

Writing about Ecology

ENC 1145: Topics in Composition

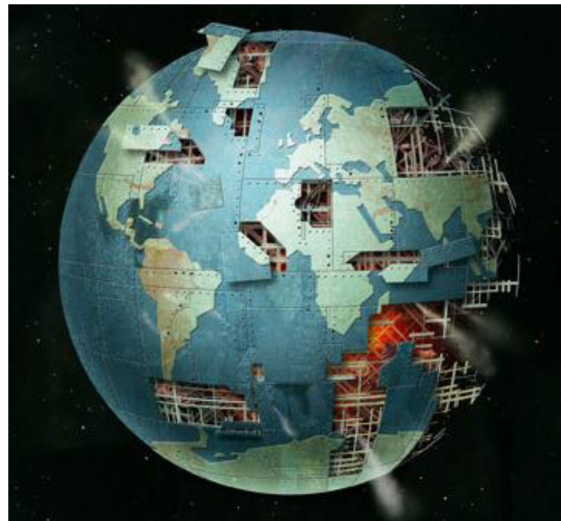
Fall 2013
Joseph P. Weakland

Course information

Section Number: 3318
Classroom: MAT 0009
Meeting Times: Tuesday, 8:30-10:25am; Thursday, 9:35-10:25 am
Email: jweakland@ufl.edu
Office Location: Rolfs 501
Office Hours: W 1:00-2:00pm, or by appointment
Course Wiki: <http://ecowriting1145.wikispaces.com/>

Course description

Many scientists and environmentalists now refer to our era as the “Anthropocene,” the geological epoch in which human civilization has the power to reshape Earth’s environment on a planetary scale. The carbon dioxide emitted by our industries and technologies, for example, will continue to warm the globe for centuries after we exhaust all fossil fuels. Some thinkers have recently proposed “geoengineering” as a solution to climate change, and suggest we attempt to regulate the planet’s thermostat through blocking the sun’s rays or farming carbon-eating plants in the ocean.



Even in the Anthropocene, however, humans are still subject to simple ecological principles. Earth’s ecology is finite, and all living and non-living things are connected through networks of relationships. This course considers our changing environment through the practice of “ecocomposition,” defined by Dobrin and Weisser as “the study of the relationships between environments (and by that we mean natural, constructed, and even imagined places) and discourse (speaking, writing, and thinking).” Accordingly, we will study how environmentalist discourses shape ecological relationships between humans, non-humans, and Earth.

We will also explore how ecocomposition can help us understand writing as an ecological process distributed among people, places, objects, and organisms. While practicing ecocomposition, our readings will consist of diverse genres, including nature writing, ecophilosophy, composition theory, scientific articles, international policy statements, a graphic novel, and environmental science fiction.

Course objectives

By the end of ENC 1145, students will be able to:

1. Define ecocomposition and understand writing as a process distributed among people, places, objects, and organisms
2. Reflect on how writing and language co-determine our relationship with the natural world
3. Make ethical sense of complex sustainability issues such as anthropogenic global warming
4. Perform an ecological analysis of how writing interacts with media technologies
5. Produce writing that possesses a focused thesis, unity throughout the essay, and coherence between paragraphs and ideas and within the essay as a whole
6. Display a command of grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and accurate MLA citation and documentation of research
7. Work collaboratively in an academic writing community, learning from and contributing to the writing of your classmates, in addition to engaging in critical verbal discourse
8. Understand and employ technological resources in your critical reading, writing, and thinking practices, including the use of word processing to develop essays, e-mail to communicate professionally, and the Internet and library database resources for developing research skills
9. Create and complete a multimodal, multimedia composition project

Required texts

Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Warner Books, 2000. Print.

Jensen, Derrick, and Stephanie McMillan. *As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007. Print.

Ray, Janisse. *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999. Print.

Additional readings will be provided through Sakai and Course Reserves. You are responsible for retrieving, printing, and bringing them to class.

