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ENST 231H.01C: Nature and Society

Susann Meachelle Bradford

The University of Montana, sue.bradford@mso.umt.edu

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Bradford, Susann Meachelle, "ENST 231H.01C: Nature and Society" (2016). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 3954.

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ENST 231 H: Nature and Society Seminar

Course Syllabus

Missoula College – Spring 2016

Instructor: Sue Bradford Ed. D.

Office & Mailbox: Missoula College, Room HB 02

Office Hours: Monday 12-1pm; and by appointment

Email: sue.bradford@umontana.edu



Required Texts:

- Quinn (1992). *Ishmael*. Bantam Books. ISBN: 0-553-37540-7
- Cahn & O'Brien (1996). *Thinking About the Environment*. M.E. Sharpe. ISBN: 1-56324-796-8
- Nash (2001, 2014). *Wilderness and the American Mind* (4th or 5th ed). Yale University Press. ISBN: 0-300-09122-2; 0-300-19038-7
- *Additional Readings posted on MOODLE*

Welcome to Nature & Society! This course explores the role and significance of *nature* in human history and examines how this has shaped our contemporary perspectives on environment issues. Beginning with ancient human societies, we will trace the idea of nature as it develops through the ages and gains complexity from the merging of diverse traditions (primarily Western). Our readings are drawn from multiple disciplines and authors, ranging from influential philosophers and historians to modern scientists and founders of the contemporary environmental movement. Students will consider how different concepts of nature have emerged from diverse cultural settings and belief systems, and how these in turn inform the ways that humans live and interact with nature. Through critical reading, class discussions and written work, students will draw connections between historic ideas of nature and contemporary environmental issues, and gain a larger understanding of nature and society.

This course satisfies General Education requirements for Writing (W) and Historical and Cultural Studies (H).

Learning Objectives: Students completing this course should be able to:

1. Identify distinct concepts of nature from major historical periods and cultural settings;
2. Explore diverse perspectives concerning texts, ideas, historical events, and environmental issues;
3. Evaluate the effects of ideas on different societal interactions with the natural world;
4. Recognize the importance of historical factors on contemporary environmental thought, particularly scientific advancements, technology, and changes in social organization;
5. Synthesize ideas and events, from prehistory to the present, that led to several major shifts in the dominant societal views of the place of humans in nature;
6. Analyze current environmental issues utilizing historical ideas, thinkers, and events;
7. Articulate their own ideas and opinions about nature and human-nature interactions and relate these to historical ideas, thinkers and events;
8. Use informal writing to develop and learn new concepts, and to formulate opinions and ideas;
9. Compose essays and papers that exhibit appropriate English language usage and writing conventions;
10. Evaluate and revise written work based on constructive feedback.

Course Structure & Expectations

Discussion Seminar: Unlike most lecture courses, a **discussion seminar** requires students to complete readings before class so they will be ready to participate thoughtfully in classroom discussions and activities. We will often begin class by sharing opinions or questions about the reading, and then proceed to examine specific passages and key ideas more closely. This approach allows us to consider many perspectives and to get feedback on our own viewpoints as we work together towards a deeper understanding of complex issues and challenging questions. The instructor's role is that of a facilitator, raising questions and offering guidance as needed. The student's role is to reflect on the readings, to share interpretations or questions in class, to respond to one another thoughtfully, and to explore how the readings inform or challenge our opinions about nature and environmental issues. This **collaborative** style of learning will challenge you to think critically and to develop skills for expressing yourself clearly, listening and working with others – essential skills for facing the challenges of responsible citizenship in the 21st century.

Preparation for Class: Always complete the assigned readings *before* class. Some readings are more challenging than others so give yourself ample time. Take notes to record key passages and ideas or questions to share in class. Do not wait until the last minute to access online readings; plan ahead in case of internet issues -- this is not an acceptable excuse for being unprepared! The success and quality of our learning experience will depend greatly on the quality of preparation that *you, the students*, bring to class. This is a team effort where everyone needs to pull their own weight. Plan to be on time and stay for the full class to avoid causing interruptions or missing important information. Always bring a copy of the reading to class so we can examine specific passages together.

Participation: Students are expected to contribute regularly to classroom discussions and activities. These include talking circles, small group activities, break-out sessions and full group discussions. Your voice is vital to our classroom process as well as your own learning process! Your ideas and opinions not only enrich and strengthen our collective understanding of challenging texts and issues, but also make the class more interesting and relevant to you personally. Speaking up in class is very challenging for some students, so we need to be mindful and respectful of one another. Students who are comfortable talking need to be aware that others may be waiting for a quiet moment to chime in. I will expect each of you to do your best to contribute to each class and work to improve your skills as the semester progresses.

Mutual Respect: The key to any successful seminar or collaboration is **mutual respect**. This includes respecting oneself and others enough to come prepared and take up the work seriously. It also relates to how we deal with disagreement. Our class discussions will explore many questions and issues that do not admit of simple "right answers." At times you will encounter opinions and viewpoints that you disagree with. Some of these may evoke strong emotions. You may even find your own opinions being challenged by others. In these situations, you will need to maintain a civil tone and a friendly attitude. Always be courteous, speak in turns, listen carefully, and respond respectfully. We may not agree on every issue, but we can still work to understand one another and recognize the reasoning behind different viewpoints.

