

MISSOURI WESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism
Dr. Elizabeth Latosi-Sawin Spring Semester 2010

ENGLISH 210: APPROACHES TO LITERATURE (ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE)

Professor: Dr. Elizabeth Latosi-Sawin
Section 06/80 11:00 a.m. -11:50 a.m.
Classroom: Spratt Hall 205 Office: Spratt Hall 202 Phone: 271-4535
Office Hrs: 10-11; 12-1 MWF and by appointment
Email: sawin@missouriwestern.edu Use only your MWSU email account to reach me.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of English 210 a student should be able to: (1.) Recognize the major characteristics of literary genres (2.) Discuss literature, orally and in writing, with assurance (3.) Appreciate literary works encountered (4.) Understand the different ways in which literary theme may be treated in literature. **MEANS:** To reach these goals, the student is expected to: (1.) Read poetry, fiction, and view drama or films (2.) Investigate various methods of approaching and understanding literature (3.) Write papers, including themes and essay examinations (4.) Read a variety of literary works in which a chosen theme is dominant.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: What is or should be our relationship to nature? Are we to have dominion over it? Be stewards of it? Be citizens in it? Is the natural world a living system that deserves our respect or just raw material for our use? Is contact with natural environments necessary for our health? Have American attitudes toward nature changed in the stories we tell, the poems we write, the movies we see and the experiences we have growing up? We will study the complex relationships between nature and the human beings this semester.

COURSE QUESTIONS:

1. What is wild and instinctual in our nature? How does this influence our relations with the outer world?
2. How do we regard other creatures? What do our encounters reveal about us?
3. Are we justified in taking the life of another creature? Under what circumstances?
4. How do the places we live in affect our inner lives? How are we affected by natural & built environments?
5. What do we know about the place we live, and what are our responsibilities toward it?
6. What impact do politics and power of one group over another have on particular places?
7. How do our individual decisions about how to earn and spend money affect our own well-being and the world?
8. What does our use of land say about who we are and what we value and believe?
9. What are the prospects for our planet and human life given our current ways of thinking about the world?
10. How can we live in healthy, ecologically responsible, and life-sustaining ways?

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Literature and the Environment: A Reader on Nature and Culture. New York: Longman, 1999.
Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver (a novel)
Tracks by Louise Erdrich (a novel).

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

Landscape of Childhood Essay Feb. 12	15%	60 points
Paper on <i>Prodigal Summer</i> March 8	25%	100 points
Test on Poetry March 12	15%	60 points
Student Panel Presentations & Reports	18%	72 points
Final Exam May 7	17%	68 points
Attendance /In-class Participation	10%	40 points
	100%	400 points

***Students taking this course for Honors credit, must confer with the course instructor about additional reading and / or writing assignments.

ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION POLICY FOR THIS SECTION OF 210:

10% (40 points) of your grade will be assigned to the *work you do in class*, including almost daily but brief, in-class writings and unannounced quizzes about the assigned readings, videos, or speakers. Most of these writings will receive a plus or minus mark from me, but some will receive points. You have signed up for *a course of instruction*, not an independent study. Coming to class allows you to learn what goes on in the minds of other people when they read what you have read, have other students listen to what you have to say face to face, view sections of videos or films selected for this course, receive help for papers you write and hear me explain assignments, introduce texts, and respond to your questions. Coming to class regularly is cost-effective in the short-run and useful in the long-run (People with college degrees and communication skills increase lifetime earnings.) ****If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to find out what we did. Make a friend in this class.**

DAILY ROSTER: You must *Sign your own complete name (no initials)* at the beginning of each class period.

- If you do not *sign* the class roster, you will be considered absent.
- If you come late to class or if you leave early, you may be marked absent. It depends on the circumstances.

Points will be distributed as follows for the whole semester's effort.

NO absence:	40 pts. = A	[Perfect attendancewith work accomplished in class.]
1 absence:	36 pts. = A-	[One absencewith work accomplished in class.]
2 absences:	32 pts. = B	[Two absences.....with work accomplished in class.]
3 absences:	28 pts. = C	[Three absences.....with work accomplished in class.]
4 absences:	24 pts.= D	[If these occur before midterm you will be withdrawn from the course.]
5 absences:	20 pts = F	
6 absences:	0 pts = F	in the course (unless extenuating circumstances & documentation are provided.).

INSTITUTIONAL ATTENDANCE POLICY: In order to improve student learning as well as to *achieve compliance with federal financial aid policies*, Western has a mandatory attendance policy for all *100-level and 200-level classes*. (Excused absences are those in which the student is serving as a representative of the college and provides written proof of doing so from the faculty/staff supervisor prior to the event.) The **maximum** number of **unexcused absences** allowed for this class is **THREE (3)**. With the 4th absence, I must report you to the Registrar's Office and you will be automatically withdrawn from this class. The Financial Aid Office will then reduce your financial aid as appropriate.

