

# AML 2410

## The Environmental Memoir

Instructor: Luke Rodewald ([lrodewald@ufl.edu](mailto:lrodewald@ufl.edu))

Class Times:

- Tuesday 3:00–4:55 PM (Anderson Hall 0032)
- Thursday 4:05–4:55 PM (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering 0229)

Office Hours: Thursday 2:00–4:00 (Turlington Hall 4008)

### Course Description

“It seems to me our family is not just people, but a place.”

- Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007)

“What happens when we truly become native to a place, when we finally make a home? What are the stories that lead the way?”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013)

This course is a meditation on memory and place.

Although memoir is rooted in the personal, its insights, ideas, and revelations naturally gravitate outward to the world. Embracing this tension, the environmental memoir directly explores the intersections of an individual’s interior landscape with their surrounding exterior. Braiding together personal experience, scientific research, and a deep consideration of place, the environmental memoir emphasizes the importance of storytelling in communicating the often-overlooked ties between the human and nonhuman world.

Environmentalist David Orr urges, “The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind.” In an era engulfed by escalating ecological crises and the encroaching disasters of climate change, how can we make sense of what it means to belong on a drastically changing planet? This course considers this question in many ways. We will examine a range of environmental memoirs—spanning from foundational texts to contemporary iterations—and contemplate how writers forge connections with a global readership. This course is also an opportunity for you to explore your own “natural history,” experimenting with style and voice. We will challenge our understanding of the links between ourselves and our environment by considering both the landscape and the geological, historical, anthropological, and even political influences of our world at large, contemplating what it means to contextualize our personal stories in new ways.

### What’s Inside?

- 2.....Course Objectives
- 2.....Materials Needed
- 2.....Statement of Support
- 3.....Communication
- 3.....Attendance
- 4.....Major Assignments
- 4.....Grading & Evaluation
- 5.....Assignment Notes
- 5.....Course Engagement
- 6.....Academic Honesty
- 6.....Diversity Affirmation
- 7.....Resources
- 8.....Course Schedule

## Course Objectives

Our work in this class will make you a better writer, reader, and critical thinker, as well as allow you to become familiar with and deepen your understanding of significant environmental conflicts and tensions of the present. Furthermore, our work will examine how such crises are linked to personal narrative, memory, and history by authors who explore the intersections between human and nonhuman worlds.

If pursued with appropriate energy and effort, you will also have achieved the following general learning objectives by the end of this course:

Content: You will be able to demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories, and methodologies used within environmental studies, environmental criticism, memoir writing, and literary scholarship at large.

Communication: You will communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate for the genre of environmental memoir. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester and reflect on assigned readings.

Critical Thinking: You will analyze texts, ideas, and information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, use discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

## Materials Needed

- *World of Wonders: World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments* by Aimee Nezhukumatathil (2020)
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* by Barbara Kingsolver (2007)
- *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* by Lauret Savoy (2015)
- You will also select 1 of the following texts to read during Weeks 4 & 5:
  - *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* by Terry Tempest Williams (1991)
  - *Desert Solitaire* by Ed Abbey (1968)
  - *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard (1974)

## Statement of Support

I am aware that COVID-19 continues to impact our daily lives and remains an incredibly real threat for unvaccinated individuals. You should observe all university-recommended protocols for health and safety throughout this semester. That being said, if you experience any hardships because of the pandemic—or anything related to it—please contact me as soon as possible so that I can make any necessary arrangements contingent on your circumstances. The fact remains that we are still in unprecedented times, and my goal is to be as flexible and understanding as possible, given the circumstances.

What can you expect of me? I will bring my full self to this course, beginning Week 1. 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 facing the planet and are open to thinking about how these conflicts relate to you and everyone else. As such, I expect you to engage willingly and fully with the material, come to class prepared, and be respectful and active participants throughout. During class periods, I simply ask you to have your attention fixed on our work together and that you keep your minds open.

### Communication and Office Hours

The best way to get ahold of me is via Canvas messenger. I'll reply to any questions or concerns within 24 hours (scout's honor!). Likewise, it is absolutely critical that you actively monitor your inbox and our course website for changes or news from me. I'll be holding regular, virtual office hours this fall during the hours immediately before our class periods on Thursday (2:00-4:00 PM), but I am also extremely flexible to meet outside of this set time. Just let me know when you'd like to talk—I'll make it happen.

