

“Writing the Wild”
ENC 3254: Nature Writing
Fall 2020

Instructor: Luke Rodewald
Email: lrodewald@ufl.edu

Class: M/W/F: 1:55-2:45 PM
Office Hours: W/F: 12:50-1:50 PM

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”
— Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (1949)

“Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are
separate from.”
— Terry Tempest Williams, *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (2001)

“To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most
valuable part.”
— Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

“But we little know—until tried—how much of the uncontrollable there is in us...urging across
glaciers and torrents, and up dangerous heights—let the judgment forbid as it may.”
— John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (1894)

The Course

The quotes above serve as both an inspiration and a point of challenge for us as we embark on this course together. Over the next few months, this class will require you to read and think deeply about the landmark figures and contemporary nature and environmental writers. One of our fundamental questions to consider concerns the balance between the personal (read: “human”) and the wild when attempting to write and document the natural world. You’ll interrogate and explore this axis in your own writing through a variety of creative and research-based projects—assignments that will require you to draw connections between your past and present experiences in “nature” (a term we’ll also unpack a bit) and what those moments and memories mean in an increasingly volatile world.

The Goals

What’s the point? Besides hopefully deepening your appreciation for the natural world, there are three overarching learning objectives for this course—which you’ll realize if you attack it with appropriate energy, attention, and commitment. First, you’ll become familiar with the basic tenets of contemporary nature writing by reading and exploring exceptional works of pioneering environmental authors. Second, you’ll hone and sharpen your own writing abilities through the construction of various projects. You will create works of both scientific and nature-based creative nonfiction, utilizing these braids between the personal and the researched to speak to larger shared experiences and knowledge. Finally, this course will deepen your understanding of effective research strategies, editing tactics, and revision principles of a work with the eventual intention of publication.

The Materials

- *Desert Solitaire* (Edward Abbey)
- *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (Terry Tempest Williams)
- A physical, paper-based notebook
- A curious mind

The Preamble

Welcome to another semester of relative uncertainty and chaos. I'm not sure how much online education you've had prior to this, but—full disclosure—this is my first go-around teaching an entirely virtual course. So, there will be bumps and a few experiments along the way, and I simply ask for your patience as we navigate this unfamiliar terrain together.

What can you expect of me? That I will bring my full self to this course from Week 1 until final grades are submitted. I take my commitment to teaching seriously—this is my dream job!—and you can be sure that I will continually reflect on how our work together is going and what changes and modifications might be helpful along the way.

What do I expect of you? Signing up for this course assumes you care—in some part, at least—about the issues and concerns this discipline covers. As such, I expect you to engage willingly and fully with the material by coming to class prepared, while being respectful and active participants even in a remote learning environment. During synchronous class periods, I'm asking you to have your computer's cameras on, your attention fixed on our work together, and your minds open.

I can make you a better writer—but you'll have to be aboard my ship in order for that to happen.

Communication & Office Hours

By far, the best way to get ahold of me is via e-mail. I'll reply to any questions or concerns within 24 hours (scout's honor!). Likewise, it is absolutely critical that you actively monitor *your* email inbox and our course website for changes or information from me throughout the semester. I'll be holding regular, yet virtual office hours this fall during the hour immediately before our class periods on Wednesday and Friday—however, I am also extremely flexible to “meet” outside of these set times. Just let me know when you'd like to talk and we'll make it happen.

The Routine

I recognize that virtual learning poses a number of challenges, especially when we're all trying to engage at the same time—connection to a stable Wi-Fi router, a working computer, and other technological struggles can make this be a taxing task to be consistent with. As such, here's what I'm envisioning for how a “typical week” will work for us:

- **Monday:** synchronous (a live, full class period over Zoom from 1:55-2:45 PM)
- **Wednesday:** synchronous (a live, full class period over Zoom from 1:55-2:45 PM)
- **Friday:** asynchronous (any lecture—if occurring—will be pre-recorded; your work must be completed by 11:59 PM that evening, unless otherwise stated)

However... this template is **subject to change** (and some weeks it will be different, depending on holidays or what we're covering in the course). I'll notify you in advance if, for example, a Friday period will be synchronous, or a Monday will be asynchronous, etc. As mentioned earlier, it is crucial that you actively check your email and our course website for the most current information about what each week or day will look like.

