

LIT 3400: The Literature of Sustainability & Resilience

Professor Terry Harpold

Fall 2020, Section 11BB

Time: MWF, per. 4 (10:40–11:30 AM)

office hours: M, 2:30–4:30 PM, and by appt. (via Zoom, no F2F meetings)

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home page for Terry Harpold: <https://users.clas.ufl.edu/tharpold/>

e-Learning (Canvas) site for LIT 3400 (registered students only): <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

Imagining Climate Change: <https://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu/>

Course Description

“Dystopia is for losers.” – Doug Henwood¹



The Pando, a clonal colony of *Populus tremuloides* (Quaking Aspen) in south-central Utah. Encompassing 43 hectares (106 acres) and 40,000 stems (trunks), at 80,000 years old it is believed to be among the oldest living organisms in the world. (Source: Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.)

This course takes as its founding premises two unassailable principles. First, we live in a time of increasing environmental instability, mass extinction, food insecurity, forced migration, and social and economic unrest fostered by climate change. Second, the literary imagination is among our most powerful and adaptive responses to the planetary realities of the twenty-first century and a path forward to a more just, sustainable, and resilient future.

We will read widely from an established and emerging canon of literary nonfiction, fiction, poetry, criticism, and theory that

address the perils and vitality of the late Anthropocene. Authors we will read include ecologists, conservationists, and naturalists such as Erle Ellis, Greta Gaard, Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Natasha Myers, Arne Næss, and Henry David Thoreau; fiction authors and graphic novelists such as Jean Giono, Leena Krohn, Ann Pancake, Richard Powers, and

¹ From his foreword to Sasha Lilley, *et al.*, *Catastrophism: The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth*. PM Press, 2012.

Joe Sacco; artists and poets such as Madhur Anand, John Ashbery, Margaret Atwood, Sandra Beasley, Robinson Jeffers, Ayelen Liberona, Donato Mancini, W.S. Merwin, Ed Roberson, François Villon, and Walt Whitman.

Graded assignments include four critical essays on assigned readings and a creative photo-essay project.

This course qualifies as a 3-credit Humanities core course for UF's Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies.

Required Texts to Purchase

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from online vendors. Used and electronic versions (Apple Books, Kindle, pdfs, etc.) are permissible – indeed they are encouraged² – so long as the version of the text you read is *otherwise identical to the editions noted below*. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy physical texts online, I recommend sources such as Abebooks.com and Alibris.com that serve independent booksellers.

Ellis, Erle C. *Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN 9780198792987. 208 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Giono, Jean. *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Illustrated by Michael McCurdy, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007. ISBN 9781933392813. 72 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Krohn, Leena. *Tainaron: Mail from Another City*. Translated by Hildi Hawkins, Cheeky Frawg Books, 2012. ISBN 9780985790448. Approx. 100 pp. (print). *Note: An easily-accessible edition of this title is available **only** in Kindle format. Print editions, now out of print, are prohibitively expensive.*

Pancake, Ann. *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Shoemaker & Hoard, 2007. ISBN 9781593761660. 360 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Powers, Richard. *The Overstory*. Norton, 2018. ISBN 9780393356687. 512 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Sacco, Joe. *Paying the Land*. Metropolitan Books, 2020. ISBN 9781627799034. 272 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

² See my “Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom,” below.

Other required and recommended texts and films

These texts and films are available for free via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>) or at the URLs indicated below. All are PDF files with searchable text layers or in comparable formats capable of being parsed by screen readers.

- Anand, Madhur. "Somewhere, a Lake." *A New Index for Predicting Catastrophe*, McClelland & Stewart, 2015, pp. 30–32. Ares.
- Ashbery, John. "Into the Dusk-Charged Air" (1985), *The Mooring of Starting Out: The First Five Books of Poetry*, Ecco Press, 1997, pp. 173–77. Ares.
- Atwood, Margaret, "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises," *Selected Poems, 1965–1975*, Houghton Mifflin, 1987, p. 56. Ares.
- Back, Frédéric, dir. *The Man Who Planted Trees*, CBC / NFB / Société Radio Canada, 1987. Available at <https://vimeo.com/57251210>.
- Baichwal, Jennifer. Dir. *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*. Kino Lorber, 2018. 87 mins. Ares.
- Beasley, Sandra. "Unit of Measure." *Poetry*, vol. 194, no. 4, 2009, pp. 276–77. Ares.
- Gaard, Greta. "Explosion." *The Nature of Home: Taking Root in a Place*, The University of Arizona Press, 2007, pp. 133–42. Ares.
- Jeffers, Robinson. "Carmel Point" (1938), *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Tim Hunt, Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 676. Ares.
- Leopold, Aldo. "On a Monument to the Pigeon." *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 108–12. Ares.
- . "Thinking Like a Mountain." *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 129–33. Ares.
- Liberona, Ayelen, and Natasha Myers. "Becoming Sensor in Sentient Worlds." Available at <https://becomingsensor.com>.
- Mancini, Donato. *Snowline*. Eth Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0692374528. 56 pp. Available at <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/25528>.
- Merwin, W.S. "Unchopping a Tree" (1970), *The Essential W.S. Merwin*, edited by Michael Wieggers, Copper Canyon Press, 2017, pp. 142–45.

