

LOGISTICS

Class Meetings: MWF, 11:15-am 12:05pm, Academic Success Center Room 302
Professor Matt Hooley, mhooley@clemson.edu, Strode Tower 317, 864-656-3151
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30, and MW by appt.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The word "ecopoetics" comes from the Greek words *oikos* (family, household) and *poiesis* (to make). Like nature poetry, ecopoetics is interested how we use poetry to interpret the natural world. But ecopoetics distinguishes itself by a critical attention to the forms and formal processes ("human," "animal," "ecosystem," "earth") that link our practices of interpretation and commitments to political community. Writers interested in ecopoetics argue that it's through writing that we are made and unmade in relation to the environment, and that new forms of writing can help us imagine new ways of being in the world. This course is an introduction to 20th and 21st century ecopoetics and will introduce students to the questions, practices, and forms that animate this emerging tradition. Course readings will focus especially on Indigenous, Black, diasporic, and proletarian writing, including poems by Wendy Burk, Muriel Rukeyser, Ed Roberson, Nikky Finney, and Tommy Pico.

The course unfolds over three units. The first, "Being Careful" takes its name from a pair of Roberson texts and considers questions about relation and ontology: what do we mean when we name something as wild or as the environment? And how does that change the ways we are with it? And how does it change ourselves in relation with non-wild/non-environmental beings (if those are possible)? In this first unit we'll also make plenty of room in class to practice reading poems, and specifically: practice learning to read and think about poems together. The second unit: "Human Nature," centers two texts that consider the human-environment interface on the levels of labor, race, and kinship. This unit will also link to key texts in ecocriticism more broadly. The final unit, "Colonial Environments," considers the relationship between the environment and ongoing histories of colonialism. Through Finney's *Rice* and a visit to the Hopewell house on Clemson's campus we'll have the opportunity to direct our readings not only to the page, but to the landscapes and ecosystems in which our university itself is situated.

COURSE GOALS

This be able to answer for ourselves, and to others, what the environment is and why asking and answering that question matters; to investigate the relation between poetry and the environment broadly, and between the poetic and always-material consequences of power. To hone and cultivate skills like critical thinking and argumentation, but also skills like imagination, creativity, and fantasy; and to practice caring for ourselves and the worlds we inhabit through our practices of thinking, reading, and writing.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Daily Participation, 25% of your final grade

I'll calculate your participation by adding together three scores, every class session: preparation for class (5pts), in-class writing (5pts), active learning and listening (5pts). Every day that we have a class meeting there are 15 total points possible. If you come to class having read all of the assigned reading, awake, and ready with ideas to share, that's 5 points. Every day we'll have an in-class writing and I'll grade that writing out of 5 points. Finally, as long as you are interested, generous, supportive, active, and engaged during class, you'll receive another five points. Over the course the term there are 585 possible participation points. I'm happy to share with you how you're doing with your participation and to brainstorm ways to improve.

Take Home Essays, 60% (3 x 20%) of your final grade

Three times during the term, I'll distribute a prompt and instructions for you to complete a take home essay. I'll distribute this via Canvas well before the date of the take home essay and we'll have time in class to answer questions that you have. You should take the time of class session itself (plus another hour or so) to complete the essay and return it to me via Canvas. The goal of these essays is two-fold. First, they will be chances to practice specific skills of cultural criticism: argument making, evidence gathering, and close reading. Second, they will give you the chance to synthesize ideas relevant to specific units in the class. Each of these units is organized around a set of questions that are suggested above in the course overview (and that we'll add to, together). Your take home essays are the place you have to test out answers to these questions. Your take home essays need only be between 2-4 pages long, and there will be specific guidelines for how to complete each successfully.

Final Essay, 15% of your final grade

At the end of the course, you'll write a 5-8 page essay examining one of the course texts in greater detail. You may also write about another text, as long as it is thematically relevant to the course and you get permission from me to write about it well ahead of time. Your final essay will be a work of literary criticism, which means that it will be a piece that makes an argument about a given text in order to say something about the significance of that text and/or how it functions as a work of art in the world. For most students, this essay will look like a conventional critical essay, with an introduction and statement of argument, well organized paragraphs that bring evidence to support that argument, and a conclusion. However, you don't have to write in that genre. If you are interested in writing a part-creative/part-critical essay, or some other kind of criticism, I would enthusiastically welcome that (but please touch base with me first to plan out what you'll do, and how we'll make sure that you can be evaluated fairly).

COURSE MATERIALS

You should buy/acquire these three books on your own, before it's time to read them for class:

Wendy Burk, *Tree Talks* (Delete Press, 2016)

Ed Roberson, *City Eclogue* (Atelos Press, 2006)

Nikky Finney, *Rice* (Triquarterly Press, 2013)

Tommy Pico, *Nature Poem* (Tin House Press, 2017)

These books are available at the University Bookstore. They are also available online (e.g. Amazon) and from whatever local bookstore you may be near if/when you're not at Clemson. They shouldn't cost you much more than ten dollars each, however I am very aware that the cost of textbooks and of attending college is extraordinary in general and so if you have trouble obtaining these, please make an appointment to talk with me. These books will also be on reserve for you at the Clemson University Library. All other course materials are available via our course site on Canvas, or (in the case of Traci Voyles' *Wastelanding*) via the library's website). On the reading schedule, materials that you don't have to acquire are marked (c).

