English 2329. 020:
American Literature: Environmental Literature and Film

TR 11-12.20
304 Preston

Spring 2010

This class will focus on how recent books and films portray current environmental crises. We will focus on four major issues: toxins, climate change, extinction and biodiversity, and the state of the oceans. We will explore how the literature, nonfiction, film, photography, and web sites portray these issues, examining how they incorporate scientific facts and frameworks, how they make different kinds of appeals to their audiences, and how they attempt to effect change. The literature includes novels, autobiographies, science writing, poetry, and science fiction. The films will include Everything’s Cool: A Toxic Comedy about Global Warming, Texas Gold; Being Caribou, and Sharkwater.

Required Texts and materials:
Percival Everett, Watershed
Suzanne Antonetta, Body Toxic
Mark Lynas, High Tide: The Truth About Climate Change
Margaret Atwood, Oryx and Crake
Ruth Ozeki, All Over Creation
E. O. Wilson, The Future of Life
Sylvia Earle, The World is Blue: How Our Fate and the Oceans are One
A stapler, bluebooks for exams.
You must purchase or rent the following films: Everything’s Cool: A Toxic Comedy about Global Warming (Gold and Helfand) and Sharkwater (Rob Stewart).
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:30 and by appointment.
(Note: although I will usually be in my office during those times I may have to attend meetings, graduate student defenses, etc. Please email me to confirm that I will be in my office or to arrange an appointment.)

Course Objectives
1. To introduce information, arguments, and reactions to four major contemporary environmental crises and to explore the meaning and significance of these crises via an examination of literature, film, and photography.
2. To develop students’ abilities to interpret the meaning and effectiveness of literary and artistic works, especially as they pertain to representing environmental crises.
3. To develop students’ ability to read critically by studying a variety of literary elements such as form, structure, style, imagery, diction, and argument. To develop students’ skills at visual analysis by studying a variety of films, photographs, and multimedia.
4. To enable students to demonstrate their understanding of and their ability to analyze literary texts, nonfiction films, and multimedia both orally and in writing.
5) To improve students’ skills, more generally, in reading, writing, and critical thinking.

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students should demonstrate an understanding of the ideas, information, arguments, questions, and concepts about the subject matter of the class.
2. Students should demonstrate their abilities to think critically about the literature and films in the course, using application, analysis, interpretation, comparison, contrast, argument, critique, and evaluation.
3. Students should be able to formulate original, illuminating, and persuasive ideas about all the texts and films in the class. These ideas should reflect an understanding of the content of the course.
4. Students should be able to express their ideas in clear, logical, organized, concise, and persuasive ways, in both written and oral forms.

Requirements
You must complete all the required work in order to obtain credit for the course.
Participation (being well prepared for class discussion and making valuable contributions to the discussion): 10%
One two-page response to a talk: 9%
Three Short (3-page) Essays: 21% (Choose 3, skip 1)
First Exam: 15%
Second Exam: 15%
Final Exam: 30%
Exams
The exams may contain some identification and short-answer questions, but most of the points will be from essay questions. The final exam will be comprehensive. Bring bluebooks and pens for the exams.

Papers
All papers must be “typed,” stapled, and have page numbers and a creative title. The papers must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. They will not be accepted if they are late. For the 3 three-page essays, I will give 4 different essay assignments, each with its own due date; you can pick 3 of them. The day you hand your paper in you will be asked to discuss it with the class. The summary and commentary on an event is due Tuesday, March 30th. Please take advantage of the free help given in the Writing Center.

Special Event: All students will be required to attend one talk related to the course; this is required to pass the class. You may choose between these three events. Please mark your calendar. More information is available here: http://www.uta.edu/uac/one-book/one-book-events.

FRIDAY, January 29 - 12:00 pm The Whitehawk Community Experiment.

FRIDAY, February 12 - 12:00 pm Bodily Natures: The Environmental Activism of the Posthuman.

WEDNESDAY, March 10 - 7:00 pm **Bill McKibben** [Please attend this if you can.]

You will be required to write a 2-page paper summarizing the main points of the talks and connecting them to the texts and ideas of our class. You will receive one class period off for attending one event. If you cannot attend one of these talks, you may attend an hour and a half of talks during the "Sustainability Across The Curriculum" symposium on Thurs. March 25, 9-12, in the Bluebonnet room of the U.C.

Grading Policy: The final grade will be calculated according to the percentages listed above. Then if there are more than 3 absences, the grade will be adjusted accordingly (see below). [Grading Scale: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=0-59]

Participation
Your active, informed participation is crucial to the success of the course. Carefully prepare for each class period by doing the reading and watching the films in a rigorous and inquisitive manner. You may have to watch the films two or more times before you are prepared for class. Keeping your own journal or notebook would be very helpful. Every day that you come to class you should have something valuable to say. You will be graded on both the quality and quantity of your contributions.
Attendance/Punctuality
I will grade on actual participation, rather than on mere attendance. However, if you miss class four times, I will lower your course grade and if you miss five classes you will fail the course. Everyone gets three absences; use them wisely. You do not need to tell me why you were absent—that is your own private business—just don’t miss more than three classes. If you come in after I have marked the rolls, that will count as an absence—so come to class on time.

