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Website for this course: www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/barnhill/ES_243/es_243.html
Barnhill website: www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/barnhill/
Environmental Studies website: www.uwosh.edu/programs/enviro_studies/
English website: www.english.uwosh.edu/
Office hours: M: 9-10; Tu: 9-10; W: 10-11; Th: 10-11 and by appointment

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES/ENGLISH 243: INTRODUCTION TO NATURE WRITING
1:50-3:20, North Halsey 456, Fall 2008

“part of the reason for turning to natural history writing is because it is written from a point of view that takes in a larger world than the world of just the writer. . . . So you turn to natural history as a kind of writing that’s not just about polar bears . . . or plants or birds. It’s about the fundamental issues of life.”
--Barry Lopez, *Writing Natural History*, 23

“I suppose this is a conceit, but I believe this area of [nature] writing will not only one day produce a major and lasting body of American literature, but that it might also provide the foundation for a reorganization of American political thought.”
--Barry Lopez

I write to create red in a world that often appears black and white. . . . I write to imagine things differently and in imaging things differently perhaps the world will change. . . . I write against power and for democracy.
--Terry Tempest Williams, *Red*, 112

This country’s wisdom still resides in its populace, in the pragmatic and generous spirits of everyday citizens who have not forgotten their kinship with nature. They are individuals who will forever hold the standard of the wild high, knowing in their hearts that natural engagement is not an interlude but a daily practice, a commitment each generation must renew in the name of the land.”
--Terry Tempest Williams, *Red*, 70

We are destroying our country -- I mean our country itself, our land. This is a terrible thing to know, but it is not a reason for despair unless we decide to continue the destruction. If we decide to continue the destruction, that will not be because we have no other choice. This destruction is not necessary. It is not inevitable, except that by our submissiveness we make it so.
--Wendell Berry, “Compromise, Hell!”

THE NATURE OF THE COURSE

This course examines literary nature writing in America. We begin with a brief section of an **OVERVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY NATURE WRITING**. The majority of the course examines more deeply two major writers: **EDWARD ABBEY AND TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS**.

As we read these authors and discuss the themes of the course, we will consider other ideas.

- One is the very *notion of nature writing*, and we will consider how scholars of American literature have presented – and disputed – this **LITERARY GENRE**.
- Another is the way nature writers have presented *the natural world as sacred*, and thus the course explores the nature of the religious and the relationship between religion and literature. Nature writing is to a large extent **SPIRITUAL WRITING** and thus an interpretation of it is interdisciplinary, involving both literature and religion.

- A third theme is *environmental philosophy*. Nature writers have played a crucial role in the development of environmental ethics. We will consider the **ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS** of the writers.
- A fourth theme is *ecosocial responsibility*, focusing on how nature writers perceive the **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE** of nature writing. This involves critiques of American culture and Western ideology and on how they have presented the ideal relationship to nature at the personal and social levels. Here too our approach is interdisciplinary, analyzing how nature writing engages environmental and social problems.
- This course counts toward the **HUMANITIES** (Literature) general education requirement. Nature writing gives a distinctive perspective on both “humanities” and “liberal arts.”
- As a 200-level English course, this course also serves the **WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM**. It includes a focus on improvement of writing skills.

LIBERAL ARTS

This course is also a part of a *liberal arts education*. The College of Letters and Sciences (COLS) is the university’s liberal arts college. COLS summarizes liberal arts in the following way:

A liberal arts education transcends preparation for specific careers. A liberal arts education prepares students to be responsible citizens who understand and contribute to the changing world in which they live. It exposes students to a broad spectrum of knowledge about the human experience and the natural world, from contemporary science to literature, music and art. It enhances the skills of communication and critical thinking. It challenges students to appreciate their cultural heritage, to be sensitive to diverse traditions and opinions and to value truth. It encourages students to develop a lifelong commitment to inquiry. In sum, a liberal arts education develops the whole person who values knowledge for its own sake as well as for the achievement of specific objectives. <<http://www.uwosh.edu/colleges/cols/home.htm>>

ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES AT UW OSHKOSH

UWO has recently stipulated what we consider the essential learning outcomes for the university as a whole—what every UWO student should obtain by graduation. This course involves all four:

1. Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in fine and performing arts, humanities, mathematics and science, and social science
 - *Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring*

2. Skills, both Intellectual and Practical, including

- Identification and objective evaluation of theories and assumptions; critical and creative thinking; written and oral communication; quantitative literacy; technology and information literacy; teamwork, leadership, and problem solving
 - *Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance*

3. Responsibility, as Individuals and Communities, including

- Knowledge of sustainability and its applications; civic knowledge and engagement—local and global; intercultural knowledge and competence; ethical reasoning and action; foundations and skills for lifelong learning
 - *Developed through real-world challenges and active involvement with diverse communities*

4. Learning: Integrated, Synthesized, and Advanced, including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
 - *Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.*

GOALS

CONTENT

1. To introduce *American nature writing*, its qualities, history, and two contemporary writers
2. To examine the *environmental philosophy* in American nature writing, including their views of nature, our relationship to it, and environmental ethics..
3. To examine the *social and political views* in American nature writing.
4. To consider the *religious dimension* of American nature writing.

