LIT 202  
The Environmental Imagination

Professor David Gilcrest  
Office: LA 218  
david.gilcrest@mso.umt.edu

I do not know where to find in any literature, whether ancient or modern, any adequate account of that Nature with which I am acquainted.

— Thoreau, Journal, February 1851

Course Description

As the gateway course to the Literature & Environment Option, LIT 202 The Environmental Imagination is designed to introduce students to the many discourses of nature. In this course we will approach “natural history” as a complex literary genre grounded in personal and cultural experience of the “more-than-human” world (in David Abram’s now ubiquitous phrase).

While the study of natural history writing has historically focused on authors like Gilbert White, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and John Burroughs (as prominent practitioners of the personal narrative essay that explores the natural world), a more thorough understanding of the genre requires a broad chronological context.

We should not be surprised that even within the shifting boundaries of Anglo-American natural history writing, conceptions of “nature” have changed dramatically over time—which is to say, the “nature” we encounter in the work of authors under the banner of ecological science, quantum physics, or the threat of imminent environmental transformation or collapse (to name only some of many possible influences) is not likely to be the same “nature” we encounter in White or Thoreau or Muir or Burroughs.

Because one’s experience of nature is profoundly shaped by personal and cultural identity, an adequate approach to natural history writing would also need to include consideration of the role race, class, and gender (for example) play in shaping discourses of nature. Further, consideration of non-Anglo-American traditions (including, for example, a range of Native American, Australian Aboriginal, and Asian “literary” practices) expands our understanding of those traditions as it allows us to see the Anglo-American tradition in useful perspective.

LIT 202 and the Writing Competency Requirement

As an approved course in partial satisfaction of the Writing Competency Requirement, LIT 202 is designed to give students the opportunity to develop the ability to write with
clarity of thought and precision of language. The faculty of The University of Montana-Missoula requires that all graduates of the University demonstrate the following competencies in their writing:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university’s writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following Writing Learning Outcomes.

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Click on the link to access the rubric that will be used to score the papers.

**LIT 202 and the General Education Program**

As a course that satisfies the General Education Group V: Literary and Artistic Studies (L) requirement, LIT 202 is designed to develop familiarity with significant works of literature. Through this experience, students will enhance their analytical skills and explore the historical, aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural features of these literary texts.

Upon completion of LIT 202, students will be able to:

1. analyze works of art with respect to structure and significance within literary and artistic traditions, including emergent movements and forms; and
2. develop coherent arguments that critique these works from a variety of approaches, such as historical, aesthetic, cultural, psychological, political, and philosophical.

Course Goals

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of the historical and cultural range of natural history writing
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of the essential connection between cultural epistemologies and environmental ethics
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays the ability to apply productively an essential critical vocabulary
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays an understanding of the many rhetorical strategies used by writers of natural history
- demonstrate through class discussion and well-reasoned essays the essential connection between effective thinking and effective writing about literature
- demonstrate through well-reasoned essays a thorough understanding of the rhetorical conventions associated with literary scholarship (especially the disciplinary conventions articulated by the MLA)

Required Texts

Chatwin, Bruce. *The Songlines*
Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
Elder, John and Robert Finch, eds. *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*

Via Moodle:

Bass, Rick. “Fiber”
Lopes, Barry. “Landscape and Narrative”
Lyon, Thomas. “A Taxonomy of Nature Writing”

LIT 202 Requirements

- Regular class attendance and participation, steady preparation
- Four revised Critical Essays
- A final Research Essay
- A portfolio that includes all your written work
Grading

Essay #1: 15%
Essay #2: 20%
Essay #3: 20%
Essay #4: 20%
Final Research Essay: 25%

Course Policies and Procedures, and Unsolicited Advice

- Attendance and Participation: Because I believe you can learn the material covered in this course only by being here, your attendance and active participation are required. Your final grade will be dropped one full letter grade after four unexcused absences; a failing grade will be assigned after six unexcused absences. (An excused absence requires a pre-arranged scholastic or athletic commitment or a bona fide and substantiated medical emergency.)
- If you miss a class, please make arrangements with a colleague to get notes. Also, please check with me to see if you missed any handouts or special instructions.
- If you get confused, or have a question, raise your hand. If your hand is not in the air, I can only assume you understand the texts and ideas under consideration perfectly.
- Texts: The texts under consideration are central to our work in this class, especially during class time. You MUST purchase the texts for this class and you MUST bring the relevant texts to class. No exceptions, no excuses.
- Being a careful reader and scholar means looking up the definitions of all unfamiliar words. Anything less reflects neglect, if not contempt, for the efforts of authors, and of language itself, the ground of our study, and delight.
- Laptops and tablets may be used for note taking; laptops, tablets, and cellphones used for other purposes will be confiscated and given to wayward children.
- Deadlines: All work is due in class on the assigned date. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.
- Presentation: Essays must be printed. Black ink. 10 or 12 pt. font. Arial, Cambria, Times, or Times New Roman are each sufficient. Please, no funky fonts. I would like you to follow the MLA citation and documentation guidelines in this class. Make sure you include on your work your name, the title and draft number, this class and section number, my name, and the date.
- Please make hard copies of all your work and keep them in a safe place.
- Revision: You may revise any of your Critical Essays. Please follow the "Guidelines for Revision" I will give you.
- The instructor and the University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as needed.
Scholarship