Course assignments

Detailed assignment descriptions and guidelines can be found on the course wiki at <http://ecowritingj14Fj.wikispaces.com/>.

Wiki Responses

Early in the term, the class will create a joint discussion board that you will contribute to in teams. These responses will help structure our group discussions of the works we encounter, and as such should be thoughtful and on-point. You must complete four wiki responses by the end of the semester. (4 responses; 500 words each; 200 points total)

Essays

You will write three essays for this course, worth a total of 450 points. The essays will require you to develop original arguments in which you critically respond to the course material. The essay assignments are described in more detail on the course wiki, (approximately 4200 words; 450 points total)

Final Project

At the end of the semester, you will produce a creative or multimedia project that expresses a critical viewpoint about any of the texts we have discussed. You will include with your submission a brief explanation of your intended rhetorical goal, though the project itself should be stand-alone. (600-900 word rhetorical explanation; 250 points)

Participation

Participation accounts for in-class discussion, workshops, quizzes, in-class work and other related activities. (100 points)

Grading scale

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	c	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3-67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3-33	87-89	870-899	D+	1-33	67-69	670-699
B	3-0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
c+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

In each paper, I will evaluate:

- 1) Content, including argument, development, and support
- 2) Organization, including paragraph structure, overall flow of ideas, transitions
- 3) Mechanics, including grammar and style.

You should strive to excel in all three areas; more specific grade breakdowns are as follows:

The A-range essay has strong content, strong organization, AND strong mechanics.

The B-range essay has one key area (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of revision.

The C-range essay has two key areas (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of significant revision.

A D-range essay has two or more key areas in need of substantial revision.

An “E” is usually reserved for students who do not do the assignment or fail to attend class. However, an “E” may also be given if an essay blatantly ignores all three areas of evaluation.

Course policies

Attendance

This is a participation-oriented, skills-based writing course, which means that you will build your skills incrementally and systematically in each class throughout the semester.

Much of the learning that takes place is spontaneous and difficult to reproduce outside of class.

Consequently, if you miss more than three classes during the semester, your grade will drop considerably. Each absence beyond three will lower your overall course letter-grade by 5 points. *If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course.* Exempt from this policy are only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, for which you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence. Absences for illness or family emergencies will count toward your three allowed absences. I advise that you save your absences for when you are truly ill. All screenings are mandatory. Some of the films we will screen are not available for rental or via Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc. Our screenings are likely to be the only circumstances in which you can view them.

If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all class discussions and activities as well as any new developments, such as assignments and due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. However, you

will not be able to make up any in-class assignments. I will not approach you regarding absences and missing or late assignments, nor will I inform you of what you miss during class. Please establish contact with a classmate in order to update yourself on the course happenings in the event that you miss class. If you anticipate having a prolonged absence for any reason, please speak with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

Late Arrival: Our class is discussion-based, and as such late arrival is both rude and disruptive. If you are not in the room when the class starts, you are late. If you are late twice, you will be penalized one absence.

Participation

Participation is a necessary component of your time in this class, and as such will factor into your grade. You are expected to arrive to class prepared, with homework done, articles/books read, and paper and writing utensils at hand. You will work individually, in small groups and in class-wide discussion. I will expect each of you to participate actively each day.

Class Discussion: You are expected to add constructively to the conversation we have each day. You will treat the instructor and your fellow classmates with respect at all times, especially when you disagree with them. Anyone who breaks that rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

Paper Submissions

In order to receive credit for an assignment, you must follow all rules set out for paper submission. All assignments should be done on a computer and have a professional appearance. (No stains, wrinkles, etc.) This includes formatting according to Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines, ranging from font and font size to the heading and margins. You can find a detailed MLA formatting guide at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>. Any multi-page assignment turned in via hard copy that is not stapled together will lose one letter grade. Please include your last name in the document title for electronic submissions.

