

Survey of American Literature

AML 2070-9788

T: 7 (1:55 – 2:45) and R: 7-8 (1:55 – 3:50) // MAT (Matherly Hall) 0117

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Office: TUR (Turlington) Hall 4307 // Office Hours: T: 8, R: 9, & by appt.

Course Description

From the contact period to contemporary writings, the American literary tradition has taken the natural world as a key theme. Yet, American cultural interaction with the environment is often tumultuous and paradoxical considering nature's importance to establishing an American mythos and identity. Despite an assumed reverence for the natural world, there exists an undeniable and powerful American desire to control and dominate the environment, bending it to our cultural will. However, have we reached the point where nature will no longer bend, but instead break? And if it breaks, what does that reveal about the great American experiment and identity? Throughout the semester, we will address the duality in the relationship between America and the environment, while placing that duality in dialogue with one of the most pressing issues of our time: climate change.

During the course of the semester, we will move chronologically from the early travel writings of William Bartram's journey through Florida to Jeff VanderMeer's haunting climate fiction novel, *Annihilation*. Along the way, we will examine a diverse group of authors whose own interventions with the environment illuminate numerous other political, ethnic, and cultural tensions that simmer just beneath the surface of the American identity. In conjunction, we will analyze poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and graphic narratives that will help us address America's evolving and increasingly volatile relationship with the environment and think about how Americanism has reached this tipping point.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Practice and communicate a knowledge of American literature.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the American environment and culture.
- Read and interpret a text critically in relation to content and form.
- Compose rhetorical arguments using primary texts and supplemental scholarship.
- Utilize a thorough writing process that includes planning, drafting, and revising.
- Evaluate the rhetorical arguments of the work of peers and other authors.

Reading List

You will need to purchase the following texts in the specific edition noted by the ISBN:

Hedges, Chris and Joe Sacco. *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. ISBN: 1568588240

Neufeld, Josh. *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*. ISBN: 037571488X

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. ISBN: 0143104918

VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation*. ISBN: 0374104093

The following texts will be available either through Canvas or ARES:

Bartram, William. Selected Writings.

Faulkner, William. *The Bear*.

Frost, Robert. Selected Poems.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

London, Jack. Selected Short Stories.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*.

You may purchase an electronic version of any of our texts if you prefer a digital copy, but it must be an electronic version of the listed edition. Consistent page numbers will be essential for our class discussions.

Assignments (1000 points total)

Reading Responses (10 total): 200 points (2000 words)

Preparation to participate in our class meeting is essential, so throughout the semester, you will be assigned ten reading response papers of at least 200 words each. In these response papers, you will write your reaction to the plot and analyze the themes addressed in the assigned selection. These responses will be interspersed throughout the semester and announced one class meeting ahead.

Presentation and Discussion Leader: 100 points

Every student in the course will prepare a five-minute presentation that not only covers the reading selection for the day but also starts our class discussion. Students have total creative reign with the production of their presentation. In the past, students prepared everything from a traditional live PowerPoint presentation to a recorded video. Since this will help start our meeting for the day and set the tone, I want you to have fun with your presentation. Regardless of preparation method, your presentation will be graded on how well you address the following:

1. A very brief plot summary of the selection.
2. Analysis of themes and content.
3. At least two open-ended questions for your classmates pertaining to the material.

Textual Analysis Project: 200 points (1000 words)

You will choose one of the texts we have read and analyze the arguments that it makes about “nature” or “the environment.” Once you have a good sense of how the argument is constructed and have determined whether that construction is or is not effective in making the argument, write an analysis of the argument. Your task is not to argue with the argument, but to offer a persuasive analysis of how that argument is made.

Research Project: 300 points (2000 words)

Effective literary scholarship requires analysis of not only primary texts but secondary, critical texts as well as an understanding of the ongoing discourse of a text. For this project, you will incorporate three critical works with your analysis of a text. Through your synthesis of these components, you will produce a unique interpretation of the text that furthers critical discourse. As part of this project, you will supply a revised draft that accounts for my comments before the end of the semester.

Mindtwister Project: 200 points (1000 words)

For your final paper of the semester, you will have to highlight your rhetorical adaptability and write a brief analysis of Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation* from the perspective of a character we have previously studied in the semester. The list of characters you may select from will be announced when you are assigned the project. All the possible options will be characters we discuss at length in class meetings.

Assignment Submission Guidelines and Late Work Penalties

All assignments must be submitted to Canvas before their due date/time in the appropriate location. Reading responses are always due before our next class meeting. The three projects will have their due dates listed on the course schedule (see below).

Late reading responses will not be accepted unless prior arraignments have been made with the instructor or due to an immediate medical emergency.

Late projects will suffer a 20% loss of possible points for every day after the deadline. Students must still submit a project even after 5 days. Failure to submit a draft of any project by the end of the semester will result in an automatic failure.

