



**AML 2070-0481 – Survey of American Literature (Class #10504)**  
Spring 2019

Instructor: Charles Acheson

Meeting Times: MWF Period 2 (8:30 - 9:20 a.m.)

Meeting Location: PUGH (Pugh Hall) 120

Office: TUR (Turlington Hall) 4315 // Office Hours: Monday P3 - 4 (9:35 - 11:30 a.m.) & by appt.

Course Website: Canvas

Instructor Email: [cpacheson21@ufl.edu](mailto:cpacheson21@ufl.edu)

### **Course Description**

From the contact period to contemporary writings, the American literary tradition has taken the natural world as a key theme. Considering nature's importance to establishing an American mythos and identity, American cultural interaction with the environment is often tumultuous and paradoxical. 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 will. 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 and placing it in dialogue with the pressing issue of 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, racial, 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.

### **General Education Objectives:**

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

#### **General Education Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

#### **Required Texts:**

*You will need to purchase the following texts. The ISBN is the preferred edition but not required (except for Style). Purchasing digital or previously loved versions of these texts is not only welcomed, but encouraged to help our classroom be as environmentally friendly as possible.*

- Neufeld, Josh. *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*. ISBN: 037571488X
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. ISBN: 0143104918
- VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation*. ISBN: 0374104093
- Williams, Joseph M. and Joseph Bizup. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (12<sup>th</sup> edition). ISBN: 0134080416

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

- Bartram, William. *Selected Writings*.

- Chopin, Kate. "The Storm."
- Faulkner, William. "A Rose for Emily."
- Frost, Robert. Selected Poems.
- Hemingway, Ernest. "Two Big-Hearted River."
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
- Iroquois Creation Myths.
- London, Jack. Selected Short Stories.
- Stevens, Wallace. Selected Poems.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*.
- Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself."

### **Assignments (1000 points total)**

#### **Reading Responses (6 total): 150 points (1800 words)**

Preparation to participate in our class meeting is essential, so throughout the semester, you will be assigned six reading response papers of 300 words each. In these response papers, you will write your reaction to the plot and analyze the themes addressed in the assigned selection. Most importantly, you will need to connect the previous meeting's reading assignment to the new one. As such, active participation and note taking will be essential to earning an A or B letter grade on these responses. The 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.

#### **Single Scene Analysis Project: 150 pts (700 words)**

For your first major project of the semester, you will choose a specific scene from one of the course's primary texts (you can choose anything from the list, even if we haven't discussed it

yet in class) and write an analysis of how the creator uses elements of the medium to depict the environment or nature. Analysis of an idea is the core skill we need when developing our critical writing abilities. So, relying solely on the chosen scene for the project, you will develop and defend a unique argument about how the creator represents the environment or nature.

**Comparison Project: 200 pts (1,100 words)**

Building on your analysis skills developed in the first project, your second major project of the semester requires you to compare two of the course's primary texts and examine how they similarly and/or differently address the environment or nature. In the development of our critical writing skills, we need to move past simply analyzing a text and practice our abilities to understand the commonalities between ideas. Thus, relying on the two chosen texts, you will develop an argumentative paper that first analyzes the two texts, and, then, articulates the similarities or differences between the texts and why those similarities or differences matter. As with the first project, you may choose any text from the course required list (even the same text you chose for the analysis project).

**Research Project: 250 points (1,500 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 two 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: 150 points (900 words)**

For your final paper of the semester, you will have to highlight your rhetorical adaptability and write a brief review of Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation* from the perspective of an author we have previously studied in the semester. You may choose any author we have previously read. You may choose Josh Neufeld, but you must meet with the instructor to discuss creating a comic for this project. This project requires you to write (or draw in the case of Neufeld) in the style of your chosen author, so having a solid understanding of their style, in addition to *Annihilation*, will be essential.

**Course Policies:**

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Participation*: Daily participation during class meetings is expected of all students. Should participation not meet instructor expectations, the instructor may implement daily graded quizzes.
3. *Attendance*: Each student has three non-penalized absences; however, for each absence after the third, a student's final grade will be lowered by 10%. When a student reaches six absences, they automatically fail the course. Students that are more than ten minutes late to a meeting will be given a tardiness check. Two checks equal an absence.  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

4. *Paper Format & Submission*: As this is an English course, all essays submitted for grading are expected to meet MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition guidelines. All projects are to be uploaded to the appropriate Canvas drop box before the due date listed.
5. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Projects submitted late will incur a 10% penalty for each day overdue. Late reading responses will not be accepted unless prior arraignments have been made with the instructor or due to an immediate medical emergency.
6. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
7. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
8. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
9. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
10. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
11. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
12. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
13. *Classroom Behavior*: Students are expected to respect their peers, the instructor, and the classroom environment. When not used for activities, all phones need to be silenced and put away. Our classroom provides computers for every student, but laptops or other learning technologies are welcome. During class and viewing times, all technology must be used for the activity at hand exclusively.
14. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
15. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