### Attendance

For obvious reasons, you are required to be present for class. This is, largely, a discussion-based course; much of what we do is geared toward a workshop format and cannot be tailored to you individually, if you miss. Our time together is precious! As such, here is the attendance policy for this semester:

- Missing more than 3 class periods will lower your grade, and excessive absences (the equivalent of two weeks) necessitates dropping the course.
  - As such, if your absences are 4-5, your grade is lowered by two increments for each of those absences. (A B+ becomes a B-, for example.)
  - The policy of the department at large is that if a student misses more than 6 periods during a semester, they are unable to receive credit.
  - The only exemptions from this policy are those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, or religious holidays. Please discuss these instances with me ahead of time.
- If there is a medical condition that causes you to miss a prolonged series of class periods, you must speak with 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 for the class period you miss, it's your responsibility to e-mail me the assignment 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 Course Assignments and Grade Categories

Your final grade for this course is composed of the following major assignments and evaluative categories, all of which will be detailed at length as they arrive in class.

<i>World of Wonders</i> Mimicry Essay	7.5% (750 words)
Analytical Response Paper (select either <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , <i>Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place</i> , or <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> )	7.5% (500 words)
Creative Nonfiction Memoir	20% (2000 words)
Preliminary Place/Plant/Animal Research via Annotated Bibliography	7.5% (1000 words)
Semester-Long Journal	12.5% (various lengths/entry requirements)
Final Project	25% (1000 words, plus visual aid construction)
Minor Assignments and Responses	10%
Course Engagement	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.

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). To satisfy this requirement, every major 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.

<b>A</b> 90-100	The qualities of a B project, <u>plus imagination, originality, and engaging expression</u> . The work exhibits depth of thought, command of language, and a keen eye for communicating through the selected medium.
<b>B</b> 80-90	A sufficient, thorough execution of the assignment's objectives. The work demonstrates coherent organization, ample supporting details, and a clear expression of ideas.
<b>C</b> 70-80	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.
<b>D</b> 60-70	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.
<b>F</b> 0-59	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/Humanities 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.

Grades will usually be posted and recorded on our Canvas site, but 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.

### Assignment Notes

All papers will be submitted as a MS Word (.doc) documents on Canvas. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced, 1-inch margins, and pages numbered.

For some of our larger assignments, there will be benchmarks along the way to aid you in your progress (for example: topic proposals, introduction/thesis drafts, peer review, etc.). If at any time you’re unprepared for these benchmarks or miss their deadline, the overall letter grade will drop for the assignment by roughly 1/3: A to A-, B+ to B, etc.).

Regarding late work: I understand that “things” happen, and you might forget to submit or have a major assignment at hand on the day it is due. Here’s my policy: you each get two (2) days of no-questions asked extensions on major assignments. The only requirement is that you e-mail before the assignment’s original deadline and let me know you’re using the extension. After that, however, major assignments will be penalized one letter grade (e.g., from B to C) for each day they are late.

### 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 10% of your overall course grade and is measured in a variety of ways: informal discussions during our scheduled class periods, formal discussion activities, 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 to small group and whole group discussions and activities—that’s “participation,” to me.

## Academic Honesty and 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, 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 patchwriting. 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 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. For more information, see: <https://disability.ufl.edu/>.



## Sexual Harassment Policy

The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community. For more information, see: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>.

## Writing Studio

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.

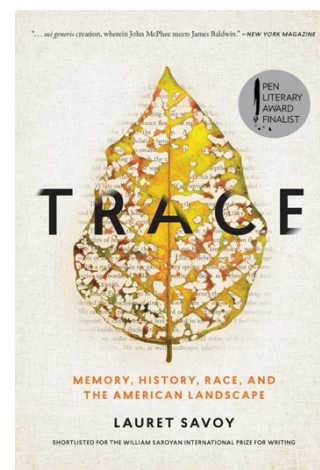
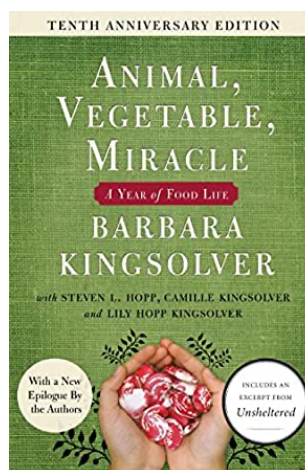
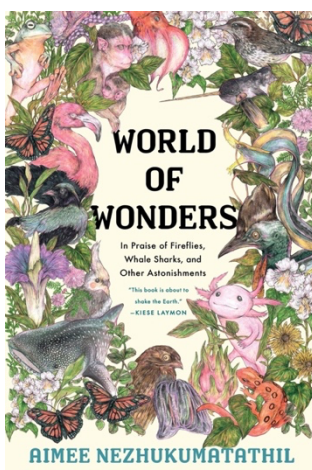
## Course Evaluations

