *Into the Wild* (Chapters 1-9)

Thurs 10/21: Krakauer, *Into the Wild* (Chapters 10-18 + epilogue)

**WEEK NINE: Contemporary Wilderness and the Legacy of Romanticism, continued**

Tues. 10/26: Krakauer, *Into the Wild* (film adaptation); **FINAL DRAFT ESSAY #1 DUE**

Thurs. 10/28: Lecture on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Part I

**WEEK TEN: Wilderness and Colonialism**

Tues. 11/2: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* Part II

Thurs. 11/4: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* Part III

**WEEK ELEVEN: Wilderness and Colonialism**

Tues. 11/9: McCarthy, "The Ecology of Heart of Darkness"- **PRES. GROUP #2**

Thurs. 11/11: Veteran's Day (NO CLASS)

**WEEK TWELVE: Anthropocene Wilderness**

Tues. 11/16: Lecture on the Anthropocene

Thurs. 11/18: McKibben, from *The End of Nature* (NBNW) – **PRES. GROUP# 3**

**WEEK THIRTEEN: Anthropocene Wilderness**

Tues. 11/23: Hohn, "Moby Duck" (M) – **PRES. GROUP #4**

Thurs. 11/25: THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS

**WEEK FOURTEEN: Anthropocene Wilderness**

Tues 11/30: VanderMeer, *Annihilation*

Thurs 12/2: *Annihilation*; VanderMeer, "Hauntings in the Anthropocene" (online)- **PRES. GROUP #5**

**WEEK FIFTEEN: Anthropocene Wilderness**

Tues. 12/7: Russell, "The Gondoliers" (M)

Thurs. 12/9: Course conclusion; evaluations – **ESSAY #2 DUE**