

Elizabeth Dodd
Kansas State University
English 450: (Topics in English) Literature and Environment

What [people] see in Nature is a result of what they have been taught to see-- lessons in school, doctrines they have heard in church, books they have read. They are conditioned most of all by what they mean by *Nature*, a word that has gathered around itself paradox and ambiguity...

--Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*

This course will examine various ways writers have presented the natural world, in poems, stories, essays, memoirs, and novels. We'll explore the following questions: how do specific places (prairies, mountains, deserts, cities) affect the psyche of the people who call those places home? Why do some people claim humanity is a part of nature, while other claim it is apart from nature, and what's the difference, anyway? How do economic circumstances affect the views people have of the land and the animal species that also live there? What are some attitudes toward hunting and what implications do they have? How do cultural views of nature contribute to the ethical decisions a community makes? How can nature writing invite larger, metaphysical speculation and conversation? And most importantly, how do authors either reflect or challenge, through their creative work, specific societal views of nature?

Primary Texts:

Many of the older works we will read for this course are available for free through various electronic means because their copyright has expired and they're in the public domain. I'm going to provide links through KSOL in order to minimize the overall cost of our texts when possible. You may reference these on a laptop or tablet reader in class, so long as we are all focused on the topic of discussion. You may not use your phone. Others I'm excerpting from larger works in units small enough to constitute fair use under copyright law. These appear as scans available through KSOL. However, some texts are still under copyright and must be purchased. For these latter, please purchase hard copy texts to better facilitate in class discussion and activities.

Books to Purchase:

A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There, Aldo Leopold. You may use whatever paper edition of this book you like. Here's the ISBN of the one I will use. ISBN-13: 9780195059281

Into Great Silence: A Memoir of Discovery and Loss, Eva Saulitis. Beacon Press, 2013. ISBN-10: 080701446X or ISBN-13: 978-0807014462. Please get a paper edition.

Ceremony, Leslie Marmon Silko. You may use whatever paper edition of this book you like. Here's the ISBN of the one I will use. ISBN-13: 9780140086836

Prodigal Summer, Barbara Kingsolver. You may use whatever paper edition of this book you like. Here's the ISBN I will use. Harper Perennial, Paperback, 9780060959036.

Letters from Yellowstone, Diane Smith. Penguin Books: 1999. ISBN 01402.91814

Links:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/emerson/nature-contents.html>

Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Rural Hours*

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/cooper/hours/hours.html>

Thoreau, Henry David. *Journals* Walden years

<http://www.walden.org/documents/file/Library/Thoreau/writings/Writings1906/07Journal01/Chapter7.pdf>

Thoreau, "Where I lived and What I lived For" and "The Pond"

<http://thoreau.eserver.org/walden00.html>

Long, William J.

<http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=long&book=brother&story=woodcock>

Ernest Thompson Seton <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3031/3031-h/3031-h.htm>

(read opening paragraph before table of contents, then scroll down to "Silver Spot" and "Raggylug")

Burroughs, John. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30249/30249-h/30249-h.htm#Page_265

(scroll down to "Literary Treatment of Nature" and "The Crow")

Roosevelt, Theodore. "Nature Fakers"

<http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/speeches/naturefakers.pdf>

Muir, John.

http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/the_treasures_of_the_yosemite/

http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john_muir_writings/our_national_parks/chapter_2.html

<http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/ranchlifeandthehuntingtrail.pdf>

Roosevelt, Theodore.

<http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/ranchlifeandthehuntingtrail.pdf>

(scroll down to page 147 for "Wapiti" and page 153 for "Big-Horned Sheep")

Interview with Eva Saulitis

<https://orionmagazine.org/2013/04/five-questions-for-eva-saulitis/>

Redmond, Glenis

<https://orionmagazine.org/article/what-hangs-on-trees/>

Excerpts:

Alison Byerly, “The Uses of Landscape”

Rick Bass, “Her 1st Elk”

Louis Owens, “Burning the Shelter”

Joseph Bruchac, “At the End of Ridge Rd

William Faulkner, “The Bear”

Rudolfo Anaya, “Devil Deer”

Pam Houston “Dall”

Robin Kimmerer, “Learning the Grammar of Animacy”

Robert D. Bullard, “Confronting Environmental Racism in the 21st Century”

Karen Warren, “Nature Is A Feminist Issue”

Alice Walker, “Everything is a Human Being”

Lynn White, “Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”

Course Objectives:

- To gain literary acquaintance with some traditions of thought about wilderness, wildlife, and environment in the United States;
- To consider how such traditions are perpetuated or challenge one another through literary history;
- To explore the way personal experience (including gender and race), religion, and aesthetics shape an individual’s attitudes toward nature;
- To formulate, synthesize, and express your responses to our readings and explorations in writing and class discussion;
- To have some fun along the way in the outdoors as well as the classroom.