- Muir, John. "Cedar Keys." *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1916, pp. 123–42. Available at <https://archive.org/details/thousandmilewal00muir/page/n11>.
- Myers, Natasha. "How to Grow Livable Worlds: Ten Not-So-Easy Steps." *The World to Come: Art in the Age of the Anthropocene*, edited by Kerry Oliver-Smith, Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, 2018, pp. 52–64. Ares.
- Næss, Arne. "Deep Ecology for the Twenty-Second Century." *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writing by Arne Næss*, edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, Counterpoint, 2008, pp. 308–13. Ares.
- Prem, Maverick, and Vidya Sarveswaran, dirs. *Under Another Sky*, Big Short Films, 2020. Available at https://youtu.be/OQZdDmC_W5w.
- Roberson, Ed. "To See the Earth Before the End of the World." *Callaloo*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2010, pp. 638–39. Ares.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "The Pond in Winter" (1854), *Walden*, edited by Bill McKibben, Beacon Press, 2017, pp. 265–79. Ares.
- . "Walking" (1851), *Collected Essays and Poems*, edited by Elizabeth Hall Witherell, The Library of America, 2001, pp. 225–55. Ares.
- Villon, François. "Ballade [des dames du temps jadis]" (c. 1461), *Complete Poems*, edited and translated by Barbara N. Sargent-Baur, University of Toronto Press, 1994, pp. 74–77. Ares.
- Whitman, Walt. "A child said *What is the grass?*" "Song of Myself" sec. 6, *Leaves of Grass* (1891–92 edition), *The Walt Whitman Archive*. Available at <https://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1891/poems/27>.

Course Calendar

Deadlines and events outside of normal class meeting times are marked with an asterisk (). Assigned readings should be completed by the start of the class meeting in which they are to be discussed. In the case of readings discussed over several class meetings you should have completed a corresponding portion of the reading for each of the meetings in which it is discussed (e.g., 2/3 of the text for the second of three meetings.)*

We must unhumanize our views a little

M, Aug 31 *Course introduction*

W, Sept 2	Jeffers, "Carmel Point"
F, Sept 4	Beasley, "Unit of Measure"
M, Sept 7	<i>No class meeting – Labor Day Holiday</i>
W, Sept 9	Ellis, <i>The Anthropocene</i>
F, Sept 11	Ellis, <i>The Anthropocene</i>
M, Sept 14	Baichwal, <i>Anthropocene: The Human Epoch</i>
W, Sept 16	Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" <i>Description of creative photo-essay project</i>
F, Sept 18	Krohn, <i>Tainaron: Mail from Another City</i>
M, Sept 21	Krohn, <i>Tainaron: Mail from Another City</i>
* Tu, Sept 22	<i>Critical essay #1 due by 5 PM</i>

The Overstory

W, Sept 23	Myers, "How to Grow Livable Worlds: Ten Not-So-Easy-Steps" <i>Recommended viewing: Liberona and Myers, "Becoming Sensor in Sentient Worlds"</i>
F, Sept 25	Giono, <i>The Man Who Planted Trees</i> <i>Recommended viewing: Back, The Man Who Planted Trees</i> <i>Recommended viewing: Prem and Sarveswaran, Under Another Sky</i>
M, Sept 28	Powers, <i>The Overstory</i>
W, Sept 30	Powers, <i>The Overstory</i>
F, Oct 2	Powers, <i>The Overstory</i>
M, Oct 5	Powers, <i>The Overstory</i>

W, Oct 7 Powers, *The Overstory*

F, Oct 9 Merwin, "Unchopping a Tree"
Creative photo-essay projects due by 5 PM

M, Oct 12 *In-class review of photo-essay projects*
Recommended reading: Thoreau, "Walking"

W, Oct 14 *In-class review of photo-essay projects*

F, Oct 16 *In-class review of photo-essay projects*

Paying the Land

M, Oct 19 Gaard, "Explosion"

*Tu, Oct 20 ***Critical essay #2 due by 5 PM***

W, Oct 21 Sacco, *Paying the Land*

F, Oct 23 Sacco, *Paying the Land*

M, Oct 26 Sacco, *Paying the Land*

W, Oct 28 Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*

F, Oct 30 Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*

M, Nov 2 Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*

W, Nov 4 Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been*

The transmundane furnace

F, Nov 6 Atwood, "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises"

M, Nov 9 Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon"

W, Nov 11 *No class meeting – Veterans Day*

F, Nov 13 Roberson, "To See the Earth Before the End of the World"

M, Nov 16 Muir, "Cedar Keys"

*Tu, Nov 17 ***Critical essay #3 due by 5 PM***

Ubi sunt?