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

<b>Week 1: Welcome</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 1/7	<b>NO CLASS MEETING TODAY AS INSTRUCTOR RETURNS FROM CONFERENCE</b>	
W 1/9	Introduction to the Course and discuss the course readings due for today (see the right column).	3 Iroquois Creation Myths
F 1/11	Introduce the overarching theme of the course: the environment.	Frost Poems: "The Song of Trees," and "Fire and Ice"; Wallace Poem: "Farewell to Florida"

<b>Week 2: William Bartram</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 1/14	Introduce Bartram and Travel Writing	Bartram: Chapters 1-5
W 1/16	Instructor Example of Discussion Leader	Bartram: Chapters 6-8
F 1/18	Writing Workshop with Bartram	Style: Lessons 1-2

<b>Week 3: William Bartram and Henry David Thoreau</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 1/21	MEETING IN SMATHERS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND VIEWING RARE EDITIONS – directions and locations in your email.	Bartram: Chapters 9-11
W 1/23	Introducing Thoreau Discussion Leader:	Thoreau: Pages 1-50
F 1/25	Writing Workshop with Thoreau	Style: Lessons 3-4

<b>Week 4: Henry David Thoreau</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 1/28	Discussion Leader:	Thoreau: Pages: 51-126
W 1/30	Concluding Thoreau Discussion Leader:	Thoreau: 127-164
F 2/1	Analysis Project Workshop	Bring a completed draft of the Single Scene Analysis Project
<b>Single Scene Analysis Project Due by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 2 to CANVAS</b>		

<b>Week 5: Jack London</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 2/4	Discussion Leader:	London's "The Law of Life" and "To Build a Fire"
W 2/6	Discussion Leader:	London's "An Odyssey of the North"

F 2/8	Writing Workshop with London	Style: Lessons 5-7
-------	------------------------------	--------------------

<b>Week 6: Walt Whitman and Zora Neale Hurston</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 2/11	Discussion Leader:	Whitman: Stanzas 1-26
W 2/13	Discussion Leader:	Whitman: Stanzas 27-52
F 2/15	Introducing Hurston Discussion Leader:	Hurston: Chapters 1-7

<b>Week 7: Zora Neale Hurston</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 2/18	Discussion Leader:	Hurston: Chapters 8-10
W 2/20	Discussion Leader:	Hurston: Chapters 11-16
F 2/22	Writing Workshop with Hurston	Hurston: Chapters 17-20; Style: Lessons 8-10

<b>Week 8: Selected Short Stories</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 2/25	Discussion Leader:	Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River"
W 2/27	Discussion Leader:	Chopin's "The Storm"
F 3/1	Compare and Contrast Project Workshop	Bring a completed draft of the Compare and Contrast Project
<b>Compare and Contrast Project Due by 11:59 PM on Friday, March 1 to CANVAS</b>		

<b>Week 9: SPRING BREAK!</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 3/4	<b>NO CLASS MEETINGS FOR SPRING BREAK</b>	
W 3/6		
F 3/8		

<b>Week 10: Leslie Marmon Silko</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 3/11	Introducing Silko	Silko: Pages 1-44
W 3/13	Discussion Leader:	Silko: Pages 45-85
F 3/15	Discussion Leader:	Silko: Pages 86-120

<b>Week 11: Leslie Marmon Silko</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 3/18	Discussion Leader:	Silko: Pages 121-150
W 3/20	Discussion Leader:	Silko: Pages 151-199

F 3/22	Research Workshop and Conclude Silko	Silko: Pages 200-243
--------	--------------------------------------	----------------------

<b>Week 12: Josh Neufeld</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 3/25	Introducing Neufeld and Comics Making Activity	
W 3/27	Discussion Leader:	Neufeld: Intro to Page 61
F 3/29	Research Project Outline Workshop and Neufeld	Neufeld Pages: 62-90

<b>Week 13: Josh Neufeld</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 4/1	Discussion Leader:	Neufeld: Pages 91-153
W 4/3	Discussion Leader:	Neufeld: Pages 154-193
F 4/5	Research Project Workshop	Bring a completed draft of the Research Project
<b>Research Project Due by 11:59 PM on Friday, April 5 to CANVAS</b>		

<b>Week 14: Jeff VanderMeer</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 4/8	Introducing VanderMeer	VanderMeer: Chapter 1
W 4/10	Discussion Leader:	VanderMeer: Chapter 2
F 4/12	Discussion Leader:	VanderMeer: Chapter 3

<b>Week 15: Jeff VanderMeer</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 4/15	Discussion Leader:	VanderMeer: Chapter 4
W 4/17	Discussion Leader:	VanderMeer: Chapter 5
F 4/19	From Bartram to VanderMeer: Alien Landscapes	Review Bartram and VanderMeer notes

<b>Week 16: Conclusions</b>		<b>Readings Due for Class:</b>
M 4/22	Mindtwister Project Workshop	Bring a completed draft of your Mindtwister Project
W 4/24	Course Conclusions and Final Thoughts	
<b>MINDTWISTER PROJECT and REVISION DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 26 to CANVAS</b>		

### 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**

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