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](mailto: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>, 564 Newell Drive, (352) 294-3601
- Student Health Care Center: <http://shcc.ufl.edu>, multiple locations, (352) 392-1161



# The Environmental Memoir

## Course Schedule

The schedule below is subject to change and may not necessarily reflect all smaller assignments and minor readings. Readings and assignments are to be completed before the class period in which they are listed, unless otherwise noted.

As I'm sure you know by now, a schedule like this often falls prey to forces outside our control. Our Canvas site will be the most accessible, up-to-date site of all resources, texts, due dates, assignments, and course information. Make it a habit to frequently check it along with your e-mail in-box for updates from me as they become available.

Week & Date	Day	Topics / Readings / Assignments
1 (8/24 & 8/26)	Tuesday	Introduction to Course Syllabus Overview Statement of Purpose Writing
	Thursday	NO CLASS – Readings & Instructor Check-Ins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "A Brief History of Real and Actual Losses" (Dungy)</li> <li>• "Body Toxic: Chapter 1" (Antonetta)</li> <li>• "Dwellings" (Hogan)</li> <li>• "My First Summer in the Sierra" (Muir)</li> </ul>
2 (8/31 & 9/2)	Tuesday	<i>World of Wonders</i> : pp. 1–51
	Thursday	<i>World of Wonders</i> : pp. 53–111
3 (9/7 & 9/9)	Tuesday	<i>World of Wonders</i> : 113–160
	Thursday	Mimicry Essay Workshop
4 (9/14 & 9/16)	Tuesday	<b>DUE: Mimicry Essay</b> <i>Student Choice Reading</i>
	Thursday	<i>Student Choice Reading</i>
5 (9/21 & 9/23)	Tuesday	In-Class Reading Conferences with Instructor <i>Student Choice Reading</i>
	Thursday	In-Class "Presentations" of Student Choice Reading
6 (9/28 & 9/30)	Tuesday	<b>DUE: Response Papers (Student Choice Reading)</b> <i>Animal Vegetable Miracle</i> : pp. 1–69
	Thursday	<i>Animal Vegetable Miracle</i> : pp. 70–147



7 (10/5 & 10/7)	Tuesday	<i>Animal Vegetable Miracle</i> : pp. 148–218
	Thursday	<i>Animal Vegetable Miracle</i> : pp. 219–295
8 (10/12 & 10/14)	Tuesday	<i>Animal Vegetable Miracle</i> : pp. 296–383
	Thursday	Sensory Writing Exercises & Workshops
9 (10/19 & 10/21)	Tuesday	<b>DUE: Memoir Piece Draft</b> In-Class Editing and Revising Workshops
	Thursday	<b>DUE: Memoir Piece Final</b>
10 (10/26 & 10/28)	Tuesday	<i>Trace</i> : pp. 1–48
	Thursday	<i>Trace</i> : pp. 49–87
11 (11/2 & 11/4)	Tuesday	<i>Trace</i> : pp. 90–160
	Thursday	<i>Trace</i> : pp. 161–186
12 (11/9 & 11/11)	Tuesday	NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR ABSENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asynchronous Readings: essays by Sandra Steingraber (TBD)</li> </ul>
	Thursday	NO CLASS – VETERANS DAY
13 (11/16 & 11/18)	Tuesday	<b>DUE: Annotated Bibliography</b> <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> (Kimmerer; excerpts) "Corn Tastes Better on the Honor System" (Kimmerer)
	Thursday	<i>Finding the Mother Tree</i> (Simard; excerpts) <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> (Leopold; excerpts)
14 (11/23 & 11/25)	Tuesday	<i>The Book of Yaak</i> (Bass; excerpts)
	Thursday	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING
15 (11/30 & 12/2)	Tuesday	"After the Flood" (Sanders) "Uncivilized" (Lopez)
	Thursday	<b>DUE: Semester Journal Submission</b> "Music for a Changing Climate" ( <i>Orion Magazine</i> Podcast Series)
16 (12/7)	Tuesday	<b>DUE: Final Project</b> Course-Wrap Up