General Assessment Guidelines

A - You successfully completed the assignment at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. Your paper reveals that you have grappled deeply with the assignment's topic. Your paper is clearly structured, thoroughly supported, and persuasive. The assignment contains no errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

B - You successfully completed the assignment at a moderately high level. Your paper reveals that you have thought deeply about the assignment's topic and have developed a largely persuasive argument, although your work may need slight revisions in terms of structure and/or content. The assignment is almost completely without errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

C - While your paper reveals that you have given some thought to the assignment's topic, your paper seems more of a rough draft than a final version and requires substantial revisions, likely in terms of both structure and content, in order to persuade the reader. While your assignment may be readable, it contains some errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax.

D - You did what the assignment required of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The paper's main ideas are poorly supported, and an organizational structure is difficult to discern. Frequently, writing at this level may suffer from many problems in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax which are so serious as to render portions of the paper nearly unreadable.

E - Papers which earn E's fail to show that the writer has given any consideration to the assignment's topic. The paper offers slim to no support for its argument, and an organizational structure cannot be discerned. The paper contains an unsatisfactory number of errors in grammar, spelling, and/or syntax. Importantly, if any of the paper has been plagiarized, it will also receive a failing grade.

Final Grade Scale

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|----|------|--------|----------|----|------|-------|---------|
| A | 4.0 | 93-100 | 930-1000 | C | 2.0 | 73-76 | 730-769 |
| A- | 3.67 | 90-92 | 900-929 | C- | 1.67 | 70-72 | 700-729 |
| B+ | 3.33 | 87-89 | 870-899 | D+ | 1.33 | 67-69 | 670-699 |
| B | 3.0 | 83-86 | 830-869 | D | 1.0 | 63-66 | 630-669 |
| B- | 2.67 | 80-82 | 800-829 | D- | 0.67 | 60-62 | 600-629 |
| C+ | 2.33 | 77-79 | 770-799 | E | 0.00 | 0-59 | 0-599 |

General Course Policies

Attendance Policy

It is crucial that you not only attend class, but also participate to the best of your ability. I will be taking attendance every class. If you are more than 15 minutes late for class, you will be counted as absent. You are allowed 3 absences from class without penalty. Any absences after the third will negatively affect your final grade.

UF Policy: In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.

Final Grade Appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Department of English Program Assistant (4008 Turlington Hall).

Technology Policy

Since you are required to fully participate in this course, which largely depends on class discussion, you will ONLY be allowed to use laptops or other computing devices for note-taking or class purposes. If you choose to use a computer during class, be prepared to show me your

notes at any time. Anyone found using their laptops for purposes other than class activities will be asked to leave class and will forfeit their attendance points.

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) Credit

This course can satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general.education.requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing Requirement

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing.and.math.requirement.aspx>

Statement of Student Disability Services

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Online Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

Statement on Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment see: <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>

Safe Space Policy

Each of us brings a unique perspective to the classroom that enriches the learning experience for everyone. This classroom will be constructed as a safe space where all voices are heard and respected. Language and actions that compromise this goal by harassing, disrespecting, or promoting violence against any group or individual will not be tolerated. This includes blatant rudeness directed toward the instructor or any other student present or not. To that end, I will ask anyone who disrupts the safe space to leave the classroom.

Tentative Schedule (Readings are due on the date listed.)

Week 1

T (8/23): WELCOME!

R (8/25): Robert Frost Poems: "Fire and Ice," "The Song of Trees," "Birches," and "A Tuft of Flowers"

Week 2

T (8/30): William Bartram, chapters 1-5

R (9/1): William Bartram, chapters 6-8

Week 3

T (9/6): William Bartram, chapters 9-11

R (9/8): *Walden* pp. 1-50

Week 4

T (9/13): *Walden*, pp. 51-87

R (9/15): *Walden*, pp. 87-164

Week 5

T (9/20): Jack London Short Story: "An Odyssey of the North"

R (9/22): Jack London Short Stories: "To Build a Fire," "The White Silence," and "The Law of Life"

F (9/9): ANALYSIS PROJECT DUE @ 5 PM to CANVAS

Week 6

T (9/27): *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chapters 1-4

R (9/29): *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chapters 5-10

Week 7

T (10/4): *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chapters 11-13

R (10/6): *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chapters 14-20

Week 8

T (10/11): *The Bear*, pp. 191-226

R (10/13): *The Bear*, pp. 226-254

Week 9

T (10/18): *The Bear*, pp. 254-315

R (10/20): *The Bear*, pp. 315-331

Week 10

T (10/25): *Ceremony*, pp. 1-54

R (10/27): *Ceremony*, pp. 55-120

Week 11

T (11/1): *Ceremony*, pp. 121-163

R (11/3): *Ceremony*, pp. 164-243

F (11/4): RESEARCH PROJECT DUE @ 5 PM to CANVAS

Week 12

T (11/8): *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*, Intro-p. 61

R (11/10): *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*, pp. 62-153

Week 13

T (11/15): *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*, pp. 157-193

R (11/17): *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*: "Days of Theft" and "Days of Destruction"

Week 14

T (11/22): *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*: "Days of Slavery"

R (11/24): THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Week 15

T (11/29): *Annihilation*, pp. 1-87

R (12/1): *Annihilation*, pp. 89-153

Week 16

T (12/6): *Annihilation*, pp. 155-195

F (12/9): MINDTWISTER PROJECT & RESEARCH PROJECT REVISION DUE @ 5 PM to CANVAS