

BIO 4010/6010-01/ENG 4460/6460-02: Eco-Narratives
Fall 2020, Online with set meet-time
Thurs 2:00-3:20 pm (Weeks 1-11) and Tues/Thurs (Weeks 12-14)

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Office Hours: by email or online appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OUTCOMES

This course engages students with immersive, integrated ecological and literary research, reading, and writing. Through biocultural perspectives, we will explore place-based narratives in ecological studies, ecocriticisms, environmental writing, and climate fictions. Readings and class discussions will emphasize the importance of effective storytelling to scientific and literary representations of humans and nonhumans in their shared environments. We will think about different modes, patterns, and forms of narrative practices when telling eco-centered stories, and the necessity of collaborative storytelling projects when addressing the complexities of environmental conditions at the intersections of scientific and humanities-based inquiry. Individual and group assignments will provide students with opportunities to write their own eco-narratives about specific environments, incorporating key themes and motifs from assigned texts and class topics, such as: extinctions, rewildings, restorations, invasions, mutations, adaptations, naturecultures, nonhuman life cycles, place histories, and human/nonhuman encounters.

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Identify and explain the methods and models that scientists, environmental scholars, and fiction writers employ when researching and narrating eco-centered stories;
- Understand the intersections of scientific and literary interests and how these interdisciplinary perspectives might be used toward collaborative storytelling practices;
- Understand how cultural, biological, political, and historical factors play an important role in shaping the kinds of narratives that are told about places and their ecologies;
- Understand how the use of characterization, setting, point of view, imagery, and other literary elements convey meaning in scientific, nonfiction, and creative writing;
- Demonstrate thoughtful reading of literary and scientific texts and express interpretations about assigned readings and their related themes both orally and through writing.

This is an upper-level BIO/ENG **cross-listed course** for juniors and seniors. Students will be expected to attend and participate in weekly online class discussions of assigned readings; weekly lectures will be in the form of podcast discussions between the co-instructors.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Butler, Octavia. *Dawn (Xenogenesis, Bk. 1)* (1987). Aspect, 1997. **ISBN: 9780446603775**
- VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014. **ISBN: 9780374104092**

Additional readings provided in the course website

COURSE EVALUATION:
Grades are based on the following points (1,000 total)

Website	100
Eco-Postcards	150
Nonhuman Story	150
Place History	200
Encounter Narrative	250
Participation and Attendance	150

Grading Scale:	
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

***Guidelines and rubrics for assignments available on the [course website](#). All assignments will be graded by both instructors and you will be given the average of the two grades.**

Participation and Attendance

Students are expected to attend and participate in the weekly online Zoom class discussions. This includes completing all reading assigned for that day and being able to respond to questions and engage respectfully with peers. You are also expected to prepare 1-2 questions about the readings, which you will be able to ask during discussion and/or post in the Zoom chat box. If you meet all of these expectations then you will receive full credit (FC); if you log on late or leave early, or are clearly unprepared or unwilling to participate, you will receive partial credit (PC); if you are absent or engage in any disruptive behaviors (see general conduct rules below), you will receive no credit (NC). Absences are factored into your final participation grade, which is based on the average of full credit, partial credit, and no credit points that you've earned. You can keep track of your participation through the Attendance register in Pilot; although this does not provide the average, you may ask for this at any time in the semester after Week 8.

ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES & POLICY

Penalties for academic dishonesty and student procedure in academic dishonesty prosecution are clarified in the *Wright State University Student Handbook* and on the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct website at: <http://www.wright.edu/students/judicial/integrity.html>. Plagiarism is using other people's ideas and/or words without crediting them and is considered intellectual theft; paraphrasing also requires citations and page numbers. For further information about plagiarism, refer to: <http://www.wright.edu/academics/writingctr/resources/plagiarism.html>.

INSTRUCTOR POLICY ON PLAGIARISM: If any portion of submitted work is plagiarized, you will receive a "0" on that assignment; if you commit a second offense, regardless of circumstances, you will receive an F for the entire course and may be subject to disciplinary action.