Attendance

For reasons that should be obvious from the previous section, **you are required to be present for class every day that we have a synchronous session**. This is a composition course; much of what we do is geared toward a workshop format and cannot be tailored to you individually, should you miss. Our time together is precious! As such, here is the attendance policy for this semester:

- **Missing more than 3 synchronous class periods will lower your grade**, and excessive absences (the equivalent of two weeks) will result in you being required to drop this course.
 - For example, if your absences are 4-5, your grade will be lowered by two increments for each of those absences. (A B+ becomes a B-, a C becomes a D+, etc.)
- The policy of the University Writing Program is that **if a student misses more than 6 periods during a semester, they will fail the entire course**.
 - The UWP exempts from this policy *only* those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, or religious holidays. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me prior to the date that will be missed.
- If there is a medical condition that causes you to miss a prolonged series of class periods, you must speak to the Disability Resources Center at the beginning of the semester to officially request an accommodation. I will work with the DRC to arrive at an accommodation that allows you to be successful without altering the rigor and basic requirements of the class.
- Regardless of reason, if you miss a class, it is still **your** responsibility to e-mail me and find out what occurred and what is expected for next time. I will respond within 24 hours (promise!) and get you the materials necessary for the next class period. Additionally, if something is due at the class period you miss, it's your responsibility to e-mail me the assignment (**on time**) if you want to receive credit for it. This course moves quickly, and I'll do my part to keep you on pace if you fall behind—just stay in touch.

Major Assignments and Course Grade Categories

Your final course grade is composed of the following major assignment categories:

Plot Project	20% (1,000 words, plus creation of the project itself)
Essay 1	15% (1,500 words)
Essay 2	25% (2,500 words)
Close-Reading Assignment	5% (500 words)
Nature/Observation Journal	10% (no word limit)
Workshop Feedback Letters	5% (one single-spaced page, each)
Reading Responses	10%
Participation	10%

Grading and Evaluation

Earning A's and B's at this level requires strong, consistent effort. Your assignments will include specific evaluation criteria, and I will provide detailed feedback on your work that illuminates progress, achievement, and areas for revision. In the past, students who have received A's put significant time and effort into this course right from the start, and simply kept at it. Be realistic in your expectations about grades; start assignments early and work steadily to avoid last-minute rushing.

In addition, the writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit: 6,000 out of the total 24,000. To satisfy this requirement, *every* project's word count must be fulfilled in your assignment's final copy. Submitted assignments that fail to reach the minimum word count will receive a score of zero.

A	The qualities of a B project, plus imagination, originality, and engaging expression. The work exhibits depth of thought, command of language, and a keen eye for communicating through the selected medium.
B	A sufficient, thorough execution of the assignment’s objectives. The work demonstrates coherent organization, ample supporting details, and a clear expression of ideas.
C	A satisfactory fulfillment of the assignment’s objectives, with baseline organization and style. A “C” means your work met the demands of the assignment in a minimally acceptable way.
D	The presence of a significant defect in context, substance, organization, style, or delivery in a lackluster paper; the project demonstrates an inadequate treatment of the assignment.
F	Inadequate coverage of essential points; uncertain or misguided purpose; poor organization; ineffective and inconsistent expression; significant defects in standard usage.

Note: you must pass this course with a “C” or better to satisfy the **General Education** requirement for Composition and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit. **A grade of “C-” will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition Requirement.**

I would like to be impressed by the complexity of your thinking. Please try.

If at any point you’re curious about your grade in the course or would like more detailed feedback on completed assignments or works in progress—just ask! I’m fully committed to helping you succeed this semester and welcome the opportunity to help you improve in whatever ways I can.

Course Engagement

“Participation” is a fairly loaded term, and so I steer away from it. Rather, this course’s success will largely depend on how fully you engage with the material, with each other, and with me. Specifically, your engagement counts toward slightly under 10% of your overall course grade and is measured in a variety of ways: informal discussions during our scheduled class period, formal discussion activities (whether or synchronous or asynchronous), reading response prompts, and other opportunities where you are able to demonstrate the effort you’ve put forth in this course. It’s not necessarily “talking in class” (although that helps!). Rather, I’m looking for active involvement in our course; showing up to class prepared and contributing in small group and whole group discussions and activities—that’s “participation,” to me.

Academic Honesty & Integrity

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the UF Student Honor Code. Detecting it is often fairly easy—all of your major assignments are sent into a copyright analysis system—and once found, most violations are automatically reported to the Academic Dean. UF’s Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.

You are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Conduct & Honor Code, which can be found at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/>.

Understanding what falls under the category of plagiarism and academic dishonesty will help prevent you from committing these acts inadvertently—and will also strengthen your own writing. If you have any questions about using work other than your own in a paper, **see me** before you turn in an assignment. “I didn’t know!” is not an excuse, and will not be counted as one, so **ask**.

Diversity Affirmation

The University of Florida does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. Effective learning environments value and support diversity, and free, open discussion is a hallmark of a functioning democratic society. It’s my goal to cultivate a comfortable, lively “classroom” (even in the bizarre world of virtual learning) where we can all exchange ideas freely.

Please keep in mind that the individuals in this course come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we discuss and write about engage in controversial topics and opinions. A myriad of student backgrounds combined with provocative texts *require* that you demonstrate respect for ideas that might differ from your own. College is a time to broaden your perspectives, challenge your ideas, and consider the viewpoints and opinions of those you haven’t engaged with before. View this as an opportunity for growth—and embrace it.

Disability Affirmation

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Those requesting accommodation should contact the Disability Resource Center, **001 Reid Hall**. That office will provide documentation to you, and then you provide this to me when requesting accommodation.