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrase) must be properly documented. Students who plagiarize face serious consequences that may range from receiving a failing grade on a given assignment to failing the course. Students who plagiarize also face additional University sanctions.

Accommodations

If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can discuss whatever accommodations may be necessary.

SYLLABUS

{Readings in The Norton Book of Nature Writing unless otherwise noted. [M] = text available via Moodle.}

Traditions of Natural History

M 8/31 Introduction: The Nature of Nature Writing
W 9/2 Finch and Elder “Introduction” and “Introduction to the 1990 Norton Book of Nature Writing” (15-30)
F 9/4 Lyon “A Taxonomy of Nature Writing” (3-7) [M]

M 9/7 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
W 9/9 White from The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne (33-50)
F 9/11 D. Wordsworth from Journals (90-95); Bartram from Travels (64-76)

M 9/14 Audubon from Ornithological Biography (117-122);
Muir “A Wind-Story in the Forests” and “The Water-Ouzel” (250-268)
W 9/16 Standing Bear “Nature” (326-331);
Momaday from The Way to Rainy Mountain (737-742)
F 9/18 Literary Analysis Bootcamp

M 9/21 MLA Bootcamp

The Nature of Narrative

W 9/23 Teale “The Lost Woods” (435-439);
Mitchell from Living at the End of Time (790-796);
Bruchac “The Circle is the Way to See” (811-818)

F 9/25
E. White “Black Women and the Wilderness” (1062-1067);
Ray “Built By Fire” and “Forest Beloved” (1130-1135)  Essay #1 DUE

M 9/28
Silko “Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination” (1003-1014);
Lopez “Landscape and Narrative” [M]

W 9/30
The Songlines (1-71)

F 10/2
The Songlines (72-143)

M 10/5
The Songlines (144-223)

W 10/7
The Songlines (224-294)

Nature, Metaphor, and the Poetic Imagination

F 10/9
The Nature of Metaphor

M 10/12
Leopold from A Sand County Almanac (376-397)  Essay 2 DUE

W 10/14
Maclean from A River Runs Through It (457-465)

F 10/16
TBA

M 10/19
TBA

W 10/21
Jefferies “Out of Doors in February” (287-295);
Wilson from American Ornithology (76-81)

F 10/23
LeGuin “A Very Warm Mountain” (651-657);
Thoreau “Seeing” and “Topsell’s Gesner” (214-218)

M 10/26
Clemens from Life on the Mississippi (236-238);
Steinbeck from The Log From the Sea of Cortez (465-468)

The Nature of Scientific Discourse

W 10/28
Science as Epistemology and Discourse

F 10/30
Darwin from Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle, from On the Origin of Species by
Means of Natural Selection, from The Descent of Man, and Selection in
Relation to Sex (151-163); King from Mountaineering in the Sierra
Nevada (276-281)

M 11/2
Waterton from Wanderings in South America, the North-West of the
United States, and the Antilles (104-116); Seton from Wild Animals I Have
Known (305-312); Burroughs “In Mammoth Cave” (244-250)
Essay #3 DUE

W 11/4
L. Thomas “Death in the Open” and “The World’s Biggest Membrane”
F 11/6
(533-538); Wilson “The Bird of Paradise” (658-662)
Pilgrim at Tinker Creek “Heaven and Earth in Jest,” “The Fixed,”
“Untying the Knot”

M 11/9
Pilgrim “Intricacy,” “Fecundity,” “The Horns of the Altar”

W 11/11
VETERANS DAY HOLIDAY

F 11/13
Literary Studies Research Bootcamp

Advocating Nature

M 11/16
Stegner “Glen Canyon Submersus” and “Coda: Wilderness Letter” (504-519)

W 11/18
Snyder “Ancient Forests of the Far West” (662-683)

F 11/20
Williams “The Clan of One-Breasted Women” (1091-1098);
McKibben from The End of Nature (1120-1130)