Writing Assignments: This course fulfills the General Education writing requirement (W) because much of your grade is based on written work. The UM Writing Program requires students to revise and resubmit their work in the effort to become more proficient writers. In this course, we will have three major papers, each of which you will be expected to revise and resubmit after I return your initial version with comments. Detailed guidelines and grading criteria will be provided in class in advance of these assignments.

Writing Program Assessment: All writing courses are also required to participate in the University-wide Writing Program Assessment. Near the end of the semester, each student will need to submit a *blinded* copy (i.e., name & course identifiers removed) of one revised paper to the Writing Committee via Moodle. Detailed instructions will be provided later in the semester.

Online Course Components

Course Supplement: This course has an online supplement in Moodle where I will post copies of course documents and provide a weekly agenda and post any online readings and resources. This will include digital dropbox features for submitting assignments online (optional).

Electronic Readings: Some of our readings will be posted on Moodle and formatted as PDF files. Please download weekly readings well in advance of class. If you do not have **Adobe Acrobat Reader** on your computer, you can download it for free from this website: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

Assignments & Grading

- **Attendance is required.** You need to be in class to be part of the discussion; there is no way to make this up. If you must miss class, you are still expected to complete readings and assignments on time, unless an extension has been requested and granted. Tardiness may counted as a partial absence. Unavoidable absences may be excused at the instructor's discretion if the reason for the absence can be documented.
 - **More than 2 unexcused absences will lower your grade for the course.**
 - Each additional unexcused absence will reduce the grade by 1/3 grade level: B > B- > C+ > C
- **Participation.** Your participation in class will be worth 3 points for each day that you (1) attend, (2) come prepared, and (3) participate actively. **Class participation is worth 75 points of your overall grade.**
- **Journal Entries.** Weekly reading response journals will help you develop your thoughts about key ideas or questions raised by our readings. Exploratory writing is an excellent tool for processing new ideas and relating these to your own experiences and viewpoints. Each journal submission should be approximately one full page in length (typed, double spaced) and may be submitted on Moodle or turned in at class. No journals are required on weeks when essays are due. **Journal entries are worth 10 points each.**
- **Reflective Essay 1: Exploring ideas of nature** (week 3/5). Our first 3-4 page essay will ask you to explore how your own experience of nature compares to the ideas set forth in the novel, *Ishmael*. You will explain a specific passage from the novel and describe an experience that leads you to agree or disagree. I will return graded essays during week 4 with edits and comments to guide your re-write. **The initial draft and the revised essay are worth 30 points each.**
- **Reflective Essay 2: Historic ideas of nature.** (week 7/9). Our second 3-4 page essay will consider how different historical conditions or cultural beliefs have influenced ideas of nature. You will interpret a specific passage from a historic text and identify features of the author's historic setting that may have influenced this way of thinking. I will return graded essays during week 8, with edits and comments to guide your re-write. **The initial draft and the revised essay are worth 30 points each.**
- **Comparative Paper** (week 11/14). This 6-8 page paper is the capstone of our course. You will describe and compare two distinct perspectives on "nature" from very different historical periods, including a historic text (this may draw on Essay 2) and a more recent text (from one of the 19th or 20th century authors on our reading list). I will return graded essays during week 13, with edits and comments to guide your re-write. **The initial draft and the revised paper are worth 50 points each.**
- **Final Creative Project & Presentation** (Finals week). Create a poster, collage, essay, artwork, or poem to share with the class. This should express "what nature means to me." **This project is worth 25 points.**

Note on Re-Writes: The process of re-writing is an opportunity to correct errors, refine and rethink ideas, and improve your ability to express yourself clearly and effectively. Revised essays will be graded with this in mind; I will look for signs of improvement that address errors and comments on your first draft.

Late Work Policy: All assignments and essays are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated on the Syllabus or Essay Guidelines. Unless you make specific arrangements with the Instructor in advance of the due date, lateness will be penalized by a 5% deduction in points for each day the assignment is past due.

Extra Credit: There will be opportunities to earn extra credit during the semester. These typically involve submitting a two page response paper to a lecture, video or service project that relates to our class topics.

Overall Grades

Traditional letter grades (A-F) will be awarded based on each student's earned percentage of the total points possible. A summary of the approximate course points from graded work and the traditional grade percentages are shown in the following tables:

Approximate Point Values		GRADING SCALE	
Participation	= 75 points	90% - 100%	A
Reading Journals	= 80 points	80% - 89%	B
Reflective Essay 1	= 60 points	70% - 79%	C
Reflective Essay 2	= 60 points	60% - 69%	D
Comparative Paper	= 100 points	0% - 59%	F
Final Presentation	= 25 points		
TOTAL	= 400 points		

Additional Information

- **Getting Help:** Please let me know if you have any questions. I am happy to arrange a time to discuss your progress, assignments, or any special circumstances that may affect your performance in class. Please see me at the end of class or contact me by email to arrange a meeting.
- **Writing Center:** The Writing Center offers free tutoring at several locations across campus to help students become more effective writers. For more info, see: <http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/>
- **Students with Disabilities:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students \[DSS\]](#). Please contact me as soon as possible if you already have a disability letter and would like to make arrangements for specific course modifications. For more information, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154, call 243-2243 (voice/TDD), or see <http://www.umt.edu/dss/>.
- **Student Conduct:** Respectful conduct and academic integrity are expected in all of your communications and academic activities during this course. Please be advised that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any conduct violations will be handled in strict accordance with the University of Montana Student Conduct Code: http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php.