

1-2014

ENST 505.01: Literature of Nature Writing

Phil Condon

University of Montana - Missoula, phil.condon@mso.umt.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

Recommended Citation

Condon, Phil, "ENST 505.01: Literature of Nature Writing" (2014). *Syllabi*. 738.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/738>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

THE LITERATURE OF NATURE WRITING 2014

NEW DIRECTIONS / OLD PATHS

EVST 505.01

Spring 2014

Phil Condon

M/W 12:40-2pm

Rankin 107 Hrs: M-TH 2:30-3:30pm

Contact: phil.condon@mso.umt.edu 243.2904

Books: *Norton Anthology of Nature Writing*. Norton 2002.
Brave New Words. Elizabeth Ammons. 2010.
Some of the Dead Are Still Breathing. Charles Bowden. 2009.
A Great Aridness. William deBuys. 2011.

About a Mountain. John D'Agata. 2010.
The Barbaric Heart. Curtis White. 2009.
Full Body Burden. Kristen Iverson. 2012.
The Small Heart of Things. Julian Hoffman. 2013.

Essays: ERES (password = bluesky).

Recommended: *Pocket Style Manual*, Hacker.

Note: All of these books are either on hardcopy RESERVE in Mansfield Library or E-Copy in ML holdings.

Purposes & Outcomes: To acquire understanding of some of the predominant traditions, concerns, forms, and diversity of American Nature Writing; to broaden and challenge the conceptions we and others may have about the boundaries and implications of Nature Writing; to relate and orient these understandings and broadened conceptions to the ideas and approaches in 7 powerful 21st-century nature/environmental books with very different subjects and perspectives; to reflect and express in a portfolio that includes several forms of writing the inquiry, analysis, discovery, delight, and/or misgivings discovered in these readings and our discussions. Secondarily, to write brief amateur natural history Field Note essays from individual field trips, 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 5 different specific writing assignments. Students combine these assignments in varying proportions to best suit their interests and needs. The assignments, described in detail elsewhere, include KUFM Field Notes (600 wds), a letter to an author of a course reading (300-1K wds), an analytical/critical response to one or more course readings (1500-4K wds), an original environmental/nature essay arising from and rooted in individual experience (1500-4K wds), and brief responses to at least 4 live reading events* (300-1K wds total). Everyone will read from and present selections of their portfolio work in class between 4/28-5/7 and all work is due by Mon 5/12. At least through M 4/14, students can turn in any drafts any time for instructor response before revision.

Format: Unless otherwise specified, please: 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 1800 pages, averaging about 75-100 pgs per class. See full schedule for specifics.

Other Work: Keep an active reading journal on all course readings; lead/facilitate class discussion as per assigned schedule (made from your preferences where possible). Browse, peruse, read from Norton anthology throughout semester and select and rank any 3 essays you like, want others to read, and would like to lead discussion on, for assignment to class in Weeks 11 & 12. Turn those ranked selections in on M 4/7.

Course Grades: Written Portfolio = 3/4

Participation, preparation, presentations (attendance) = 1/4

*Choices for live readings include 8 Wild Mercy Readings Thur 7pm 2/6—3/27 at UM FLAT & others TBA. If you hear of any readings in our field, please let class know.

AM =About A Mountain SDSB =Some of the Dead Are Still Breathing BNW =Brave New Words
 GA=A Great Aridness SHT=Small Heart of Things FBB=Full Body Burden BH=The Barbaric Heart

Wk#	Dates	Readings / Discussion	(xx) = number of pgs	Writing Due
1	m 1/27 w 1/29	Review Syllabus & Schedule, Discuss Course, Introductions NORTON: 2 Intros & Gilbert White and Janisse Ray; ERES: Solnit (3)		
2	m 2/3 w 2/5	BNW: Preface and thru 101 BNW: 102-174		
3	m 2/10 w 2/12	AM: to 106 AM: 107-120 (& look at his notes)		
4	m 2/17 w 2/19	NO CLASS—PD HOLIDAY FBB: to 166		
5	m 2/24 w 2/26	FBB: 167-240 FBB: 241-344 (& look at Ode & timeline & notes)		
6	m 3/3 w 3/5	SHT: to 81 SHT: 81-150		
7	m 3/10 w 3/12	BH: Foreword, Preface, & thru p107 BH: p109-177		
8	m 3/17 w 3/19	GA: to 128 GA: 128-203		
9	m 3/24 w 3/26	GA: 204-315 NORTON: TBA		PF # 1 DUE
SPRING BREAK: M-F 4/1-4/5				
10	m 4/7 w 4/9	SDSB: to p154 SDSB: p155-243		
11	m 4/14 w 4/16	4 NORTON Rdgs Selected & Assigned by Classmates 3 NORTON Rdgs Selected & Assigned by Classmates		PF # 3 OR #4 DUE
12	m 4/21 w 4/23	4 NORTON Rdgs Selected & Assigned by Classmates 3 NORTON Rdgs Selected & Assigned by Classmates		PF #2 DUE
13	m 4/28 w 4/30	4 Portfolio Presentations 4 Portfolio Presentations		
14	m 5/5 w 5/7	4 Portfolio Presentations 2 Portfolio Presentations & Class Evals		
Finals Week		All Portfolio & Course Work due in Rankin mailbox/office by Optional Individual Conferences Scheduled Tues-Fri		Mon 5/12

1) Letter to Author (300-1000 wds): Pick one N/Env writer (if not from course readings, please consult w/ me), 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. Find contact info for the writer (some I have) and mail or email the letter. Please let me and class know if you get a response. **Due By or Before (DBB): W 3/26**