RESOURCES:
The Writing Center: The Writing Center offers free help with your papers at any stage of the writing process. They are located in the Central Library, room 411. You can just walk in with your paper or you can make an appointment: http://www.uta.edu/owl/appointments.htm. They even offer an online lab: http://www.uta.edu/owl/. They also offer a helpful list of online resources: http://www.uta.edu/owl/resources.htm.

The OneBook web site: http://www.uta.edu/uac/one-book/?c=ONE-BOOK-2009-10

Official UTA Policies
Drop Policy: It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Academic Integrity: It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the UT System Regents’ Rule 50101, §2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

Student Support Services Available: The University of Texas at Arlington has established a variety of programs to help students meet the challenges of college life. Support to students includes advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and writing assistance. For a complete list of academic support services, visit the Academic Assistance resource page of the Office of Student Success Programs, www.uta.edu/uac/studentsuccess/academic-assistance. To help students address personal, academic and career concerns, individual counseling is also available. For more information, students are encouraged to contact Counseling Services www.counseling.uta.edu at (817) 272-3671 or visit a counselor in 216 Davis Hall.
**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. **Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at [http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/](http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/). There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

**Respect your fellow students, respect the classroom:**

1. **TURN OFF** all pagers, beepers, cell phones and other electronic devices! You may not have these devices turned on while in class. You may not text message or read email or engage in any other electronic activities during class. You may not use laptops in class.

2. Arrive to class **ON TIME**. It is distracting to both the professor and the students to have someone come in late. If you come in late, you will be marked absent.

3. Always arrive **PREPARED** to work. Every day we will have work to do in class. Some days we will work in small groups. If you are not prepared then you will not be able to contribute to the class or to your small group. You may be asked to leave class if you are not prepared. Also, remember that for English classes you **MUST BRING** whatever **TEXTS** we are discussing that day to class.

3. Treat your classmates with **RESPECT**. Learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We will often discuss controversial, volatile topics, so everyone needs to learn how to disagree with someone’s views, beliefs, or perspectives while maintaining a sense of civility. This is a rare skill in our culture, but a skill that is necessary for an educated, humane, democratic society.

**SYLLABUS**

*Always come to class prepared. *Always bring the books we are discussing.

**Introductions.**

Week One. January 19 & 21
Tuesday: Introductions.
Handout: background reading, excerpt from James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the End of the World.*
Thursday: Introductions (extra day of introductions to allow for students adding the course late.)
Toxins: Environmental Health and Environmental Justice

Week Two. January 25 & 28
Tuesday: Read first half of Percival Everett, Watershed
Thursday: Second half of Percival Everett, Watershed

Week Three. February 2 & 4
Tuesday: First Half of Suzanne Antonetta Body Toxic
Essay due at the start of class.
Thursday: Second half of Suzanne Antonetta, Body Toxic

Week Four. February 9 & 11
Watch films in class: Texas Gold and excerpts from Manufactured Landscapes.
Read chapters 1 and 2 from Mark Schapiro, Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products and What’s at Stake for American Power.

Thursday: First Exam

Climate Change

Week Five. February 16 & 18
Tuesday: first half, Mark Lynas, High Tide: The Truth About Climate Change Essay due.

Thursday: second half, High Tide

Week Six. February 23 & 25
Tuesday: Watch before class: Everything’s Cool: A Toxic Comedy about Global Warming

http://www.panda.org/about_our_earth/aboutcc/problems/people_at_risk/personal_stories/witness_stories/ (before coming to class).

**Biodiversity, Extinction, and Genetic Engineering**

Week Seven. March 2 & 3  
Tuesday: Ruth Ozeki, *All Over Creation*  
Thursday: Ruth Ozeki, *All Over Creation*

Week Eight. March 9 & 11  
Tuesday: Ruth Ozeki, *All Over Creation*  
Explore “The Svalbard Global Seed Vault”  
Essay Due  
Thursday: **Second Exam.**

Week Nine. March 16 & 18 **Spring Break!**

Week Ten. March 23 & 25  
Tuesday: Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life*  
Thursday: No class: attend ACES symposium on Sustainability if you haven’t already attended a talk.

Week Eleven. March 30 & April 1:  
Tuesday: Poems about animals and biodiversity (handout).  
Two-page paper about a talk due on or before this day.  
Thursday: Watch *Being Caribou* (Leanne Allison and Diana Wilson, 72 minutes) at http://beingcaribou.com/necessaryjourneys/film.html#BC (before class).

Week Twelve. April 6 & 8  
Tuesday: Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, first two thirds  
**Essay Due**  
Thursday: Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, last third
Oceans

Week Thirteen. April 13 & 15
Tuesday: Sylvia Earle, The World is Blue: How Our Fate and the Oceans are One, pages 1-149.
Thursday: The World is Blue, 151-247.

Week Fourteen. April 20 & 22
Tuesday: Watch the film Sharkwater before class.
Thursday: Poetry about the ocean (handout)

Week Fifteen. April 26 & 28
Tuesday: In class: films and photographs about the ocean.
Thursday: Course evaluations, discuss final exam.

Week Sixteen. May 4 & 6: Dead Week
No class, unless we need to reschedule a class due to snow days, ice days, etc.

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 11, 11:00-1:30.
Bring bluebooks and pens.