GENERAL EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK

- A = Demonstrates advanced critical thinking skills and outstanding knowledge of the readings and other course content. Ideas are original and depth of analysis is excellent. Writing is clear, concise, free of basic errors, easy to follow **and** shows excellent command of language and disciplinary style.
- B = Demonstrates solid critical thinking skills and familiarity with readings and other course content; provides interesting illustrations and examples. Writing is coherent, concise, easy to follow, and **nearly** free of basic errors.
- C = Demonstrates basic understanding of the readings and other course content and can provide a good summary of material but only provides superficial analysis and support for issues raised. Writing is coherent and easy to follow but wordy, repetitious and/or marred by numerous errors.
- D = Demonstrates minimal understanding of readings and course content; ideas are vague or not supported by any analysis and shows overall lack of effort. Writing lacks general coherence and shows little to no command of the English language.
- F = Demonstrates serious lack of understanding of readings and other course content; serious lack of analysis and/or effort. Writing is incoherent and impossible to follow
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COURSE POLICIES & GENERAL CONDUCT

NB: *Failure to follow these guidelines may lead to dismissal from the class.*

- You are expected to compose yourself as if in a professional environment. Your behavior in an online classroom should be no different than in a face-to-face class. Unprofessional behavior will imperil your ability to get a good grade, but also your ability to receive a letter of recommendation should the need arise. Your individual opinions about the texts and issues explored in this class are encouraged, but you must be able to present your interpretations or stance through an informed lens, using critical thinking and/or verifiable evidence beyond personal beliefs or anecdotes (such as reference to textual examples, reliable secondary sources, or socio-cultural, historical, scientific and political contexts).
- You are expected to follow the class calendar and all assignment guidelines. If you are confused about any of these it is your responsibility to ask for clarification, and NOT the night before something is due. Late submissions will be accepted up to two days after the due date, with a full letter grade deducted for each day that it is late, and any missing assignment will receive a zero. All submission deadlines are posted in the class calendar below as well as in Pilot.
- Raider Mail is the best way to communicate with us, and you should follow the general rule of including both instructors in your emails. You can expect to receive a reply from one or both of us within a 24-hour period on weekdays; we normally do not respond to e-mail on weekends (Sat-Sun). Please follow general rules of e-mail etiquette; if you don't know what this is then learn it. When asking a question, make sure it is concise, calm, and coherent (i.e. not rambling, vague, panicked, or full of spelling and grammatical errors); this will make a much more favorable impression and will help us provide the help you need.
- Regularly check the newsfeed on the course homepage in Pilot for any class updates or info. If we make changes to the syllabus or class calendar, we will post them in Pilot and communicate the changes by email. Be tech savvy or learn how to be; don't expect us to provide you with this kind of training. Wright State has excellent learning resources for technology-related questions. If you have questions about

A Note about Covid-19

- We want to assure students that we are sensitive to the various ways the ongoing pandemic continues to impact our lives. We are luckily entering the fall semester well-prepared for online learning and will not have the disruption of suddenly moving things to remote instruction as we did in the spring. Nevertheless, we understand that many students may need to deal with a number of health-related concerns, including the possibility of looking after sick family members and/or their own physical and mental well-being. Be sure to continue using the Wright State Covid-19 website as a resource: <https://www.wright.edu/coronavirus>.
 - If you experience any technical or accessibility issues when attending class discussions or using the course website (including downloading course materials), or making your own websites, please let us know and we will work with you to the best of our abilities. We are willing to grant extensions in cases of illness or emergency, which should ideally be documented and, if possible, communicated to us *before* the due date and not after the missed deadline. Please note that we reserve the right to deny any requests for extensions and will only grant incompletes to students who have consistently participated and are missing no more than 1-2 assignments. Extra credit is only provided as an option available to the entire class.
 - Regardless of circumstances, we want to ensure that you are able to fully participate and succeed in this class. We are aware that online learning has its challenges and drawbacks but have tried to design a class that is interactive and enjoyable. We encourage open communication and feedback and will do our best to be as flexible and accommodating as possible.
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USEFUL CAMPUS & ONLINE RESOURCES

University Libraries: The University Libraries are the scholarly information center for the University. In support of the University's mission of educational excellence, the Libraries collect, organize, preserve, and facilitate access to scholarly resources in all formats; support teaching, learning, and research in an intellectually open environment; and provide instruction in the use of traditional and new information resources and technologies. The libraries' online catalog, databases, and interlibrary loan service is essential for conducting research. Web page: <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/>

Disability Services: If you require course accommodations due to a disability, please inform the Office of Disability Studies so we can make arrangements early in the semester. For more information about support services offered by Disability Services (E186 Student Union), call 775-5680; TTY: 775-5844. Or visit their Web page: http://www.wright.edu/students/dis_services/

Counseling and Wellness Services: If you are suffering from depression or have any other mental health concerns, please be aware that counseling services are available on campus. Counseling and Wellness offers a wide range of services to the Wright State University community, including the following: group, individual, couples, and family counseling, crisis intervention, and outreach. They offer specialized services on a variety of mental health, multicultural, diversity, and wellness issues. Location: the bottom level of the Student Union off the Atrium and below the Admissions Office in suite 053. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 775-3407 or stop by to set an appointment. Web page: <http://www.wright-counseling.com/>

