

**ENC 1145**  
**Writing About Trees**

Course: 12820 - 3309  
Instructor: Luke Rodewald  
[lrodewald@ufl.edu](mailto:lrodewald@ufl.edu)

M/W/F: 11:45—12:35 PM  
Matherly Hall 0115  
Office Hours: Wednesday 9:30—11:30 AM (via Zoom)



**Course Description**

Did you know? Your campus is home to over 150 different species of trees. Some are several hundreds of years old, pre-dating many of the buildings we pass through and by each day. The ubiquity of trees makes them easy to ignore, yet we are quickly coming to realize that we do so at our own peril.

Increasingly, writers across disciplines have been drawing our attention to the often-overlooked power, significance, and even wisdom of trees. This course is a trek into contemporary writing on and about them: their material and physical properties, historic prominence, and their cultural relevance as environmental images and symbols. Spanning a variety of genres—scientific writing, fiction, narrative essays, poetry, children’s literature, film—we will consider the following:

- \* How have humans translated the physical structures of trees into readable, figurative structures with our own meanings and connotations?
- \* How do our perceptions of a species shape how we relate to it?
- \* To what extent have the symbolic representations of trees changed over time, and how do trees figure differently for people of varying heritages or culture?
- \* How does contemporary tree literature help us reckon with themes of loss, community, and resilience in the face of escalating global climate change?

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**Course Objectives**

Your work in this class will make you a better writer, reader, and a more critical thinker. If pursued with the appropriate energy and effort, you will:

...discover and become familiar with the basic traits, botany, and biology of trees, as well as how these characteristics are highlighted, utilized, or transformed by authors for specific purposes.

...survey and consider the function and form of trees as depicted in different genres and modes of writing, as well as the overall ambitions and impact of such composition on a reader.

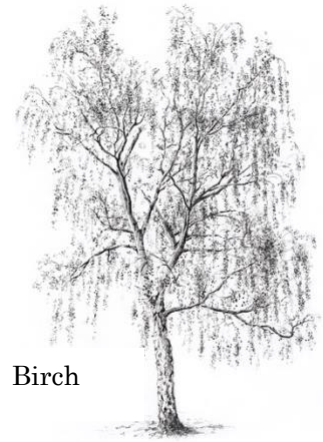
...study, practice, and acquire competence in writing for multiple purposes and audiences and through distinct genres: creative field journaling, science communication, public writing, literary and critical analysis, and the personal essay.



Aspen

## Materials Required

- \* *The Overstory* by Richard Powers (2018)
- \* *How I Became a Tree* by Sumana Roy (2017) or *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard (2021)
- \* *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* by Peter Wohlleben (2016)
- \* *Old Growth: The Best Writing About Trees from Orion Magazine* (2021)
- \* A curious mind



Birch

## Course Expectations

*What can you expect of me?* I will bring my full self to this course throughout the semester. 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?* By signing up for this course, I assume that you are at least somewhat interested in the course topic—one that, as we shall see, is of utmost importance given the planet’s precarious state of affairs. As such, I expect you to engage fully with our material, come to class prepared (having read our text with a pen in hand!), and be respectful and active participants throughout. During class, I ask you for your attention to be fixed on our work together and your minds open. I will make you a better writer—but I need you to be fully present and engaged for that growth to take place.



## Communication

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 office hours on Zoom this fall during the hours immediately before our class periods on Wednesday (9:30-11:00 AM), 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) necessitate dropping the course.
  - As such, if your absences are 4-5, your grade is lowered by two increments for each of those absences. (A C+ becomes a C-, 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 (athletics, band, etc.) 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 (DRC) at the beginning of the semester to officially request an accommodation. I'll work with the DRC to arrive at an accommodation that allows you to be successful without altering the rigor and 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 get you the materials necessary for the next class period if they are not already available on Canvas. 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.

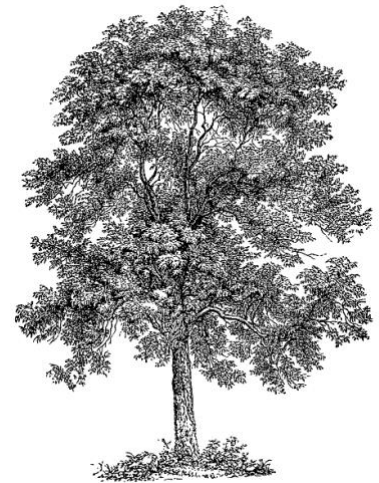
### Major Course Assignments & Grade Categories

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.

