Nature and the American Literary Imagination: U65 313
Spring 2014 with Matt DeVoll

Course Description:
American literature and culture have often been defined by Americans’ relation to nature, from the stories of early Native Americans and colonial Europeans to modern day nature writers. This course is a survey of American literature with a focus on nature writing from the colonial period to present. Works predominantly include non-fiction, but also some fiction and poetry. In addition to exploring the tradition of nature writing in America, students develop their skills as sophisticated readers and writers of literature.

Course and Contact Information:
- Class time and room: Mondays, 6:30-9:00 p.m. in January Hall, room 10
- Instructor: Matt DeVoll
- Office: Cupples II, 104
- Office hours: Mondays, 9 a.m.-noon and by appointment
- Email: mwdevoll@wustl.edu
- Phone: (office) 314-935-5392; (cell phone and text) 314-607-7028
- Blackboard will be used to post materials and announcements, but not to post grade or submit assignments

Required Course Materials and Book
- Loose-leaf or hole-punched printer paper and 3-ring binder for your journal

Course Assignments and Grading Policies
Students complete the following assignments over the course of the semester

- Reading Journal (200 points)
- Two 3-4 page interpretive essays (200 points each; 400 total)
- Two exams (200 points each; 400 total)

The final grade is calculated as follows:
A+ = 980-1000   A = 930-979   A- = 900-929
B+ = 880-899     B = 830-879   B- = 800-829
C+ = 780-799     C = 730-779   C- = 700-729
D+ = 680-699     D = 630-679   D- = 600-629
F = 599 and below

Pass/Fail
Students taking the course pass/fail must earn a C- to pass the course
**Incompletes**
Students unable to complete the second exam and Reading Journal because of extraordinary circumstances beyond their control may be granted an incomplete for the course and must complete an agreement with the instructor outlining when assignments will be turned in for a grade.

**Attendance Policy:**
- Students may have 1 unexcused absence without penalty.
- Students may have 3 total absences without penalty, with 1 unexcused and 2 excused absences.
- An absence will be excused for the following reasons; written documentation from an authority is required:
  - Religious holiday
  - Catastrophic personal emergency
  - Illness requiring doctor’s visit
  - Jury duty
  - Required active or reserve military service
- Each penalized absence will reduce the final course grade by one-third letter grade.

**Participation Policy**
Active, constructive participation is expected, but not graded.

**Statement of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**
Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students seeking support for a disability or suspected disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Cornerstone at Gregg Hall, first floor; 314-935-5970; or [http://www.cornerstone.wustl.edu/](http://www.cornerstone.wustl.edu/).

**Writing Help:**
Students are encouraged to seek tutoring for the essays from the Writing Center at Olin Library. For more information, see [http://writingcenter.wustl.edu/](http://writingcenter.wustl.edu/).

**Academic Integrity Policy:**
At the heart of the University community is a shared and implicit sense of academic integrity among students and faculty. Such integrity fosters an atmosphere of mutual trust, which is necessary in the pursuit of excellence. Any violation of academic integrity will be forwarded to the Academic Integrity Committee, who will provide a recommendation that may include a zero for the given assignment and possibly an F for the course as a whole. Examples of violating academic integrity include, but are not limited to the following:

- Abetting: helping another student to cheat
- Plagiarism: claiming another’s work as your own
- Misrepresentation or dual-submission: submitting work done in one class for another class

Details on academic integrity and sanctions for violation are found at [http://studentconduct.wustl.edu/academic-integrity/](http://studentconduct.wustl.edu/academic-integrity/)

**Description of Assignments**
Reading Journal
For each class, students turn in a brief 300-400 word interpretive journal entry in response to the day’s readings. Students may skip ONE journal entry without penalty (see below on penalty).

Journal entries capture your impressions, observations, questions and analyses of the day’s readings, and they may serve as starting points for class discussion and possibly for the interpretive essays and exam essay questions. They do NOT have to be thesis-driven (with a single overall point to argue), but may focus on questions the readings provoke, along with your best tentative answers. They may be typed or hand-written, but if they’re hand-written, they must be legible.

*Special note on grading:* The instructor will collect journal entries each day to provide feedback to guide students in their reading. Individual journal entries ARE NOT graded. HOWEVER, at the end of the semester, students submit a Reading Journal, with two major sections 1) a reflective and analytical account of one or two themes that emerge through your journal entries (2-3 pages) and 2) all of your journal entries. FOR ANY JOURNAL ENTRIES NOT SUBMITTED ON TIME, the grade for the Reading Journal will be reduced. More details will follow later in the semester.

Interpretive Essays
Students will write two interpretive essays, each 3-4 pages long (double-spaced, printed). These papers are thesis-driven, with an overall argument in response to a given prompt. They will be graded on their strength of argument and insight into the literary works, overall paper and paragraph organization, grammatical correctness, and clarity of style. We will spend time in class reviewing a sample essay and discussing how to write a strong literary essay.