Writing Studio

The University Writing Studio is located in **Turlington 2215** and is available to all UF students. Free appointments with writing tutors can be made up to twice a week for help on structural work on major assignments. See <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> to learn more.

Course Evaluations

You’ll have the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. You will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email you receive from GatorEvals, in your Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

Physical and Mental Health Resources

For guidance during distressing situations, please contact U Matter We Care or the Dean of Students Office. They can help you navigate resources and academic procedures for personal, medical, and academic issues.

- U Matter We Care: <http://umatter.ufl.edu>, umatter@ufl.edu, (352) 294-2273
- Dean of Students: <https://dso.ufl.edu/>, 202 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-1261
- Counseling Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> 3190 Radio Road, (352) 392-1575
- Field and Fork Pantry: <https://fieldandfork.ufl.edu/>, located near McCarty A, (352) 294-3601
- Student Health Care Center: <http://shcc.ufl.edu/>, multiple locations, (352) 392-1161

Course Schedule
ENC 3254: Nature Writing
Fall 2020

The calendar below is **subject to change** and may not necessarily list all readings and shorter assignments. Readings are to be completed **before the class period for which they are listed**, unless mentioned otherwise.

Week	Day	Topics/Readings/Assignments
1 (8/31—9/4)	Monday	Introductions Opening Exercises
	Wednesday	Overview of Environmental and Nature Writing
	Friday	Introduction to Nature Journal Project Introduction to Plot Project Read: Excerpts from <i>Walden</i> , <i>Silent Spring</i> , <i>A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf</i> (on Canvas)
2 (9/7—9/11)	Monday	No Class (Labor Day)
	Wednesday	Imagery Workshops <i>Desert Solitaire</i> Introduction Read: <i>Desert Solitaire</i> : “Author’s Introduction” “The First Morning” (xi—p. 7)
	Friday	Imagery Workshops Read: <i>Orion Magazine</i> “The Place Where You Live” Series & Responses
3 (9/14—9/18)	Monday	Imagery Workshops Read: “Drought” (Lopez, on Canvas)
	Wednesday	Introduction to Essay #1 Read: <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 8—81)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #1
4 (9/21—9/25)	Monday	Openings Exercises Read: TBD (Canvas)
	Wednesday	Landscape Autobiographies Read: <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 82—150)
	Friday	Closings Exercises Read: “The Storyteller” “River People” (Bass, on Canvas)
5 (9/28—10/2)	Monday	Workshop Essay #1 (full draft due)
	Wednesday	Read: <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 151—205)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #2
6 (10/5—10/9)	Monday	Character and Dialogue Read: “Mono Lake” (Twain, on Canvas) Due: Essay #1
	Wednesday	Read: <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 206—269)
	Friday	People and Place Introduction to Essay #2 Read: “Tales from a Black Girl on Fire...” (Dungy, on Canvas)

7 (10/12—10/16)	Monday	Creating Storytelling and Meaning Read: “A Presentation of Whales” (Lopez, on Canvas)
	Wednesday	<i>Refuge</i> Introduction Read: <i>Refuge</i> (p. 3—57) “Winter Solstice at the Moab Slough” (Williams, on Canvas)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #3
8 (10/19—10/23)	Monday	Research Overview
	Wednesday	Read: <i>Refuge</i> (p. 58—114)
	Friday	Research Exercises Read: “Trapline: An Ojibwe Man’s Search for Identity...” (Treuer, on Canvas)
9 (10/26—10/30)	Monday	Activist Writing Introduction Read: “White Butte” (Brorby, on Canvas) Due: Nature Journal
	Wednesday	Read: <i>Refuge</i> (p. 115—173)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #4
10 (11/2—11/6)	Monday	Activism Writing Read: “70117” (Verdelle, on Canvas) “Burning the Shelter” (Owens, on Canvas)
	Wednesday	Read: <i>Refuge</i> (p. 174—232)
	Friday	Activism Writing Read: “The Secret History of Lead” (Kitman, on Canvas)
11 (11/9—11/13)	Monday	Read: <i>Refuge</i> (p. 233—290)
	Wednesday	No Class (Veterans Day)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #5
12 (11/16—11/20)	Monday	Revision Introduction Landscape Inventory Exercises
	Wednesday	21 st Century Nature Writing Read: “Consider the Lobster” (Foster Wallace, on Canvas)
	Friday	Revision Exercises Read: “The Case for Going Uncivilized” (Lopez, on Canvas) TBD (Dillard, on Canvas)
13 (11/23—11/27)	Monday	Introduction to Peer Workshop Groups for Essay #2 (full draft due)
	Wednesday	No Class (Thanksgiving Break) Feedback Letters E-mailed by 11:59 PM on 11/29)
	Friday	
14 (11/30—12/4)	Monday	Student Essay Readings
	Wednesday	Student Essay Readings
	Friday	Submission and Publication Information
15 (12/7—12/11)	Monday	Plot Projects
	Wednesday	Plot Projects Culminating Responses