

AML 2410 – “Mistaken for Nowhere”: Rural America and What It Means for All of Us

(Section #8974, Class #10348), Fall 2022

Instructor name: William Carpenter

Course meeting time and location: Tuesdays, Periods 5-6 (11:45 a.m.-1:40 p.m.) in [MCCA G186](#) and Thursdays, Period 6 (12:50 p.m. to 1:40 p.m.) in [FLI 0119](#)

Office location and hours: Turlington 4413, Tuesdays from 2:00-4:00 p.m., and by appointment

Course website: Canvas (<https://ufl.instructure.com/>)

Instructor email: carpenterwilliam@ufl.edu

Why we’re here and what we’ll do: Rural communities today are often looked upon as vestiges of a bygone era, as backwards or unnecessary, as places where nothing is happening. More often, they are simply overlooked. Many rural communities are in jeopardy due to a multitude of interrelated factors. The opioid crisis has ravaged rural areas at a rate disproportionate to that of cities and suburbs, and some rural communities have little to no access to adequate medical care, educational resources, and other necessities. Corporate farming, brain-drain, and a variety of contributing factors have inflicted widespread poverty, while urban and suburban sprawl have displaced or consumed rural communities. Many rural spaces also harbor severe bigotry, and their responses to the neglect they have perceived at the hands of city-dwelling Americans have often proven reactionary and disconcerting, demonstrating, as well, that rural America still wields formidable sociopolitical power.

At the same time, trouble is far from the only thing one will find in rural America. Outside observers have long turned to this country’s rural communities for voyeuristic glimpses of a monolithic group of ignorant, luckless white people sporting track marks, Mountain Dew mouth, and cartoonish twang. This depiction is finding renewed resistance from the areas and people it caricatures, and has been revealed as unhelpful at best, destructive at worst.

In this course, we will study works of American literature concerning and originating from rural areas in order to look intently at these places and the people who live in them. We will also attempt to analyze and challenge the somewhat dismissive or stereotypical ways of looking with which many regard rurality, to discover other ways of thinking about rural spaces. More specifically, this course will use rural literature to explore how the social, political, economic, and ecological forces at work in rural America impact not only those in the countryside, but those in cities and suburbs across the nation. It will examine unique and vital communities that contribute to the texture and character of America today. It will investigate troubled and foundational histories. While they will aim to offer insight into rural folks’ lived experiences—glimpses into small towns and out-of-the-way counties—such readings of rural literature may also provide a telling cross-section of American happenings, and perhaps even a focal point for some international conversations.

COVID Statement: In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit [ONE.UF](#) for screening/testing and vaccination opportunities.

- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

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: Hard copies are preferred over e-books, and I highly recommend purchasing used copies of books to save money. These selections will be supplemented by additional texts posted on Canvas. Amazon is a good resource for discounted books, as are Thriftbooks.com, Abe Books, and Bookshop.org. You may also choose to support local bookstores like Book Gallery West (<https://www.bookgallerywest.com/>) and Third House Books (<https://www.thirdhousebooks.com/order-online>). Keep in mind also that both Library West and the Alachua County Library System have options for curbside pick-up.

- *Yellowrocket* by Todd Boss
- *The Art of Loading Brush* by Wendell Berry
- *Raised Up Down Yonder* by Angela McMillan Howell
- *Appalachian Reckoning* by Anthony Harkins and Meredith McCarroll
- *The Blue Buick* by B.H. Fairchild

- Supplemental readings will be posted on Canvas

Optional Texts: We'll decide together, over the course of the semester, what to do with these.

- *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance
- *The Unsettling of America* by Wendell Berry

Assignments:

Assignment	Word Count	Points Available
Close Readings	300 (x5)	40 (x5)
Close Reading Responses	100 (x5)	15 (x5)
Critical Essay—One Text	1,000	130
Critical Essay—Multiple Texts	1,500	175
Reading Responses	300 (x5)	40 (x5)
Peer Review	-	35 (x2)
Participation	-	150
Optional Revision	-	See description
Total	6000	1000

Writing:

- **5 Close Readings (at least 300 words each):** You'll be asked to complete one of these for each major text we read. These assignments will require you to examine the language and construction of a poem or passage carefully and deliberately. **The aim is not mere summary.** Instead, you should advance an argument—about what a unit of language does and how/why it does it—by carefully explicating the movements and possibilities you notice. Focus very intently on syntax, word choice, punctuation, etc.; the point, purpose, or argument of any text is made of minute details. If you like, think of this exercise as an autopsy: the patient did not die because of something as abstract as “poor health”—the patient died because of a ruptured spleen, or a clot in the femoral artery. Without specifics, generalizations cannot hold. When dealing with poems, you'll choose one poem from a given text that interests you, and then select **one to six lines** of that poem to examine in your close reading. When dealing with prose, you'll select 1-2 paragraphs. You may, and often should, draw on the context offered by a larger passage (e.g. an entire poem, chapter, or book) when crafting your reading, but it's important that you narrow your focus to only a few lines or sentences—good poems and prose will give you plenty to talk about, even in such a small space. You'll upload your completed assignments to the appropriate Canvas discussion board. **Please paste the full text of the passage on which you conduct your close reading at the top of your post.**
- **5 Close-Reading Responses (at least 100 words each):** For these assignments, each of you will reply to one other student's close reading via the Canvas discussion board. The goal of these assignments is to allow exploration of passages' tensions, complexities, and shades of meaning. To this end, you'll endeavor to adapt, expand, specify, or even challenge your classmates' close readings in a meaningful and respectful way. **Please be sure to paste the full text of the close reading to which you're responding at the top of your reply, in quotation marks—this will make my life a bit easier.**
- **5 Reading Responses (at least 300 words each):** You'll be asked to complete one of these for each major text we read. These assignments are designed to give you chances to work through some of the Big Ideas of each text, and to connect them to the world and discourses in which

they exist. While remaining close to the text—and therefore citing specific passages—you should give an analytical account of how you have reacted to the notions advanced by or the machinations of a given text. Perhaps they make you think of something else you've read, in the course or on your own, of a story you've heard from a relative, or of an experience you yourself have had. But don't just tell us how you feel; rather, explain in specific terms how a text has acted on you.

- **Critical Essay—One Text (1,000):** This assignment is designed to give you space to make a somewhat extended argument about one of the major texts we're slated to read. In essaying on one text, you'll conduct a thorough exploration of some of its major movements and effects by way of closely read analysis of how that text operates. You won't necessarily have to frontload your point—after all, an essay is designed to mimic the gradual unfolding of thought—but you will have to make one. By finding, explicating, and interrogating patterns, convergences, dissonances, interactions, etc. within a text, you'll endeavor to make a limited, well-supported argument about that text. It may be useful to think of this assignment as an intersection between close-reading assignments and reading-response assignments. In short, you'll look intently at a text, in writing, so as to say something significant about it (your analysis should amount to something much more rigorous than "I really like this book," or "This book flows nicely"). You must use evidence from the text to support your arguments, but quotations should not exceed 10% of a paper's total word count. It will be impossible, of course, for you to discuss a book's every part or movement in your response—it wouldn't likely be useful to attempt such a feat, either. On the contrary, you'll want to limit your argument to the passages most relevant to it, and make sure you're making a single argument (if one with multiple parts), rather than several related arguments.
- **Critical Essay—Multiple Texts (1,500 words):** As in the one-text critical essay, you'll closely examine the innerworkings of multiple passages in order to ruminate on and eventually make an argument about an element thereof. The difference here is that you'll do this across several texts, using at least two of our major texts and at least two supplementary sources (you'll likely find these via your own research, but it's probably not impossible to use two of our other major texts). Find something that the texts you use say or do in reference to each other, in concert with each other, or in opposition to each other, paying particular attention to the discourse of which they are all part or into which you'll have placed them. Maybe you'll find significance in differences in lineation between our two books of poetry, or uncover important tonal tensions between two of our prose books, with larger implications for conceptions of rurality—think through these relationships, and their underpinnings and effects, on the page. You must use evidence from the text to support your arguments, but quotations should not exceed 10% of a paper's total word count.
- **Optional Revision (no word count):** At the end of the semester, you'll have the opportunity to revise one of your two major essays using the feedback I'll have offered on your original draft (and, of course, your own renewed vision of the piece). Your revision grade will replace your original grade. Please submit your revised draft to the submission page of the original assignment, as a resubmission, and email me to let me know you've done so.