Requirements:

- *Regular* class attendance and participation. More than three absences, for any reason, can reduce your grade. More than six absences will result in failure for the course. There will be occasional pop quizzes over the assigned reading, for **5% of the course grade.**
- A reading journal with *weekly* entries in response to prompts for **20% of the course grade.**
- *Three* exams; each for **20% of the course grade.**
- *One* writing project related to the student’s major (examples: preparing an edited version of an essay, story or poem, providing any discipline-specific information vital to the piece (English majors); selecting a poem or other excerpt to include in a State Parks website or brochure, and explaining what the piece adds to the park’s history, mission, etc. and the brochure’s presentation (Wildlife and Parks); writing your own Almanac of the seasons, January-April (any major); evaluating

a piece of literature for its inter-disciplinary accuracy (historical, biological, geological) for **15% of the course grade.**

Extra-Curricular Fun:

We may arrange an optional field trip to Kearney, NE in order to view the Sandhill Crane migration from an Audubon Sanctuary blind and camp in a nearby state park. We may also arrange an optional field trip to our own Konza Prairie to watch Prairie Chickens on their mating lek some early morning on a Saturday or Sunday in April. Cost for each is about \$25.

~ January 2015 English 450~		
Mon	Wed	Fri
19 MLK day	21 Introduction to the course	23 Emerson chapters 1-3 KSOL link
26 Emerson 4-6 KSOL	28 Emerson 7, 8 KSOL	30 Thoreau Journals KSOL link Susan Fenimore Cooper KSOL link

~ February 2015 ~		
Mon	Wed	Fri
2 Thoreau, "Where I lived..." KSOL link	4 Thoreau, "The Pond" (link) and Dillard "Stalking"	6 Exam 1
9 Visit to Special Collections Meet fifth floor, Hale Library	11 Leopold, <i>Almanac</i> Part One	13 Long and Seton, KSOL link
16 Burroughs, "Literary Treatment of Nature" & "The Crow" link	18 In-class Ken Burns; KSOL link Roosevelt, "Nature Fakers"	20 In-class Ken Burns; KSOL link Muir, "Treasures of Yosemite"
23 In-class Ken Burns; KSOL Muir "Yellowstone"	25 Alison Byerly, "The Uses of Landscape" KSOL Leopold, "Chihuahua & Sonora"	27 Leopold, "Wilderness"; Smith, <i>Letters from Yellowstone</i> 1-58

~ March 2015 ~		
Mon	Wed	Fri
2 <i>Letters from Yellowstone</i> 59-146	4 <i>Letters from Yellowstone</i> 147-end	6 Leopold, "Wisconsin"; "The Conservation Esthetic"
9 Leopold, "Wildlife in American Culture" "Clandeboye"	11 Roosevelt, "Wapiti" (link) p. 147 & Bass, "Her 1 st Elk"	13 Louis Owens, "Burning the Shelter"; Joseph Bruchac, "At the End of Ridge Rd" KSOL

~ March 2015 ~		
Mon	Wed	Fri
16 Spring Break	18 Spring Break	20 Spring Break
23 Roosevelt “Big Horned Sheep” link p. 153 & Houston “Dall”	25 Faulkner, “The Bear” & Anaya, “Devil Deer”_ KSOL	27 Leopold, “Arizona & New Mexico”; “Illinois & Iowa”
30 Exam 2		

~ April 2015 ~		
Mon	Wed	Fri
	1 Leopold, “The Land Ethic”; Robin Kimmerer, “Learning the Grammar of Animacy” KSOL	3 Saulitis, <i>Into Great Silence</i> Part One, pp 1-54
6 Part Two: pp 55-122; Valdez history KSOL	8 Part Three: pp. 127-179 and “Vocal Repertoire” KSOL	10 Part Four: pp 179-245
13 Saulitis, “Wild Darkness” KSOL & Interview, KSOL	15 Silko, excerpts from KSOL	17 Redmond, “What Hangs on Trees” (link) & Bullard, “Confronting Environmental Racism in the 21 st Century” KSOL
20 Alice Walker, “Everything is a Human Being”	22 Warren, “Nature Is A Feminist Issue” KSOL	24 Kingsolver, <i>Prodigal Summer</i> pp 1-100
27 Kingsolver, 101-220	29 White, “Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” KSOL	

~ May 2015 ~		
Mon	Wed	Fri
		1 Kingsolver, <i>Prodigal Summer</i> pp 220-284
4 Kingsolver, <i>Prodigal Summer</i> pp 285-360	6 Kingsolver, <i>Prodigal Summer</i> 361-444	8 Review and Teaching Evaluations
11	13 9:40 AM – 11:30 AM Final Exam	15