SKILLS AND QUALITIES

5. To study these subjects in a way that develops the quality of your *thinking*, especially the ability to think analytically, critically, and constructively. This is part of the LIBERAL ARTS aspect of the course.
 6. To cultivate your own sense of **responsibility** for the natural and social worlds we live in.
 7. To develop the ability to examine a subject in an *interdisciplinary* way.
 8. Through the composition and revision of different types of papers, to develop your ability to *write* with clarity, correctness, incisiveness, and vigor.
 9. In general class discussion, small discussion groups, peer-editing groups, and an oral presentation, to develop your ability to *speak, listen, and question* in an effective way.
 10. In group discussions and peer editing, to develop skills in *cooperative learning*.
- *we will analyze and discuss the nature and process of these skills throughout the class*

REQUIRED TEXTS

Note: *You need to purchase all of the books at the beginning of the semester because the bookstore will send them back after a few weeks.*

Abbey, Edward. *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. New York: Ballantine, 1985.

Barnhill, David Landis, ed. *At Home on the Earth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Williams, Terry Tempest. *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*. New York: Vintage, 2002.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

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|-----|--|
| 15% | Class discussion, including group student panel |
| 20% | Reading journal: study questions, precis, rhetorical analyses |
| 10% | Test on American nature writing |
| 25% | Paper on Terry Tempest Williams |
| 25% | Paper on Edward Abbey |
| 5% | $\frac{3}{4}$ to one-page double-spaced reflection on each of two co-curricular events concerning nature (e.g., Earth Charter events) or literature. (Total of two responses, $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 page each.) Due the first class period after Earth Charter week. |

CALCULATING GRADES

Grades will be calculated with the following schema:

- 92%: A; 88-92%: AB; 83-87%: B; 78-82%: BC; 73-77%: C; 68-72%: CD; 63-67%: D; <63%: F.

ELECTRONIC CONTACT

We will be in contact throughout the semester via email. It is university policy that you establish and use your uwosh.edu email account. I will be sending you important messages from time to time through email, and you are responsible for them. So you should check your email at least once a day. If you have a personal email account (e.g., yahoo or hotmail), you can set it up to forward those messages to your uwosh.edu account. It is your responsibility to ensure that we are in email contact – let me know if you

are not receiving emails from me. In addition, much of the class material is on the course website, and you are responsible for accessing that material.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

- **DUE DATES:** You **must submit assignments by the beginning of class on the due date**. Papers handed in after that time will be marked down: 1-2 days: one level (e.g., B to BC); 3-6 days: two levels; 7-10 days: three levels; more than 10 days: F. *Do not miss class in order to work on your homework or papers.*
- **ATTENDANCE:** Both because of the difficult nature of the material and the importance of class discussion, regular attendance is crucial to all concerned. Students will be allowed **two absences due to circumstances other than illness** [bring note on the illness]. **Each subsequent absence will result in a reduction of the final grade one mark**, e.g. BC to C, per absence. **MORE THAN SIX [6] ABSENCES FOR ANY REASON WILL RESULT IN REMOVAL FROM THE CLASS.** ABSENCES ON DAYS WHEN THERE IS PEER EDITING WILL COUNT DOUBLE. Classes missed on account of athletic contests or family emergencies do not count as absences due to illness – save your “free days” for such emergencies.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is committed to a standard of academic integrity for all students. The system guidelines state: “Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors.” (UWS 14.01, Wisconsin Administrative Code) Students are subject to disciplinary action for academic misconduct, which is defined in UWS 14.03, Wisconsin Administrative Code. Students at UW Oshkosh have been suspended from the University for academic misconduct. Students are encouraged to review the procedures to violations of academic honesty. The system guidelines and local procedures are printed in the *University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Student Discipline Code 2003-2004* and can be found on the Dean of Students website at www.uwosh.edu/dean/conduct.htm

In section UWS 14.03, **academic misconduct** is defined as an act in which a student:

- (a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- (c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- (d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- (e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or student's academic performance; or
- (f) Assists other students in any of these acts.