CELL PHONES & RESPECT FOR OTHERS:

- MWSU requires all students to help us maintain good conditions for teaching and learning.
- All students will treat their classmates, teachers, student assistants, and guests with civility and respect, both inside and outside the classroom. As part of that respect for others ...
 1. **CELL PHONES** must be turned **OFF** *before* you walk through the door. Put them on vibrate or silent and be prepared to answer them **AFTER** class is over.
 2. **NO TEXT MESSAGING** in the classroom. **NO MP3 PLAYERS** or other music. **NO HEADPHONES / EARPHONES**. Let's try to be fully present for each other.

INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY: Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent activity. Violations may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure for the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student's grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty **will be reported to the Provost** or designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report Forms. **PUT SIMPLY**, you are expected to do your own reading and writing in this course. Any student who submits someone else's work as his or her own will receive no credit (0 points) for that assignment and be reported to the Provost. A second infraction will earn an "F" in this course. Please see the 2009-2010 Student Handbook and Calendar for specific activities identified as violations and the student due process procedure: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>.

DISABLED STUDENT POLICY: If you have a recognized disability, please make an appointment to see me during the first week of classes so that we can discuss how I might help you to succeed.

LATE PAPERS. When papers are DUE, I will collect them and put them into the envelope. If you are not ready to submit the paper at that time, your work is LATE. This will automatically entail a 5% reduction in points for *each day*. **ALWAYS IDENTIFY** your papers with your full name, English 210 and the date for all in-class work.

REQUIRED FORMATTING for out-of-class copy. Identify yourself in the **upper, right-hand corner**:

First Name Last Name
English 210: Environmental Literature
Landscape of My Childhood
Feb. 17, 2010

1. Use regular white paper. 2. Word-process and check your work for spelling and grammar. 3. One-inch margins on all sides. 4. **TIMES NEW ROMAN FONT** 10 or 11 point. 5. *Single-space within paragraphs*. 6. *Double-space between paragraphs*. 7. Use one staple in the upper left-hand corner. No folders, ripped dog-eared edges, or pages from spiral notebooks. I'll usually have a stapler in class.

SCHEDULE (I reserve the right to make changes to adjust to our class's needs. *These are your out-of-class assignments.*)

WEEK #1

Jan. 20: **INTRODUCTION**

Jan. 22: Ch. 1: **WHAT IS WILD AND INSTINCTUAL IN OUR NATURE?**

HOW DOES THIS INFLUENCE OUR RELATIONS WITH THE OUTER WORLD?

Read and respond to: "To Build a Fire" Jack London 31-41 (short story)

WEEK #2

Jan. 25: Read and respond to: “Collecting Myself” Lester Rowntree 21-27 (essay)

“Solitude” Henry David Thoreau 47-52 (essay)

Jan. 27: Ch. 2: **HOW DO WE REGARD OTHER CREATURES? WHAT DO OUR ENCOUNTERS REVEAL ABOUT US?**

“Come into Animal Presence” Denise Levertov 63-64 (poem)

“A Blessing” James Wright 64-65 (poem)

“Living Like Weasels” Annie Dillard 4-7 (essay)

“The Crow in the Woods” John Updike 68-70 (short story)

Jan. 29 “Apologia” Barry Lopez 75-79 (essay); “The Creatures on My Mind” Ursula Le Guin 80-83 (essay)

“Traveling through the Dark” William Stafford 79-80 (poem)

WEEK #3

Feb.1: Ch. 4 **HOW DO THE PLACES WE LIVE AFFECT OUR INNER LIVES?** *As you read these selections think about your own essay on the landscape of your childhood (whether that was in an urban or a rural setting). That essay will be due on Feb. 17.*

Childhood: “The Secret Lion” Alberto Rios 214-219 &

“The Memory Place” Barbara Kingsolver 199-205

Feb. 3 Adulthood: “Alone on the Mountain Top” Jack Kerouac 191-199 &

“A Blizzard Under Blue Sky” Pam Houston 184-188

Feb. 5: Ch. 3 **ARE WE JUSTIFIED IN TAKING THE LIFE OF ANOTHER CREATURE? WHEN?**

“The Gifts” Richard Nelson 119-130 (personal narrative)

“The Buck” Joyce Carol Oates 130-140 (short story)

Compare and contrast the hunter in Nelson with the hunter in “The Buck.” Do you understand Melanie Snyder’s actions?