M 11/23
Williamson from Tarka the Otter (410-415);
Mowat from Never Cry Wolf (561-566)

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

M 11/30
Bass “Fiber” [M]

The Nature of Immediate Experience

M 11/30
Nature at the Edge of Language

W 12/2
Hinton “Introduction” to The Wilderness Poetry of Ancient China [M]

F 12/4
Suzuki from “Love of Nature” [M]

M 12/7
Thoreau “Ktaadn” (205-211)

W 12/9
Pilgrim “Seeing” and “The Present”

F 12/11
Fowles from The Tree (592-605); Evaluations

W 12/16
Research Essay, Revised Critical Essays DUE in Portfolio no later than Noon.
In his “A Taxonomy of Nature Writing,” Thomas Lyon presents a spectrum that runs from “Field Guides and Professional Papers” on one end to varieties of “Essays on Experiences in Nature” on the other.

“Field Guides and Professional Papers” would seem to describe a kind of nature writing that maximizes “objectivity” as it minimizes “subjectivity”; such texts insist on “the primacy of natural history facts.”

Texts on the other end of the spectrum would seem to maximize subjectivity while minimizing “objectivity”; these texts demonstrate “a clear emphasis on the writer’s experience” in writing in which “interpretation predominates.”

For their part, Finch and Elder’s focus on nature writing in “first person narrative essays” would seem to locate Natural History largely on the “subjective” side of Lyon’s spectrum. “The personal element—that is, the filtering of experience through individual sensibility—is central to what we view as the nature writing tradition” (28).

Lyon also argues that “whatever the artistic means chosen, and whatever the type of essay we may choose to call a certain piece of nature writing, the fundamental goal of the genre is to turn our attention outward to the activity of nature.”

Similarly, Finch and Elder applaud the ability of the first person natural history essay to connect us with something that seems to approach “objective” nature, nature as “palpable fact.” They quote approvingly Alfred North Whitehead: “There is no substitute for the direct perception of the concrete achievement of a thing in its actuality.”

For your first essay, I would like you to choose (at least) one author from the first part of our syllabus and write a reasoned response to the following:

**If the goal of nature writing is, as Lyon says, “to turn our attention outward to the activity of nature,” what possible role can our “subjectivity” play?**

In responding to this question, you may need to consider the following:

Aren’t we in effect “losing sight” of nature as we move from left to right on Lyon’s spectrum? Or, to put the problem another way: doesn’t “the personal element—that is, the filtering of experience through an individual sensibility” in fact get in the way of “direct perception of the concrete achievement of a thing in its actuality”?}
Your response should take the form of a well-reasoned essay of around five pages. Your audience for this essay consists of your instructor and your colleagues in this class.

Further, your essay should

- offer a specific, controlling thesis that represents your response to the question
- offer specific claims regarding the authors' work in support of this thesis
- support those specific claims with well-chosen quotations (evidence)
- use quoted material effectively by establishing the context for, and significance of, all quoted material—QUOTES DO NOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES
- offers parenthetical citations for all quoted material
- follows the MLA guidelines for formal presentation (including crafting a Works Cited bibliography)

I am most interested in YOUR direct experience of the texts under consideration. However, if you find yourself needing to address arguments made by other critics, please cite your use of their ideas and document these sources on a Works Cited bibliography.

Remember that all work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course.

If you are having trouble framing your inquiry within the constraints of this assignment, talk to me. Likewise, if you have questions about your argument, your use of sources, or the presentation of your reasoning, or anything else, talk to me.

Essay #1 is DUE Friday 25 September.
Using Quotations Effectively

Quotation: “Brain Generated Music represents a new modality of music that enables the music to evolve continually based on the interaction between it and our own mental responses to it.”

I. You MUST introduce your reader to your source before quoting; no one likes to be broadsided by unidentified quoted material.

Introducing the Quote

Good: According to Ray Kurzweil, “Brain Generated Music represents a new modality of music that enables the music to evolve continually based on the interaction between it and our own mental responses to it” (152).

Better: In his book The Age of Spiritual Machines, Ray Kurzweil defines Brain Generated Music as “a new modality of music that enables the music to evolve continually based on the interaction between it and our own mental responses to it” (152).

Even Better: Some innovators believe that the new sonic frontier demands more participation on the part of the listener. Ray Kurzweil, inventor of the Kurzweil synthesizer, believes that the listener’s brain waves will play a role in creating what he calls “Brain Generated Music.” In his book The Age of Spiritual Machines, Kurzweil defines “Brain Generated Music” as “a new modality of music that enables the music to evolve continually based on the interaction between it and our own mental responses to it” (152).