Field Journal	10% (750 words)
Campus Annotations	15% (750 words)
Creative Nonfiction Essay	15% (1500 words)
Literary Analysis Essay	10% (750 words)
Annotated Bibliography	5% (500 words)
Term Project	25% (1750 words)
Minor Assignments & Responses	10%
Course Engagement	10%

### 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 exercises, reading response prompts, and other opportunities where you are able to demonstrate the effort you’ve put forth in this course. This grade is 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.



Chestnut

## Grading & 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.

<b>A</b> 90-100	The qualities of a B project, <u>plus</u> 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>B</b> 80-89	A sufficient execution of the assignment's objectives. The work demonstrates coherent organization, ample supporting details, and a clear expression of ideas.
<b>C</b> 70-79	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> 60-69	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> 50-59	Inadequate coverage of essential points; uncertain or misguided purpose; poor organization; ineffective and inconsistent expression; significant defects in standard usage.

**Note:** ENC 1145 confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of UF's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR). In order to meet either of these requirements, you must pass this course with a "C" or better. A grade of "C-" will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Requirement.

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

All major assignment grades will be posted and recorded on our Canvas site and will receive extensive feedback from myself, but if at any point you're curious about your grade in the course or would like more insight 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 Format

All major papers will be submitted as a MS Word (.doc) documents on Canvas, unless otherwise noted. 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.).

## Late Work

I understand that life happens, and there may be times where our planned itinerary conflicts with your other obligations and commitments. 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. Otherwise, major assignments will be penalized one letter grade (e.g., from B to C) for each day they are late.



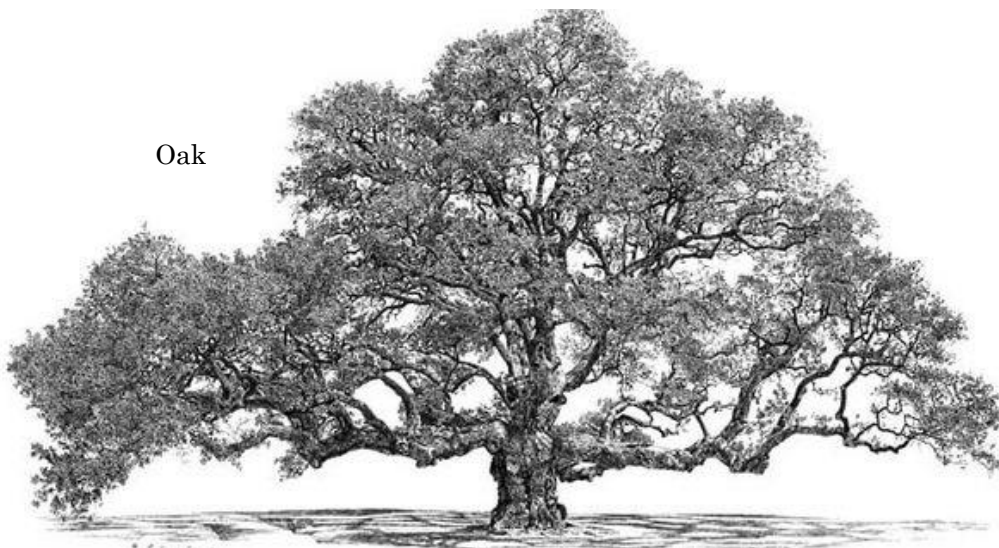
## Academic Honesty and Integrity

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.

Oak



## **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. You will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email you receive from your Canvas course menu under GatorEvals or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl>.

## **Physical and Mental Wellbeing**

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 & 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

## ENC 1145 Writing About Trees

The schedule below is subject to change and may not necessarily reflect all smaller assignments or 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 for updates from me as they become available.

Week & Date	Day	Topics / Readings / Assignments
<b>1</b> (8/24-8/26)	Wednesday	Course Introduction Syllabus Overview & Contracts Statement of Purpose Writing
	Friday	“Reading Tree in Nature’s Nation: Toward a Field Guide to Sylvan Literacy in the 19th-Century United States” (Miller) Selections from <i>American Canopy</i> (on Canvas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The Death of Prometheus” &amp; “From Discovery to Revolution” (pp. 1-39)</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> (8/29—9/2)	Monday	Walking Tour of Campus Trees <i>Sibley Guide to Trees</i> (pp. 1-50)
	Wednesday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Fieldwork & Journaling
	Friday	Selections from <i>American Canopy</i> (on Canvas) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Postwar Prosperity” (pp. 268-307)</li> </ul> “Horse Meadows and Bohler Canyon Arborglyphs: History Recorded on the Trees” (Hadlock, Potashin)
<b>3</b> (9/5—9/9)	Monday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Labor Day
	Wednesday	<i>Hidden Life of Trees</i> (1/2)
	Friday	<b>FIELD JOURNAL DUE</b> <i>Hidden Life of Trees</i> (2/2)
<b>4</b> (9/12—9/16)	Monday	<i>Hidden Life of Trees</i> (dir. Adolph)
	Wednesday	Selections from <i>The Songs of Trees</i> and <i>The Forest Unseen</i> (Haskell)
	Friday	“Net Transfer of Carbon Between Ectomycorrhizal Tree Species in the Field” (Simard) Selections from <i>Nature</i> (TBD)
<b>5</b> (9/19—9/23)	Monday	Campus Annotations Work Day
	Wednesday	<i>Old Growth</i> : Kimmerer, Simard, Shipley, Lee, Logan, MacArthur
	Friday	<b>CAMPUS ANNOTATIONS DUE</b> <i>Old Growth</i> : Sullivan, Tevis, Bass, Hay
<b>6</b> (9/26—9/30)	Monday	<i>Old Growth</i> : Vandenberg, Sanders, Marris, Tagatac, Purpura, Mailhot, Preston
	Wednesday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Essay Conferences