WEEK #4

Feb. 8 **TEST #1 (This will cover all out-of-class readings and any in-class poetry.)**

“From Fellow Creatures” Paul Shepard 140-46 (essay)

“The Willingness of a Deer to Die” Wintu Tribe 117-19 (essay)

Feb. 10 : “Thinking Like a Mountain” Aldo Leopold 148-50 (essay)

“A White Heron” Sarah Orne Jewett 150-57 (short story)

Feb. 12: **ESSAY on the LANDSCAPE of your CHILDHOOD** (approximately 650-900 words)

WEEK #5

Feb. 15: No class. President’s Day

Feb. 17 **PRODIGAL SUMMER** Read the following from Barbara Kingsolver’s novel, *Prodigal Summer: 1-91*

Predators 1-30 Moth Love 31-48 Old Chestnuts 49-51

Predators 51-67 Moth Love 68-80; Old Chestnuts 81-91

After reading each section, write down a response to at least ONE of the following (although you can vary which you respond)

- Who is the principal character? What he is or she like? Identify 3 things that he or she says or does in that section that leads you to your first impression. **CHARACTER**
- What is happening in this story? Is there a conflict? Who wants what? What is standing in the way? **PLOT**
- Where is the story taking place? Could you move the story from that location without a loss of meaning? Why or why not? **SETTING**
- What insights into life (human behavior, the natural environment, or both) seems to be emerging? **THEME**

Feb. 19 Read Predators 92-100; Moth Love 101-127; Old Chestnuts 128-145 AND 146- 187

WEEK #6

Feb. 22 Read: *Prodigal Summer*: 188--284 In-class Poetry Unit begins

Feb. 24 Read *Prodigal Summer* 285-343 “ “

Individual Conferences with Dr. Sawin *before or after* class

Feb. 26 Read *Prodigal Summer* 344-384 “ “

Individual Conferences with Dr. Sawin *before or after* class

WEEK #7

Mar. 1 Read *Prodigal Summer* 385-444 “ “

Individual Conferences with Dr. Sawin *before or after* class

Mar. 3 **PAPERS Due on Prodigal Summer**

Mar. 5 In-class Poetry Unit continues ...

WEEK #8

Mar. 8 In-class Poetry Unit continues ...

Mar. 10 In-class Poetry Unit continues ...

Mar. 12 **TEST on Poetry.**

No assignment over Spring Break but when you get back you will choose which of the remaining chapters in *Literature and the Environment* you would like to read and report on to the class. SO if you have some time to scan the following over your break, I encourage you to do so.

Ch. 5 Visions of Home: What do we know about the place where we live?

Ch. 6 Politics of Place: What impact do politics and power have on particular places?

Ch. 7 Getting and Spending: How do our individual decisions about earning and spending money effect us and our planet?

Ch. 8 Land Use: What does our use of land say about what we value?

Ch. 9 Peril and Response: What are the prospects for our country given our current ways of thinking?

SPRING BREAK

WEEK #9

Mar. 22: *Jeremiah Johnson* In-class viewing.

Mar. 24: *Jeremiah Johnson* In-class viewing.

Mar. 26: *Jeremiah Johnson* In-class viewing.

WEEK #10

Mar. 29 "O Rotten Gotham" Tom Wolfe 53-61

"The Walling of Awareness" Jerry Mander 205-214

Mar. 31 Ch. 5 **Visions of Home:** What do we know about the place where we live?

Apr. 2 " " " " "

WEEK #11

Apr. 5 Ch. 6 **Politics of Place:** What impact do politics and power have on particular places?

Apr. 7 " " " " "

Apr. 9 Ch. 7 **Getting and Spending:** How do our individual decisions about earning and spending money effect us and our planet?

WEEK #12

Apr. 12 " " " " "

Apr. 14 Ch. 8 **Land Use:** What does our use of land say about what we value?

Apr. 16 " " " " "

WEEK #13

Apr. 19 Ch. 9 **Peril and Response:** What are the prospects for our country given our current ways of thinking?

Apr. 21 " " " " "

Apr. 23 Read **TRACKS** by Louise Erdrich

Ch. 1 Winter 1912: Little Spirit Sun (Nanapush is the Narrator) 1-9

Ch. 2 Summer 1913: Raspberry Sun (Pauline is the Narrator) 10-31

WEEK #14

Apr. 26 **TRACKS**

Ch. 3 Fall 1913-Spring 1914: Crust on the Snow Sun (Nanapush) 32-61

Ch. 4 Winter 1914-Summer 1917: Blueberry Sun (Pauline) 62-95

Apr. 28 **TRACKS**

Ch. 5 Fall 1917-Spring 1918: Strong Spirit Sun (Nanapush) 96-130

Ch. 6 Spring 1918-Winter 1919: Wood Louse Sun (Pauline) 131-164

Apr. 30 **TRACKS**

Ch. 7 Winter 1918-Spring 1919: Skeleton Winter (Nanapush) 165-191

Ch. 8 Spring 1919 (Pauline) 192-205

WEEK #15

May 3 **TRACKS**

Ch. 9 Fall 1919-Spring 1924: Wild Rice Sun (Nanapush) 206-226

May 7 Final Exam 11:30 a.m. -1:20 a.m. (on *Tracks* and Student Panel Presentations)