Exams
Mid-way and at the end of the semester, students will be tested on their knowledge of material through identification, short-answer, and essay questions. The second exam covers material read after the first-exam, except for an essay question that covers works from the first and second halves of the semester. For both exams, students are given the prompts for essay questions ahead of time so they can prepare.
Course Schedule

All readings are from the *Nature Book of Nature Writing*, unless described as a handout. Course schedule is subject to change at the professor’s discretion. Any changes will be announced in class and Blackboard. Students who miss class are responsible for finding out if there have been any changes.

Jan. 13  Brave New World
Columbus, from *Letter of Columbus* (handout)
Bradford, from *Of Plimouth Plantation* (handout)
Rowlandson, selected passage from *Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (handout)

Jan. 20  MLK Day (University Holiday—No Classes Held)

Jan. 27  Pastoral Dreams and Nightmares
*Green Perspectives*, “1850-1914: Evolving Environmental Awareness” (handout)
Crevecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer* and *Sketches* (51-63 and handout)
Jefferson, passage from *Notes on the Present State of Virginia* (handout)
Freneau, “On the Emigration to America” and “To Sir Toby”

Feb. 3  Exploring the New Nation
Bartram, from *Travels through North & South Carolina, etc.* (64-76)
Lewis, from *Journals of Lewis and Clark* (95-104)
Audubon, selections from *Ornithological Biography* (117-122)
Bryant, “The Prairies” (handout)
Catlin, from *Letters and Notes on … North American Indians* (129-140)

Feb. 10  Cultivating an Original Relation to the Land—*Walden*
“Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” from *Walden* (handout)

** Paper 1 **

Feb. 17  Opening of the West
Muir, “A Wind-Storm” and “The Water-Ouzel” (250-268)
Powell, from *Exploration of the Colorado River* (230-238)
Bird, from *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* (handout)
Whitman, “Song of the Redwood-Tree” (handout)

Feb. 24  Nature Faker Controversy
Seton, from *Wild Animals I have Known* (305-312)
Long, from *School of the Woods* (handout)
London, from *White Fang* (handout)
Burroughs, “Real and Sham Natural History” (handout)
T. Roosevelt, “Nature Fakers” and interview in *Everybody’s Magazine* (handouts)
London, “The Other Animals” (handout)
Mar. 3 Exam 1

Mar. 10 Spring Break (No Classes Held)

Mar. 17 Rise of Bioethics
   Green Perspectives, “1915-1949” and “1915-1975” (handouts)
   Leopold, from Sand County Almanac (376-397)
   Carson, “The Marginal World” (479-485)
   Stegner, “Coda: Wilderness Letter” (504-519)

Mar. 24 Gardens and Farms  36
   Thaxter, from An Island Garden (239-243) 4
   Wright, “Story of a Garden” (299-304) 5
   Berry, “Making of a Marginal Farm” (728-736) 8
   Kincaid, “Alien Soil” (1015-1022) 7
   Pollan, “Weeds Are Us” (1078-1090) 12

Mar. 31 Desert Places
   Thoreau, from Maine Woods (205-211)
   Austin, “Land of Little Rain” (320-326)
   Abbey, from Desert Solitaire (614-627)
   Grover, “Cutover” (891-899)
   Frost, “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening” and “Desert Places” (handout)

Apr. 7 Communion  37
   McLean, from A River Runs Through It (457-465) 8
   Merton, “Rain and the Rhinoceros” (545-553) 8
   Peacock, “The Big Snow” (832-841) 9
   Dillard, “Heaven and Earth in Jest” and “Living Like Weasels” (867-879) 12

Apr. 14 Modern Native American Visions of Nature  34
   Green Perspectives, “1976-1993” (handout)
   Luther Standing Bear, “Nature” (326-331) 5
   Lezard Heat-Moon, from PrairieErth (773-781) 8
   Momaday, Introduction to Way to Rainy Mountain (737-742) 5
   Silko, “Landscape, History and the Pueblo Imagination” (1003-1014) 11
   Erdrich, “Big Grass” (1043-1047) and “Captivity” (handout)

Apr. 21 Science, Myth, and Nature: Toward New Fables of Nature 44
   Thomas, “The World’s Biggest Membrane” (533, 536-38) 3
   Wallace, “The Human Element” (930-936) 6
   LeGuin, “A Very Warm Mountain” (651-57) 6
   Wilson, “Bird of Paradise” (658-662) 4
Lopez, “Migration” and “American Geographies (900, 903-908, 914-923) 15
McKibben, from *The End of Nature* (1120-1130) 10

Apr. 28 To be announced

May 5 Exam 2 and Reading Journal Due