W, Nov 18 Ashbery, "Into the Dusk-Charged Air"

F, Nov 20 Anand, "Somewhere, a Lake"

M, Nov 23 Thoreau, "The Pond in Winter" (from *Walden*)

W Nov 25 *No class meeting – Thanksgiving*

F, Nov 27 *No class meeting – Thanksgiving*

M, Nov 30 Villon, "Ballade [des dames du temps jadis]"
Mancini, *Snowline*

Coda

W, Dec 2 Næss, "Deep Ecology for the Twenty-Second Century"

F, Dec 4 Whitman, "A child said *What is the grass?*" (from "Song of Myself")

M, Dec 7 *Course debriefing*

W, Dec 9 *Course debriefing*

*Tu, Dec 15 ***Critical essay #4 due by 5 PM***

Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by four assignments, each representing a portion of the grade:

Signature reading exercise:	3%
Critical essays on assigned readings (× 4 @ 20%)	80%
Creative photo-essay project	17%

Signature reading exercise. This is a short writing exercise that will help participants in the course understand your reading habits and identify our common interests; it's essentially a report on your recent reading for pleasure. (I will complete the exercise also.) The exercise is due at the beginning of the second week of classes. Students who register for the course nearer to the end of drop/add can make up this assignment during the second week of classes. If you complete this exercise and meet its (very) basic requirements, you will receive a grade of 100 on the assignment. In effect, the assignment is worth three points toward your final grade. The procedure for the signature reading assignment will be reviewed in the second class meeting.

Critical essays. During the semester you are required to complete four critical essays on texts and films we have read/viewed and discussed in class, not including the flash climate fiction exercises we will review together. Each essay must be 4–5 double-spaced pages in length, not including a Works Cited section, and must demonstrate a close critical reading of a passage or passages from the text or film that you find of particular interest or significance in relation to the themes and methods of the course. Each of the essays must be submitted by four deadlines that divide the semester roughly into quarters: the first essay within the first quarter of the semester, the second within the second quarter, and so on. You may submit any of the essays before these deadlines so long as the text(s) you are writing on were assigned to be read within that portion of the semester. Early in the semester I will distribute a model for the critical essays illustrating my expectations for them.

You are free to write these essays on any text or film among the assigned readings; you do not have to notify me in advance of which texts you are writing on. You must keep track of all deadlines related to this course requirement. I will review, grade, and return the essays on a rolling basis throughout the semester.

Creative photo-essay project. This is an exercise in embodied encounters with our region's diverse natural environments. You will be required to turn away from the screens that are the primary portals of our exchanges this semester, and to move about for a time

in the real world, beneath and among Gainesville's diverse and exuberant forest canopy.³ Your essay will record small, focused observations of forms of life at your feet and overhead in the forest canopy in a short prose statement and photographs or video. Specific requirements of this assignment will be described in detail in mid-September. I will collate students' projects and we will spend a full week of the course reviewing and responding to them.

Trees! (extra-credit option). A growing body of scientific evidence shows that encouraging the regeneration of natural forests and planting new trees on treeless lands are among the most economical and effective climate change mitigation solutions available to us.⁴ You may receive extra course credit by taking part in a local effort to increase our forest canopy.

The Office of the Alachua County Arborist, Department of Parks and Conservation Lands, supervises volunteer tree plantings in and around the city of Gainesville. The plantings emphasize high-value tree species appropriate for site conditions on County owned right-of-ways, developed County properties, and properties directly influencing the public sphere. Of priority are trees that provide shade for bicycling and human pedestrians, provide erosion control, extend forest canopy, and support wildlife biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

This program adheres to strict protocols for the safety of participants during the COVID-19 crisis. Appropriate social distancing will be enforced. If you do not arrive at the planting site wearing your own mask, one will be provided to you. Masks *must* be worn during the planting.

Tree plantings are fun, low-effort undertakings to beautify our community and to help foster a sustainable local ecosystem for decades to come.⁵ Pretty much, you help to dig a hole a few feet deep, drop in a juvenile tree, refill, brace, bank the tree with mulch, water, and repeat. No prior tree planting experience is necessary. Needed tools, reflective safety vests, and vegan snacks are provided. A filled personal water bottle is strongly recommended, as access to potable water on site may be limited. You should wear lightweight but sturdy outdoor clothing and closed-toed shoes. Gloves suitable for garden

³ Gainesville has been an Arbor Day Foundation "Tree City USA" (<https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/about.cfm>) since 1983. it was named a "Tree City of the World" (<https://www.arborday.org/programs/tree-cities-of-the-world/about.cfm>) in 2020.