CLASS CALENDAR

*Subject to changes

WEEK	DATE	Class Topics, Assigned Readings, and Assignment Due Dates
		UNIT ONE: The Anthropocene and Environmental Writing
ONE	8/25	Podcast (1): BIO/ENG Perspectives and Anthropocene Storytelling
	8/27	Discussion: Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill, “The Anthropocene: are humans now overwhelming the great forces of nature?” and Nixon, “The Anthropocene: The Promise and Pitfalls of an Epochal Idea”
TWO	9/1	Podcast (2): Environmental Writing and Eco-Centered Stories
	9/3	Discussion: Aldo Leopold, from <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> (“Odyssey” and “65290”), Rachel Carson, <i>Silent Spring</i> (excerpts from <i>The New Yorker</i>) and Joy Williams, “Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp”
		UNIT TWO: Extinctions, Rewildings, and Nonhuman Stories
THREE	9/8	Podcast (3): Nonhuman Stories and Extinction Narratives
	9/10	Discussion: Thom van Dooren and Deborah Bird Rose, “Lively Ethography: Storying Animist Worlds” and Ursula K. Heise, “Cultures of Extinction”
FOUR	9/15	Podcast (4): Precarious Environments and Multispecies Mutualism Video (1): Campus Woods
	9/17	Discussion: Anna Tsing, <i>The Mushroom at the End of the World</i> (Prologue & Part One) and Pesendofer et al. “Scatter hoarding corvids as seed dispersers for oaks and pines”
	9/20	DUE: Eco-Postcards (Sunday 11:59 pm)
FIVE	9/22	Podcast (5): Nonhuman Networks and Communication Video (2): Bill Yeck Park
	9/24	Discussion: Robert McFarlane, “The Understorey” (<i>Underland</i> , Chap. 4) and Suzanne W. Simard, “Mycorrhizal Networks Facilitate Tree Communication, Learning, and Memory”
SIX	9/29	Podcast (6): Forest Ecologies and Entanglements
	10/1	Discussion: Richard Powers, <i>The Overstory</i> (Chap. 1 & 7)
	10/4	DUE: Nonhuman Stories (Sunday 11:59 pm)
		UNIT THREE: Disturbance, Resurgence, and Place Histories
SEVEN	10/6	Podcast (7): Wilderness Spaces/Places
	10/8	Discussion: Lutz, “The Vegetation of Heart’s Content,” Rooney and Dress, “Species Loss over Sixty-Six Years in the Ground-Layer Vegetation of Heart’s Content,” and Alverson, “The Habitat Island of Dr. Moreau”
EIGHT	10/13	Podcast (8): Forest Histories—Disturbance & Resurgence
	10/15	Discussion: Tsing, <i>The Mushroom at the End of the World</i> (Chap. 11-13)
NINE	10/20	Podcast (9): Landscape, Environment, and Race
	10/22	Discussion: Lauret Savoy, <i>Trace</i> (Chap 3-4, “Alien Land Ethic” and “Madeline Traces”) and Curt Meine, “The View from Man Mound”
TEN	10/27	Podcast (10): Urban Spaces and Climate Change
	10/29	Discussion: Kim Stanley Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> (“Citizen” Chapters) and Tschakert, Ellis, Anderson, and Obeng, “One thousand ways to experience loss”
	11/1	DUE: Place Histories (Sunday 11:59 pm)

		UNIT FOUR: Invasions, Mutations, Adaptations, and Encounter Narratives
ELEVEN	11/3	Podcast (11): Darwin, Evolution and Speculative Literature
	11/5	Online Lecture: Introduction to Jeff VanderMeer's <i>Annihilation</i>
TWELVE	11/10	Discussion: Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> , Ch. 1-2 (pp. 3-87)
	11/12	Discussion: Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> , Ch. 3-5 (pp. 89-195)
THIRTEEN	11/17	Online Lecture: Introduction to Octavia Butler's <i>Dawn</i>
	11/19	Discussion: Octavia Butler, <i>Dawn</i> (Parts I & II)
FOURTEEN	11/24	Discussion: Octavia Butler, <i>Dawn</i> (Parts III & IV)
	11/26	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Holiday
FIFTEEN	12/1	Podcast (12): Collaborative Storytelling/Class Wrap-up
	12/3	Writing Workshop: Encounter Narratives
EXAM WK	12/10	DUE: Encounter Narratives (Thursday 11:59 pm)