For a website that gives a **helpful discussion of plagiarism**, see <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Students need to actively and critically think about the reading before class.
***** Bring all relevant texts to class, including hard copies of e-reserves *****

INTRODUCTION TO NATURE WRITING

- W 9/3 INTRODUCTION
- M 9/8 NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE, "NATURE," AND NATURE WRITING.
--N. Scott Momaday. "A First American Views His Land." *At Home on the Earth*, 19-29. <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
--Leslie Marmon Silko. "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination." *At Home on the Earth*, 30-42. <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
>> **Hand in** responses to the Momaday and Silko study questions <on the course website>.
- W 9/10 WHAT IS NATURE WRITING?
--Barnhill, "Surveying the Landscape." <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
>> *Be prepared to discuss the study questions* <on the course website>.
- M 9/15 SPIRITUALITY IN NATURE WRITING. DEEP ECOLOGY.
--Barnhill, "The Spiritual Dimension of Nature Writing." <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
--David Barnhill, "Deep Ecology – Berkshire Encyclopedia" <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
--Bron Taylor, "Deep Ecology ERN" <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
>> **Hand in** précis of "The Spiritual Dimension" <See description of "precis" on course website>
- W 9/17 THE LOSS OF THE SENSE OF PLACE,
--bell hooks. "Touching the Earth." *At Home on the Earth*, 51-56.
--Wendell Berry. "A Native Hill" (part 1). *At Home on the Earth*, 45-50.
>> *Be prepared to discuss the study questions for both essays* <on the course website>.
- M 9/22 BIOREGIONALISM AND THE SENSE OF PLACE
--Gary Snyder. From "The Place, the Region, and the Commons." *At Home on the Earth*, 93-102.
--Thomas Berry. "The Hudson River Valley: A Bioregional Story." *At Home on the Earth*, 103-110.
>> **Hand in** a rhetorical analysis of Snyder OR Berry
>> *Be prepared to discuss study questions for the Snyder essay*
- W 9/24 DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PLACE: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
--Wendell Berry. "A Native Hill" (part 2). *At Home on the Earth*, 65-76.
--Wendell Berry. Selected poems. <**on e-reserve: print and bring to class**>
>> *Be prepared to discuss the themes and images of this section of "A Native Hill"*
>> *Be prepared to discuss three of the poems*
- M 9/29 DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PLACE: STAYING PUT
--Scott Russell Sanders. "Settling Down." *At Home on the Earth*, 77-92.
>> **Hand in** answers to study questions to Sanders essay **OR** complete a rhetorical analysis of Hubbell.
- W 10/1 DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PLACE: A LITERATURE OF ENGAGEMENT.
--Sue Hubbell. From *A Country Year: Living the Questions*. *At Home on the Earth*, 201-207.
--Rick Bass. "On Willow Creek." *At Home on the Earth*, 211-226.
>> *Be prepared to discuss themes and images in the two essays*

- M 10/6 DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PLACE: ADAPTING NATIVE CULTURES
 --Richard Nelson. "The Gifts of Deer." *At Home on the Earth*, 125-147.
 >>Be prepared to discuss study questions <on the course website>.
- W 10/8 TEST ON AMERICAN NATURE WRITING