⁴ Bastin, Jean-François, *et al.*, "The Global Tree Restoration Potential." *Science* 365, 76–79 (2019) <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6448/76>.

⁵ Andreu, M.G. *et al.*, *Urban Forest Ecological Analysis. Report to the City of Gainesville, March 2017*. City of Gainesville, Florida, 2017. <http://sfrc.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/GNV-ECO-Report-2016.pdf>.

work, a hat, protective eyewear (eyeglasses or sunglasses), sunscreen, and insect repellent are recommended. Typically, a planting takes 3–4 hours, usually beginning around 9 AM. You must complete a volunteer release form before the planting begins. See <http://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu/trees> for planting dates and locations and for a photographic gallery of previous plantings. *The Office of the Alachua County Arborist is unaffiliated with the University of Florida.*

You will receive extra credit for participating in up to two sponsored plantings during the semester. For each planting, you will earn 2.5 points of extra credit applied *after* the calculation of your final grade. In other words, a student with a final average of 85 (a B+) who takes part in two plantings will have her or his grade raised to a 90 (an A).

If you are unable to participate in the tree plantings, you may receive comparable extra credit for completing up to two additional short critical essays, as per the requirements described above. These essays are graded assignments: each is worth *up to* 2.5 points, less the difference between a grade of 100 and your actual grade on each essay. (Thus, two critical essays submitted for extra credit that earn grades of 84 are worth a total of 4.2 extra points.)

Course reading load & warning. The course reading load is substantial but not onerous. The pace of our discussions will vary according to the complexity of texts we read and the need to focus on selected portions of the texts. The page counts shown above are fair measures of reading load but they may be deceiving. Some of the texts we will read are illustrated, some – especially the electronic facsimiles of original editions – use larger margins and font sizes than would modern editions, some include extensive scholarly apparatus. (Which of course you *should* also read.) You should always aim to have completed reading each text by the last class period in which it is scheduled to be discussed.

A few of the texts we will read include representations of class, race, and gender that are by contemporary standards outdated and mildly offensive. A few of the texts include depictions of physical violence and indirect depictions of sexual violence.

Fall 2020 Imagining Climate Change events. Several UF events this semester sponsored by the Imagining Climate Change initiative (<https://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu>) are of direct relevance to this course. It is likely that ICC's lectures, seminars, and roundtables, featuring prominent climate activists, artists, researchers, and scholars, will be subjects of

our discussions. I strongly recommend that you review the ICC schedule of events and plan on attending as many as possible.

Grading scheme and graded assignments. The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF's policies on grading (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E).

If you do not complete an assignment you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may make up a missed assignment only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in the submission of graded work.

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading or do not come to class prepared and on time. Class discussions will often include materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. **I take attendance. After four missed class meetings, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.** I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special requirements because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) and provide me with appropriate documentation.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances you must notify me of this conflict in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

Use of computers and other electronic devices in class. This is an entirely online course. The use of personal computers and other electronic devices in class is acceptable for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to class activities will not be tolerated. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and similar communication devices may not be used during class meetings, and must be set to silent ring at the start of class.

Online process and etiquette. Zoom is not an optimal environment for rigorous, free-ranging class discussions. I have constructed the syllabus and required assignments to encourage your active participation and collaboration during our online meetings and in asynchronous settings such as threaded discussions in Canvas. I will make every effort to foster collegial, effective, and wide-ranging discussion, and to give every student her or his best opportunity to participate. I ask that you make a comparable effort to engage with me and others in the classroom respectfully, constructively, and in the spirit of shared inquiry and purpose.

Course evaluation. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful 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/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy on academic honesty. The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic

honesty, are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Emergency services. **U Matter, We Care** serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor overnight and during weekends.

Note also these support services:

- The University Counseling Center – 301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>
- Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1171
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union – 352-392-1601
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1161
- University Police Department – 352-392-1111 (non-emergency); *call 9-1-1 for emergencies*

Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom. When possible I will distribute all course materials via paper-sparing digital media. I encourage you to purchase e-book editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the

course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers' hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county's excellent but criminally underfunded public libraries.) If you do elect to keep your books, share them with others after the course is over. And a final appeal to your common sense: bring food and/or beverages to the classroom only in reusable containers. Please, no food or beverages in single-use containers and no single-use, unrecyclable cutlery or straws.