II. Quotations DO NOT speak for themselves; you must tie quoted material directly into the point YOU are trying to make.

Tying in the Quote

Good: “According to Ray Kurzweil, “Brain Generated Music represents a new modality of music that enables the music to evolve continually based on the interaction between it and our own mental responses to it” (152). By using the listener’s own neural response as part of the creative process, Brain Generated Music makes the musical experience much less passive than before.

Better: In his book The Age of Spiritual Machines, Ray Kurzweil defines Brain Generated Music as “a new modality of music that enables the music to evolve continually based on the interaction between it and our own mental responses to it” (152). While Brain Generated Music is still evolving, it is clear that technologies like this represent a different kind of creative transaction. No more will the listener be imprisoned in the mind of the musician, a prisoner to alien insights and emotion.
Quotation Mechanics: Prose

Relatively short quotations (four lines or less in original margins) are presented in-line—that is, integrated in the normal structure of your paragraphs.

Lawrence Buell underscores the fact that the literary critic's habit of stressing the divergence of *verba* and *res* entails certain ethical consequence. He argues that "to posit a disjunction between text and world is both an indispensable starting point for mature literary understanding and a move that tends to efface the world" (5). He goes on to ask, in a question which has become a rallying cry for much contemporary ecocriticism: "Must literature always lead us away from the physical world, never back to it?" (11).

Setting off long quotations

When you quote more than four typed lines of prose, set off the quotation by indenting it one inch (ten spaces, two tabs) from the left margin. Long quotations should be introduced by an informative sentence, usually followed by a colon. Quotation marks are unnecessary because the indented format tells readers that the words are taken directly from the source.

Tom and Ray Magliozzi are not impressed by economists who conduct risk-benefit analyses of phone use by drivers:

Other critics [or regulation of cell phones]—some from prestigious “think tanks”—perform what appear to be erudite cost/benefit analyses. The problem here is that the benefits are always in units of convenience and productivity while the costs are in units of injuries and people’s lives! (2)

At the end of an indented quotation the parenthetical citation goes outside the final punctuation mark.
Quotation Mechanics: Poetry

Because poems are often reprinted in various editions and anthologies, they are cited by line number rather than by page number.

Quoting Three Lines or Fewer

When you are quoting fewer than three lines from a poem, you may incorporate the quotation into the body of your paragraph.

Tips for quoting up to three lines of poetry:
- Use slashes (/) to indicate line breaks within the poem
- Keep all punctuation intact as it appears in the poem
- Use quotation marks to indicate the beginning and end of the quotation

If you have included the name of the poet elsewhere in your paper, do not include the poet's name in your parenthetical citation. Instead, include the first significant word of the poem's title, followed by the line number(s). This is especially important if you are quoting more than one poem by the same author in your paper.

Example:

Eliot immediately engages the reader with his use of the second person in the opening lines: "Let us go then, you and I / When the evening is spread out against the sky"

("Prufrock" 1-2).

However, if you have mentioned the title of the poem in the sentences immediately preceding your quotation, you can cite the line number only.

Example:

In his "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot immediately engages the reader with his use of the second person in the opening lines: "Let us go then, you and I / When the evening is spread out against the sky" (1-2).
Quoting Four or More Lines

Tips for quoting four or more lines of poetry:
- Start the quotation on a new line.
- Indent each line one inch (2 tabs) from the left margin of your paragraph.
- Preserve all punctuation, spacing, and line breaks exactly as they appear in the original text of the poem.
- Double-space between each line.
- Do not use quotation marks (unless they are used in the poem).

Example:

Yeats, an Irish nationalist himself, knew several of the Easter Monday rebels personally, and he mentions them by name in his poem. He even notes his former nemesis, Major John MacBride. MacBride was briefly married to the love of Yeats's life, Maude Gonne. Though he acknowledges MacBride's heroism, he does so begrudgingly:

A drunken, vainglorious lout

He had done most bitter wrong

To some who are near my heart

Yet I number him in the song; ("Easter" 31-34)
Quotation Mechanics: Drama

Quoting a Monologue in a Verse Play

A) For up to three lines of monologue:

Incorporate quotation in your paragraph, and treat it like poetry (marking the line break with the backslash):

Iago’s deception of Othello is dependent upon the Moor’s honest and trusting nature: “The Moor is of a free and open nature / That thinks men honest that but seem to be so; / And will as tenderly be led by th’ nose / As asses are” (1.3.390-93).

Note that the citation references the Act, Scene, and line range—in Arabic numbers—and note also the periods separating these three separate pieces of information.