2) Field Notes (600 wds): Write a 2-page, 4-minute field-note essay for KUFM radio program *Field Notes* (airs Sun 12:25pm, Mon 3pm). I'll provide previous KUFM FN manuscripts, suggested topics, and broadcast tapes as examples. 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 radio listening audience), you take notes of your experience of species or features and then do some research (general, popular audience level), and write a Field Note. Turn it in to me first and when I return, send it to MNHC editor Allison De Jong at adejong@montananaturalist.org. Allison & KUFM will schedule your radio reading. **DBB: M 4/21**

3) Analytical Response (1500-4000 wds): Choose from any of the books or essays in assigned readings, and write an expository essay that includes some elements of analysis & critique (careful reading) of author's approach, presentation, form, &/or arguments. Our class discussions of readings will offer multiple possibilities for this, as will your own reading experience. Use more than one author and/or work as you wish. **DBB: M 4/14 OR M 5/12**

4) Original Environmental Essay (1500-4000 wds): Write an environmental or nature essay (at least one major element of essay in/of/about the beyond-human world) that arises from your own experience. The essay can refer to and refract your reading (as part of your experience), but it should be rooted in your bodily, sensory experience. Use any course readings as models if that works, and/or simply explore experiences you may have wanted to write about but haven't had the time or space for. Experiment. Enjoy. **DBB: M 4/14 OR M 5/12**

5) Responses to at least 4 outside readings (400-1000 total words for all 4 together): Attend live readings outside of class and write short responses. Hearing the written word aloud, especially from the writer, adds dimension to literature study that nothing else provides. If possible, readings should be of environmental or nature writing, but any good writing will do if necessary. Wild Mercy Readings (8 Thursdays 7pm at UM FLAT 2/6-3/27) are ideal for this, but also watch event schedules on campus & at independent bookstores. (*Please let class know of any readings you hear of.*)

Turn in each response asap after reading, but all are DBB: M 5/12

For any or all of this work, feel free to turn in drafts any time thru Mon 4/14 for my response & suggestion. I can try to read drafts after that date if/as time allows, but without the same promise of speedy response.

For #1 & #2 above particularly, check in with class anytime on your progress, as this will likely help others.

Minimum total for combined 5 assignments = 7,000 words. The minimum lengths total ± 4000 wds; the maximums total $\pm 10,000$ words; so you have latitude to mix and match lengths to emphasize projects that most interest you.

You may exceed the maximums for individual projects if you wish, but the maximum word count listed above for each project is the most that can be counted toward the overall portfolio minimum of 7,000 words.

Deadlines by the Numbers: #5 turn these short pieces in as soon as you can after you attend readings

Wed 3/26: #1 (Letter to Author) (ALSO: MON 4/7: Your 3 Ranked Norton Selections due in class)

Mon 4/14: Either #3 OR #4—yr choice--whichever one of these 2 you don't turn in 4/14 is then DBB Mon 5/12

Mon 4/21: #2 (Field Notes)

Mon 5/12: Full Portfolio (include the parts previously turned in and returned)

EVST 505 Spring 2014 Discussion Leaders

Below is schedule for leading & facilitating reading discussion. Everyone will be scheduled for two days as part of a pair. Take a look at the books, the calendar, and any available oracles you like to consult. Then sign your name below in slots for your top 3 choices (*name #1, name #2, name #3--on 3 different days*), depending on your particular interests & your own semester planning.

Please return this sheet to me with your 3 preferences by next Mon 2/3. I'll collate requests and do my best to match preferences as well as I can to fill the schedule. I will give everyone their dates by Wed 2/5. We need 4 volunteers today: 2 each M 2/3 & W 2/5. *Those 4 only sign up for 2 other preference days below.*

For leading discussion, I don't expect you to plan everything for 80 minutes! Do plan some ways to get us started, provide some directions and focus, and have ideas to jumpstart us if we get stalled. I welcome your initiative and creativity in developing this, and I'm open to any interesting approaches, techniques, or methods.

Key discussion questions, directed small group activities, & relevant information from outside the readings are helpful in focusing our talk & enlivening class. Connecting &/or contrasting readings with previous course readings and discussion are often good ways to expand our thinking & inquiries. If you've been able to read ahead, & you'd like to give class a short assignment ahead of time—focus question(s), for example—for the day you're leading discussion, that's fine, although certainly not necessary. As each book is divided between successive days, it is a good idea, and fun, for the people on those days to talk & coordinate a bit.

1 M 2/3: BNW to 101	<u>volunteer</u>	<u>volunteer</u>
2 W 2/5: BNW 101 to end	<u>volunteer</u>	<u>volunteer</u>
3 M 2/10 AM to 106	_____	_____
4 W 2/12 AM to end	_____	_____
5 M 2/24 FBB 167-240	_____	_____
6 W 2/26 FBB 241 to end	_____	_____
7 M 3/3 SHT to 81	_____	_____
8 W 3/6 SHT to end	_____	_____
9 M 3/10 BH to 107	_____	_____
10 W 3/12 BH to end	_____	_____
11 M 3/17 GA to 128	_____	_____
12 W 3/19 GA to 129-203	_____	_____
13 M 4/7 SDSB to 154	_____	_____
14 W 4/9 SDSB to en	_____	_____

SHT=Small Heart of Things SDSB =Some of the Dead Are Still Breathing BNW =Brave New Words
AM =About A Mountain GA=A Great Aridness FBB=Full Body Burden BH= The Barbaric Heart