Papers due via hard copy will be turned in at the start of the class period on the due date. Papers due electronically should be turned in via Sakai by the time that class begins on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Failure of technology (hard drive crashes, printer out of ink, etc.) is not an excuse. If Sakai is not functioning properly when you attempt to submit a paper, you must immediately email me and apprise me of the situation and bring a hard copy to class, which you may submit for no penalty.

Email Correspondence

This is an English class, so I expect your emails to me to be professional and follow rules of grammar and etiquette. Please include proper salutations and a signature that includes your name.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. 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):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b.) Submitting a document or assignment that in completely or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15 Aug. 2007

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without also providing the exact location from which it came, including the date cited.

Final grade appeals

After discussing any apparent grade discrepancies with the course instructor, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the English Department. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

University statements

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit: This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR): This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx>

Statement of student disability services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Statement on harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Statement on academic honesty: All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Course schedule

Week 1

R 8/22 Syllabus review; introductions

Week 2 **PART 1: THINKING/WRITING ECOLOGICALLY**

T 8/27 Naomi Oreskes, “The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change” (2005)
Kim Stanley Robinson, “Terraforming Earth” (2012)

R 8/29 Aldo Leopold, selections from *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

Week 3

T 9/3 Margaret A. Syverson, “What is an Ecology of Composition?” (1999)

R 9/5 Rachel Carson, selections from *Silent Spring* (1962)
Wiki response due for team 1

Week 4.

T 9/10 Karen J. Warren, "Nature is a Feminist Issue" (2000)

Wiki response due for team 2

R 9/12 Vandana Shiva, "Soil Not Oil" (2009)

Essay #1 assigned

Week 5**PART 2: SUSTAINABILITY**

T 9/17 United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development,
"Towards Sustainable Development" (1987)

R 9/19 "The Talloires Declaration" (1990)
"The Earth Charter" (2000)
"Text of the American College & University Presidents' Climate
Commitment" (2007)

Week 6

T 9/24 Bill McKibben, excerpt from *The End of Nature* (1989)

Draft of Essay #1 due

Peer review

R 9/26 Selections from Derrick Jensen, *Endgame (Volume 1): The Problem of
Civilization* (2006)

Essay #1 due on Friday, 9/27

Week 7

T10/1 Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Simple
Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial: A Graphic Novel* (2007)

R10/3 Jensen and McMillan, continued

Essay #2 assigned

Week 8 **PART 3: PLACE(S)**

T 10/8 Derek Owens, "Place" (2001)

Wiki response due for team 1

R10/10 David Orr, "What is Education For?" (1990)
 Sidney L. Dobrin, "Writing Takes Place" (2001)
Wiki response due for team 2

Week 9

T10/15 Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (2000)
Draft of Essay #2 due
 Peer Review

R10/17 Ray, continued

Essay 2 due on Friday, 10/23

Week 10

T10/22 Ray, continued
Essay #3 assigned
Wiki response due for team 1

R10/24 Ray, continued
Wiki response due for team 2

Week 11

T10/29 Ray, continued
 Draft of Essay #3 due
 Peer Review

R10/31 Marilyn M. Cooper, "The Ecology of Writing" (1986)

Week 12 PART 4: FUTURE(S)

T11/5 Derek Owens, "Future" (2001)

R11/7 Individual conferences

Essay #3 due on Friday, 11/8

Week 13

T11/12 Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World" (2007)

Final project assigned

Wiki response due for team 1

R11/14 Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993)

Week 14

T11/19 Butler, continued

Wiki response due for team 2

R11/21 Butler, continued

Week 15

T 11/26 NO CLASS - Thanksgiving Break!

R11/28 NO CLASS - Thanksgiving Break!

Week 16

T12/3 Paul Kingsnorth, "Dark Ecology: Searching for Truth in a Post-green World" (2013)

Butler, continued

Wrap-up

*****Monday, December 9, 2013: Final Project due by 5:00 PM*****