B) For four or more lines of monologue:

Begin block quotation by tabbing in twice (""") after signal phrase:

Othello’s trusting nature allows him to mistakenly trust Iago:

    This fellow’s of exceeding honesty,
    And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit
    Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,
    Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,
    I’d whistle her off and let her down wind
    To prey at fortune. (3.3.257-62)

Quoting a Monologue in a Prose Play

{Note: your citations for quotations from prose drama should—in the absence of significant act, scene, and line or speech numbers, reference the page number in the textbook.}

For monologues in prose drama (as in Death of a Salesman) treat the material as you would any other prose source.
If the quoted monologue material is four lines or fewer given your normal margins, the quotation stays in the paragraph:

Biff finally reveals himself to Willy when he says, "Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all" (891).
Citation and Documentation Primer

The goal of any set of citation and documentation strategies is to facilitate communication, to allow you to acknowledge your sources, and to enable your reader to consult your sources directly.

The MLA (Modern Language Association) has established a set of conventions used by scholars in the humanities which are both intuitive and relatively easy to use. Alternative conventions, used by other discourse communities, include the APA (American Psychological Association) author-date system, used by scholars in the social sciences, and those conventions used in other scientific fields.

The MLA Style

The MLA style is comprised of two parts: 1) parenthetical citation within the essay, and 2) a works cited bibliography at the end of the essay.

I. PARENTHETICAL CITATION

Parenthetical citation identifies:

   a. the author’s name
   b. in rare cases, the (usually abbreviated) title of the source
   c. the page number (or page range) of the quoted or paraphrased material

A. Author’s name: usually last name only, unless your works cited bibliography includes two authors of the same last Name. NOT NEEDED IN PARENTHETICAL CITATION IF THE AUTHOR HAS BEEN CLEARLY IDENTIFIED IN CONTEXT.

EXAMPLES

“Once a Gooch, always a Gooch” (Gilcrest 65).

Gilcrest says, “Once a Gooch, always a Gooch” (65).

B. Occasionally you will have more than one title by the same author on your works cited list. To avoid ambiguity, you will need to delineate one text. Concise abbreviations are allowed and encouraged.

EXAMPLES

{from the bestseller, A Gooch For All Seasons}

“Once a Gooch, always a Gooch” (Gilcrest, Gooch 65).

As Gilcrest notes, “Once a Gooch, always a Gooch” (Gooch 65)
Remember that you are citing the actual text you have in hand; your works cited bibliography will sort out strange publication complications, like collected essays edited, translated or published by someone other than your author, etc. etc.

C. Page number: a single page number; or, if the quoted or paraphrased material extends over more than one page, the page range.

EXAMPLES

“Once a Gooch, always a Gooch” (Gilcrest 65).

Gilcrest observes that the Gooch stigma can be enduring (64-66).

II. WORKS CITED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The goal of your works cited bibliography is to allow your reader to go to your source directly. You must therefore provide all relevant publication information.

Your works cited bibliography contains only those texts you make direct reference to, especially those referenced via parenthetical citation. It is found at the end of your essay on a REGULARLY NUMBERED PAGE OR PAGES.

Your sources are listed alphabetically by author. Editors of collections, titles of journals or magazines, etc., are identified within the bibliographic entry.

Remember, you have given your reader the author’s name, the title if necessary, and the page number(s) in your citation. Your works cited bibliography provides information pertaining to publication form, publisher’s name, place of publication, and date of publication.
Rhetorical Redemption, Environmental Poetics, and the Case of the Camperdown Elm

In 1965, at the age of seventy-eight, Marianne Moore was appointed president of New York’s Greensward Foundation. For several years she helped the Foundation pursue its goals: “to foster and promote public appreciation of Central and Prospect Parks and other parks designed by Frederick Law Olmstead; to contribute to their restoration and beautification; to encourage research about them; and to collect and preserve drawings, plans, paintings, books and other records about them” (Willis, "Camperdown Elm" 8). In addition, Moore pressured City Hall for financial support, she wrote an introduction to Clay Lancaster’s 1967 Prospect Park Handbook, and she worked to rescue one of Prospect Park’s most remarkable trees, the Camperdown Elm, with a plea to save Brooklyn's "crowning curio" in The New York Times and with a poem published originally in The New Yorker.

“Camperdown Elm” is a useful poetic specimen to the extent that it foregrounds some of the central ambitions (and dilemmas) of environmental poetry. By “environmental poetry” I mean poetic work which moves beyond mere environmental mimesis, offering instead an understanding of a global ecology conditioned by
Works Cited


