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ENST 573.01: Environmental Writing Seminar

Mark E. Sundeen

University of Montana, Missoula, mark.sundeen@umontana.edu

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Recommended Citation

Sundeen, Mark E., "ENST 573.01: Environmental Writing Seminar" (2021). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 12314.

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Environmental Writing Seminar
ENST 573 Fall 2021

Mark Sundeen
M/W 11-12:20

mark.sundeen@mso.umt.edu
Office Hours: JRH 102, MW 2-3:30

This is a workshop for writing prose: memoir, personal essay, lyric essay, narrative journalism, travel stories, and any hybrid thereof. Works of fiction will also be considered. Each student will submit three pieces during the semester to be discussed in class. Workshops will focus on five basic elements of craft: voice, character, theme, structure, and plot. We will also hone the skill of providing verbal and written feedback: learning to comment on peers' work with insights that are honest, kind, and constructive.

As this is a nonfiction course, I do not suggest that you make stuff up (unless it's really good). However, I encourage you to freely borrow techniques from fiction and poetry to find your distinctive voice.

Reading List. The texts below are not typical "environmental" writings. This is because this is a craft class, and exemplary work teaches us to write, no matter the genre. And I'd like to spend the semester interrogating what is "the environment," and asking why so much of its literature has sprung from a narrow slice of the population. Each piece has been chosen to illustrate a specific element of craft, which is in all caps below.

Books

The Art of Memoir, Mary Karr
Guillotine, Eduardo Corral

Essays

My President Was Black, Ta-Nehisi Coates
What Is It About Costco? Emily Mester THEME
Shooting an Elephant, George Orwell PLOT
A Black Woman Walks Into A Gun Show, Kashauna Cauley IMMERSION
Mimis in the Middle, Domingo Martinez CHARACTER
America Wasn't A Democracy, Until Black Americans Made It One, Nikole Hannah Jones
HISTORICAL RESEARCH
Coal. Guns. Freedom, Abe Streep SCENE VS SUMMARY

Fiction

Crown of Thorns, Louise Erdrich (from *Love Medicine*) METAPHOR
Indian Education, Sherman Alexie STRUCTURE

Poems

"She Had Some Horses," Joy Harjo VOICE
"Why I Hate Raisins," Natalie Diaz DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE

Manuscripts will be submitted in paper, one copy for each student and professor. Each will be 10-20 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font, stapled, one-inch margin. Each page should have author's last name and page number. No stupid fonts, please.

Proofreading. I expect all manuscripts to be free from errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and formatting. This will require extensive proofreading and revising. Print your final draft and correct with a pen. Then read the printed version aloud and correct it again.

Peer Response Letters must be printed or emailed to the author and uploaded to me. They should be 1 page, single-spaced, 12 point font. Return edited MS to author with line notes.

Grades. Students will not receive a letter grade on creative submissions. Grades will be determined by the quality of Peer Responses, and level of participation in class.

Equal Access. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible so that we can work together to address your needs.

Cultural or ceremonial leave allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes to meet the student's customs and traditions or to participate in related activities. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious or ceremonial event the student or their advisor (proxy) must submit a formal written request to the instructor. This must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony and the importance of the student's attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor. Appeals may be made to the Chair, Dean or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students remain responsible for completion or make-up of assignments as defined in the syllabus, at the discretion of the instructor."

COVID. UM recommends that students get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please direct questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center. Mask use is required within the classroom. Seating arrangements (sitting in the same spot each class period) and daily class attendance will be used to support contact tracing efforts if needed. Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom. If you feel sick and/or are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please don't come to class and contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330. If you are required to isolate or quarantine, you will receive support in the class to ensure continued academic progress. Quarantining students should not expect the class to be changed to a hybrid structure, however, and may be assigned short homeworks to serve the place of classroom activities."

All students must practice academic honesty. 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: (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).