Participation, etc.:

- **Class Discussion:** Our class will run on discussion, and so your frequent and insightful contributions to the conversations we have in class will contribute to your participation grade. In order to make such contributions, you'll have to complete the required readings for each week

(it helps to take notes!), and come to class prepared and eager to engage. This class will depend on your input, so you must do your bit to help us learn as a community.

- **2 Peer Reviews:** For each Critical Essay, you'll be asked to offer a critique of a peer's draft, and in return, you'll receive a critique of your own. The function of these assignments is twofold. You'll of course offer your peer feedback that could improve their draft, and thereby raise their grade. Just as importantly, though, you'll exercise your keen analytical and conceptual thinking in describing to your peer how their essay works and what it accomplishes, or fails to accomplish, in the eyes of a reader. You should strive not to offer vague or empty praise, but care and respect in reading and responding will be paramount, and it will be as useful to note what is working in each draft as what is not. I'll assign pairings for peer review, and offer prompts intended to direct your focus to various parts and functions of each essay. Each review will take shape as a series of responses to these prompts, supplemented by in-text markup where appropriate.

Course Policies:

1. *Assignments:* You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. You risk failing the course if you accrue **four** absences. You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue **two** absences. As a general rule, let me know if you think you might miss class—we can move forward from there.

Excused absences, such as athletic events, theater commitments, illnesses, family emergencies, etc. **require appropriate documentation AND advance notice given to me.** You will be responsible for meeting with me outside of class to make a plan for completing work missed due to absences. You will also be responsible for turning in any assignments regardless of whether you are in class or not. For UF's official attendance policy, you can visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

3. *Tardiness:* Be on time to show respect to your colleagues and me. Latecomers receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I know they attended.
4. *Classroom Behavior:* Please be respectful and attentive to your colleagues and to me when we are talking, whether during discussion of published texts or our own work. In particular, be respectful of your colleagues' diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs. Critique others as you would like to be critiqued—for me, that means substantive, actionable feedback that respects the intention and inherent validity of your peers' work and thought.

You are also responsible for keeping up with your UF email, as this is how I will contact you outside of class. Feel free to reach out to me via UF email or Canvas messaging anytime—I'll try to respond within 24 hours on business days.

No use of phones or laptops during class, unless I specifically instruct you to use your laptops for in-class work.

5. *UF's policy on Sexual Harassment:* 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:

<https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>

6. *Formatting & Submission*: All assignments should be typed in a readable, 12 pt. font with standard margins. All assignments should be double-spaced. Submit all on Canvas as specified in each assignment's instructions.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Acceptance of late papers/assignments will be at my discretion and dependent on circumstances. **Here, as with absences, advance notice is key.**
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

As specified by the current UF Student Honor Code: A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- b. 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.
- c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

In short, show respect to yourself, your colleagues, and me by submitting original work earnestly and honestly produced by you for all assignments.

10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.
11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you.

UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support at (352) 392-1575. You can also contact them online at <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

If you are experiencing unmanageable stress or other emotional or physical distress during the semester, please **ask me for help finding resources**. In addition to teaching you about rural literature, I am committed to helping you succeed in a rigorous academic environment and to introducing you to the myriad resources for mental, physical, and emotional help and for time- and stress-management available on campus.

12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
13. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount (cblount@ufl.edu), Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
14. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>

Grading Scale and General Rubric:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59
4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.00

"A"- A paper at this level is truly high quality. It demonstrates a clear understanding of critical concepts, creatively addresses the subject matter, and exceeds the expectations of critical analysis. A paper with this grade will be free of grammatical errors.

"B"- A paper with this grade has met the standards of the assignment at a high level. This assignment may need revision but is organized in a logical way and avoids fallacies or mistakes in critical analysis. A paper with this grade may contain grammatical errors but will be readable.

"C"- A paper that earns a "C" has done everything that was required, but no more. This assignment may require significant revision to more thoroughly examine critical elements, or may need reorganization. A paper with this grade will generally contain a few grammatical errors but will still be readable.

"D"- This paper does not adequately fulfill the assignment to a satisfactory degree. One portion of an assignment may be missing or there may be a misused critical element. Papers with this grade tend to be disorganized and contain many grammatical errors.

"E"- This paper does not address the assignment prompt or is unreadable/incomplete.

More generally, work in this class will be graded on the earnestness with which you endeavor to undertake meaningful investigations of course material/related material, revise your work and adapt your practice based on feedback you receive, and adhere to the grammatical and artificial requirements of assignments. Your participation grade will depend on the preparation, thoughtfulness, respect, and professionalism you demonstrate in engaging with your peers as a member of an academic community.