*** Earth Charter Community Summit October 11-16 ***

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN NATURE WRITING AND SPIRITUALLY-BASED POLITICS

Edward Abbey

- M 10/13 *DESERT SOLITAIRE*
 --Jack Loeffler, "Edward Abbey ERN" <on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 --Selections from *Desert Solitaire*. "Author's Introduction," "The First Morning," "Solitaire,"
 "Cliffrose and Bayonets," "The Heat of Noon: Rock and Tree and Cloud"
 ➤ Hand in rhetorical analysis of ONE of these chapters from *Desert Solitaire* (excluding the Introduction)
 ➤ Be prepared to discuss study questions
- W 10/15 *DESERT SOLITAIRE. Student panel 1*
 --Selections from *Desert Solitaire*. "Down the River" (selections: 188-193 [173-178], 207-211 [189-192], 228-245 [206-220]), "Episodes and Visions," "Bedrock and Paradox."
 ➤ Be prepared to discuss study questions
- M 10/20 ABBEY'S ANARCHISM & RADICAL RHETORIC. SOCIAL ECOLOGY.
 --Barnhill, "Anarchism" <on course website: print and bring to class>
 --Barnhill, "Social Ecology and Sustainability" <on course website: print and bring to class>
 --Barnhill, "Why We Should Take Seriously Radical Views" <on course website: print and bring to class>
 --Abbey, "Theory of Anarchy," *One Life at a Time, Please*, 25-28. <on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 ➤ Hand in study questions on Abbey's "A Theory of Anarchy"
- *** Responses to co-curricular events due (unless you have made other arrangements with me) ***
- W 10/22 WILDERNESS AND ANARCHISM. Student panel 2.
 --"Freedom and Wilderness, Wilderness and Freedom," *The Journey Home*, 227-238; "A Writer's Credo," *One Life at a Time, Please*, 161-178; <all on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 --recommended: "Shadows from the Big Woods," *The Journey Home*, 223-226; "The Conscience of a Conqueror," *Abbey's Road*, 133-137;
 ➤ Be prepared to discuss study questions
- M 10/27 MONKEY WRENCHING.
 --"Eco-Defense." *One Life at a Time, Please*, 29-32. <on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 --Introduction to *The Monkey Wrench Gang* <on course website: print and bring to class>
 --*The Monkey Wrench Gang*, chapter 5. <on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 ➤ Be prepared to discuss the study questions on "Eco-Defense" and *Monkey Wrench Gang* chapter 5 <on course website: print and bring to class>
- *** Prewriting for Edward Abbey paper due. See webpage for instructions.
- W 10/29 MONKEY WRENCHING. Student panel 3.
 --*The Monkey Wrench Gang*, chapter 6 <on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 --Debating ecotage: Hargrove, Abbey, and Foreman, *Radical Environmentalism* 250-255 <on e-reserve: print and bring to class>
 ➤ Be prepared to discuss the study questions on the Hargrove, Abbey, Foreman debate and *Monkey Wrench Gang* chapter 6 (on course website)

- M 11/3 FILM: WALDEN
 *** *Three copies of first draft of paper on Edward Abbey due, beginning of class*
 >> *Email first draft of paper to barnhill@uwosh.edu by class time*
- W 11/5 WRITING WORKSHOP: PEER EDITING.
 --read peers' papers on Edward Abbey

Terry Tempest Williams

- M 11/10 NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE AND AMERICAN NATURE WRITING
 --Sarah Taylor, "Terry Tempest Williams ERN" <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class*>
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Prologue: A Sprig of Sage" (abbreviated), *Pieces of White Shell*, 1-5, 8 <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class*> ????
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Lion Eyes," Kokopelli's Return," "Perfect Kiva," *Red*, 27-31, 43-45, 46-51.
 >> *Be prepared to discuss study questions.*
- *** *Paper on Edward Abbey due, beginning of class*
- W 11/12 REFUGE: FAMILY AND NATURE IN LOSS. ECOFEMINISM.
 --Laura Hobgood-Oster, "Ecofeminism ERN" <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class*>
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Prologue," "Pintails, Mallards, and Teals," *Refuge* 3-4, 239-252
 <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class*>
 >> *Be prepared to discuss Ecofeminism and study questions on Refuge*
- M 11/17 THE EROTIC LANDSCAPE. **Student panel 4**
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "The Clan of the One-Breasted Women," *Refuge* <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class* (listed with "Prologue" and "Pintails")>
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "River Music" and "The Erotic Landscape," *Red*, 148-150, 104-111
 >> *Be prepared to discuss study questions*
- W 11/19 ENGAGING NATURE.
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Desert Quartet (Earth, Water, Fire, Air)" and "Changing Constellations," *Red*, 195-211, 116-123.
 >> *Hand in answers to study questions*
- M 11/24 AN EARTH-CENTERED, EROTICS OF DEMOCRACY. **Student panel 5**
 --Barnhill, "Terry Tempest Williams and the Literature of Engagement." <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class*>
 >> *Be prepared to discuss study questions <on the course website >.*
- W 11/26 **Happy Thanksgiving break. Go out and enjoy nature.**
- M 12/1 THE WORK OF THE COYOTE CLAN.
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Home Work" and "Coyote Clan," *Red*, 1-26
 >> *Hand in 1 page analysis of these essays: in what ways do they involve a "literature of engagement"?*
- *** *Prewriting for Terry Tempest Williams paper due. See webpage for instructions.*
- W 12/3 ENGAGING THE POWERS THAT BE. **Student panel 6.**
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Labor," "America's Red Rock Wilderness," "Statement," *Red*, 154-163, 61-71, 72-78
 --Terry Tempest Williams, "Engagement" (7 pages) <*on e-reserve: print and bring to class*>.
- M 12/8 REVIEW TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS AND AMERICAN NATURE WRITING
 --Barnhill, "The Issue of the Effectiveness of Literary Techniques" <*on course website: print and bring to class*>
- W 12/10 NO CLASS
 *** *Paper on Terry Tempest Williams due, noon*