	Friday	<i>How I Became a Tree</i> (pp. 1-81) <u>or</u> <i>Finding the Mother Tree</i> (pp. 1-100)
7 (10/3—10/7)	Monday	<i>How I Became a Tree</i> (pp. 82-148) <u>or</u> <i>Finding the Mother Tree</i> (pp. 101-192)
	Wednesday	<i>How I Became a Tree</i> (pp. 149-197) <u>or</u> <i>Finding the Mother Tree</i> (pp. 193-305)
	Friday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Homecoming
8 (10/10—10/14)	Monday	<b>CREATIVE NONFICTION ESSAY DUE</b>
	Wednesday	<i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 1-72)
	Friday	<i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 73-149)
9 (10/17—10/21)	Monday	<b>NO CLASS</b> <i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 149-229)
	Wednesday	<i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 230-279) “Arboromorphism” (Cooper-Smithson)
	Friday	<i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 280-351) “Bee and Tree Temporality in <i>The History of Bees and the Overstory</i> ” (Anderson)
10 (10/24—10/28)	Monday	<i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 352—405) “Understories and Upside-Downs: The Pedagogical Misanthropy of <i>The Overstory</i> and <i>Stranger Things</i> ” (McMain, Torres)
	Wednesday	<i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 406—466) “Arboreal Encounters in Richard Powers’ <i>The Overstory</i> ” (Spengler)
	Friday	<b>LITERARY ANALYSIS DUE</b> <i>The Overstory</i> (pp. 407—504)
11 (10/31—11/4)	Monday	<i>The Fountain</i> (dir. Aronofsky) (1/2)
	Wednesday	<i>The Fountain</i> (dir. Aronofsky) (2/2)
	Friday	“Vicious Circles: Intersections of Gender and Species in Darren Aronofsky’s <i>The Fountain</i> ” (Piskorski)
12 (11/7—11/11)	Monday	“The Giving Tree” (Silverstein) “The Lorax” (Seuss) “Kate, Who Tamed the Wind” (Scanlon) “The Great Spruce” (Duvall)
	Wednesday	“As an Oak Tree Grows” (Karas) “We Planted a Tree” (Muldrow) “Tall, Tall Tree” (Fredericks) “A Tree is Nice” (Udry)
	Friday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Veterans Day
13 (11/14—11/18)	Monday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Instructor Absence
	Wednesday	Poetry: Larkin, Frost, Warren, Housman, Hopkins, Shelley, Hass, Swenson, Keats, Kunitz (on Canvas)
	Friday	“The Man Who Planted Trees” (Giono)
14 (11/21—11/25)	Monday	<b>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE</b> Harn Museum Field Trip
	Wednesday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Thanksgiving



	Friday	<b>NO CLASS</b> Thanksgiving
<b>15</b> (11/28—12/2)	Monday	“Surely I Am Able to Write Poems” (Clifton) “To Waste at Trees” (Barrax) “The Maple Remains” (Johnson) “Haunted Oak” (Dunbar)
	Wednesday	Sylvan Rhetorics: Roots and Branches of More-than-Human Publics” (Jones) Selections from <i>The Language of Plants</i> (Gagliano et. al)
	Friday	“The Role of Urban Trees in Reducing Land Surface Temperatures” (Schwaab et. al) “The Benefits and Limits of Urban Tree Planting for Environmental and Human Health” (Pataki et. al)
<b>16</b> (12/5—12/7)	Monday	Articles on UF Trees (TBD)
	Wednesday	Presentations Course Wrap Up
<b>17</b> (12/12)	Monday	<b>TERM PROJECTS DUE</b>



Sequoia