Course Schedule:

Our syllabus and course schedule, including planned readings and assignment due dates, follows on the next page. Syllabus and schedule are subject to change and adjustment at my discretion and/or due to severe weather, health/safety concerns, and other mitigating circumstances. I will always advise you of any changes both in class meetings and through email with advance notice.

Rundown of assignments/color-coding key:

- **Reading Responses** are due by class time on the first Tuesday of each “unit” (period dedicated to each text).
- **Close Readings** are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday of each unit’s second week (**except during the first unit, for which deadlines have been altered due to Labor Day**). This deadline is a bit strange, I know, but it allows your peers ample time to respond to your Close Readings.
 - o Speaking of which, **Close-Reading Responses** are due by class time on Tuesday of each unit’s second week.
- For **In-Class Peer Reviews**, each student must bring a draft of the appropriate Critical Essay on the class day before the due date of the Critical Essay.
- **Critical Essays** are due Weeks 9 and 16 (Thursday and Tuesday, respectively).
- The **Optional Revision** is due 12/15 by day’s end.

Date/Week	Readings (Complete Before Class)	Assignments Due (Tuesdays by class time, or Mondays by 5:00 p.m. if peer-response is required, unless otherwise stated)
08/25 (Week 1)	Syllabus	None

<p>08/30 & 09/01 (Week 2)</p>	<p><i>Yellowrocket</i> p.12-60 Watch <i>Look and See: A Portrait of Wendell Berry</i></p>	<p>Reading Response 1 due 08/30 by 11:45 a.m. Close Reading 1 due 09/02 by 11:59 p.m.</p>
<p>09/06 & 09/08 (Week 3)</p>	<p><i>Yellowrocket</i> p. 61-116 Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Close-Reading Response 1 due 09/06 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>09/13 & 09/15 (Week 4)</p>	<p><i>The Art of Loading Brush</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Reading Response 2 due 09/13 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>09/20 & 09/22 (Week 5)</p>	<p><i>The Art of Loading Brush</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Close Reading 2 due 09/19 by 5:00 p.m. Close-Reading Response 2 due 09/20 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>09/27 & 09/29 (Week 6)</p>	<p><i>The Art of Loading Brush</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>10/04 & 10/06 (Week 7)</p>	<p><i>Raised Up Down Yonder</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Reading Response 3 due 10/04 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>10/11 & 10/13 (Week 8)</p>	<p><i>Raised Up Down Yonder</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Close Reading 3 due 10/10 by 5:00 p.m. Close-Reading Response 3 due 10/11 by 11:45 a.m.</p>

<p>10/18 & 10/20 (Week 9)</p>	<p><i>Raised Up Down Yonder</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>In-class Peer Review of Critical Essay—Single Text (must have draft in hand by class time) on 10/18</p> <p>Critical Essay—Single Text due 10/20 by 11:59 p.m.</p>
<p>10/25 & 10/27 (Week 10)</p>	<p><i>Appalachian Reckoning</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Reading Response 4 due 10/25 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>11/01 & 11/03 (Week 11)</p>	<p><i>Appalachian Reckoning</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Close Reading 4 due 10/31 by 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Close-Reading Response 4 due 11/01 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>11/08 & 11/10 (Week 12)</p>	<p><i>Appalachian Reckoning</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>11/15 & 11/17 (Week 13)</p>	<p><i>The Blue Buick</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Reading Response 5 due 11/15 by 11:45 a.m.</p>
<p>11/22 (Week 14)</p>	<p>No class—enjoy your break and travel safe!</p>	<p>None</p>

<p>11/29 & 12/01 (Week 15)</p>	<p><i>The Blue Buick</i> (excerpts TBD) Supplemental Readings</p>	<p>Close Reading 5 due 11/28 by 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>Close-Reading Response 5 due 11/29 by 11:45 a.m.</p> <p>In-class Peer Review of Critical Essay—Multiple Texts (must have draft in hand by class time) on 12/01</p>
<p>12/06 (Week 16)</p>	<p>Tearful goodbyes and last words</p>	<p>Critical Essay—Multiple Texts due 12/06 by 11:59 p.m.</p> <p>Optional Revision due 12/15 by 11:59 p.m.</p>