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1: Being Careful

Week 1

8/22 Gay, "Thank You"
8/24 Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things" and Harjo, "Anchorage"

Week 2

8/27 Roberson, "We Must Be Careful" and "be careful"
8/29 Reading Poems Collaboration
8/31 Reading Poems Collaboration

Week 3

9/3 Hume, "Imagining Ecopoetics"
9/5 Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain," "The Land Ethic"
9/7 Buell, "Representing the Environment"

Week 4

9/10 Bennett, "The Agency of Assemblages"
9/12 Bennett, "The Force of Things"
9/14 Burk, *Tree Talks*

Week 5

9/17 Burk, *Tree Talks*
9/19 Burk, *Tree Talks*
9/21 Take Home Exam #1

Unit 2: Human Nature

Week 6

9/24 Nixon, "Introduction"
9/26 Taylor, "Introduction"
9/28 Brown, Murphy, Porcelli, "Ruin's Progeny "

Week 7

10/1 Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*
10/3 Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*
10/5 Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*

Week 8

10/8 Buell, "The Pastoral Ideology"
10/10 Bullard, "Race, Class, and the Politics of Place"
10/12 Keller, "An Interview with Ed Roberson"

Week 9

10/15 Shockley, "Black and Green: On the Nature of Ed Roberson's Poetics"
10/17 Roberson, *City Eclogue*
10/19 Roberson, *City Eclogue*

Week 10

10/22 Roberson, *City Eclogues*
10/24 Roberson, *City Eclogues*
10/26 Take Home Exam #2

Unit 3: Colonial Environments

Week 11

10/29 McClintock, "The Lay of the Land"
10/31 Tsing, "Earth Stalked by Man"
11/2 McKittrick, "Geographic Stories"

Week 12

11/5 Fall Break (no class meeting)
11/7 Finney, *Rice*

11/9 Finney, *Rice*

Week 13

11/12 Hopewell Visit

11/14 Finney, *Rice*

11/16 Finney, *Rice*

Week 14

11/19 Take Home Exam #3

11/21 Thanksgiving (no class meeting)

11/22 Thanksgiving (no class meeting)

Week 15

11/26 Goeman, "Land as Life"

11/28 Pico, *Nature Poem*

11/30 Pico, *Nature Poem*

Week 16

12/3 Pico, *Nature Poem*

12/5 Pico, *Nature Poem*

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Respect and Support for Each Other

It's only possible for us to achieve our goals for this term if we are able to rely on each other to think, talk, and write together. Therefore, it's a requirement for this class that we prioritize treating each other with respect, compassion, and support. This means far more than simply not being disengaged or hateful. It means actively giving energy to care for and about the other people in class.

Academic Honesty

Clemson University has an Academic Integrity Policy that applies to this course. It defines a violation as: 1. Giving, receiving, or using unauthorized aid on any academic work; 2. Plagiarism, which includes the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one's own efforts; 3. Attempts to copy, edit, or delete computer files that belong to another person or use of Computer Center account numbers that belong to another person without the permission of the file owner, account owner, or file number owner.

All academic work submitted for grading contains an implicit pledge that no unauthorized aid has been received. It is the responsibility of every member of the Clemson University community to enforce the Academic Integrity Policy.

Attendance

Three times during the term, you may contact me at least 24 hours before class, and let me know that you will not be able to make it to class. I'll send you a prompt for your in-class writing and you'll be responsible for sending it back to me. I'll grade the writing as I normally do, and you won't lose any additional points for that day (i.e. it's still possible to get 15 participation points for these days). If you don't let me know in advance that you'll be absent, you can still do the in-class writing, up to two days late, for those five points for writing (but you'll lose the 10 points for being in class and participating). If you are absent more than six times during the term, it won't be possible for you to pass the class.

Other Stuff

If the university is closed because of inclement weather (or any other reason), all students will receive full participation points for that day and any additional assignments due that day will be pushed to the next class date. If I am late to class, you are to wait 10 minutes before assuming that something unforeseen has prevented me from teaching class that day. Your feedback to the second take home essay will include your midterm grade.

Accessibility

University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries or conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources. Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let me know, and make an appointment to meet with a staff member in Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. You can make an appointment by calling 864-656-6848, by emailing studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu, or by visiting Suite 239 in the Academic Success Center building. Appointments are strongly encouraged – drop-ins will be seen if at all possible, but there could be a significant wait due to scheduled appointments.. Students who receive Academic Access Letters are strongly encouraged to request, obtain and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester. You can access further information here: <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/ccampus-services/ssds>.

Title IX

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity in

employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.. This policy is located at www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix. Mr. Jerry Knighton is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator. He also is the Director of Access and Equity. His office is located at 110 Holtzendorff Hall, 864.656.3184 (voice) or 864.656.00899 (TTDD).

Resources

Bookstore: <https://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/book-store/> Library: <https://libraries.clemson.edu/>

Writing Center: <https://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/writing/>

Student Health Services: <https://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/student-health/>