LOGISTICS

Class meetings: M 4:00 to 6:45pm, Academic Success Center Room 300

Course materials (including many of the readings) available on Canvas

Contact: mhooley@clemson.edu, Strode 317

Office hours: MW 11am-2pm and by appointment (but please make an appointment with me, via email no matter when you plan on coming).

A note on public health: I strongly support and an encourage students to wear a mask during class, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and in fact any time or under any circumstances illness is a concern. Because I am fully vaccinated and in order to communicate as effectively as I can, I will wear a mask while teaching usually only when I am feeling ill or worried about a specific exposure.

OVERVIEW AND COURSE GOALS

The word “environment” comes from an old French word, *environer*, which means “to surround.” So, the environment is what surrounds us, who and what we’re surrounded by, what our surroundings are. This is a peculiar formulation in the sense that it proposes a stable and objective scheme (the environment is what is out or over *there*) that we realize almost instantly is completely contingent and subjective (what seems out or over *there* depends on how I define *me* or *us* or what’s *here*). So then, what do we mean when we invoke this distinction, when we name something “the environment,” or when we use that word to declare ourselves to be outside (or inside?) it? If this distinction always deconstructs, which is to say that what it means always depends on the conditions of its invocation, why is it such a powerful idea? How should we use it? What can its use tell us about the world or about ourselves?

These are questions that preoccupy scholars, writers and artists (and, really, almost everybody) and there are lots of different ways to begin to answer them. In this course, we will approach the idea of *the environment* as an invitation to examine our surroundings and to rethink the concepts and relationships that that sense of being surrounded, or encircled, implies. To that end our course will be structured around two units that think about the relationship between the environment and the campus (a word that means “field” but also, from the Greek *kampē*, “a bending”).

The first unit will read a book that’s classified as a “college novel” or a “campus novel” as a work of environmental literature. That is, we’ll read the novel paying special attention to the dynamics of inside/outside, home/surroundings that structure it. Alongside we’ll read theoretical texts that help us interpret the ways campuses are curated as beautiful, comfortable, and as conveying a conditional quality of belonging. The second unit will reverse this dynamic: we’ll read a classic work of environmental writing as a college novel. Here, we’ll pay critical attention to the way an immersion in natural surroundings is understood to correlate to ideological, social, and intellectual development; the way, in other words, it implies an experience of education.

The course’s outcomes will be methodological in the sense that we’ll practice close reading among other modes of literary analysis. Students will grow as readers, interlocutors, and writers about literature as well as the world in general. Finally, students will learn how to think across or between disciplines—to allow the conventions of different genres and academic fields to work with each other toward students’ own reassessment of the community and land that surrounds them.

COURSE TEXTS

There are two books that you should buy/borrow/acquire, and both are available at the Clemson Bookstore (and, more cheaply, online, from places like bookshop.org). They are:

* Zadie Smith, *On Beauty*, Penguin (0143037749)
* Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, Signet (0451532163)

The remaining course texts will be made available via Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS

Take Home Essay Exams 60% (2 x 30%) of Final Grade

Two 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 3-4 pages long, and there will be specific guidelines for how to complete each successfully.

Final Project 20% of Final Grade

At the end of the course, undergraduates will write a 4-5 page essay or complete a comparable creative project that returns critical attention to a space/environment that has or continues to shape you and in whose wellbeing you are directly invested. You’ll use one or more course text to think the history and/or political and cultural meaning of the space you choose as well as your situated interest in it. Some students will choose to write a personal or critical essay, however you are not restricted to those genres. You’re also welcome to work across visual/audio/tactile media or to find ways to make your text collaborative—just be sure to check in with me before you begin work on this assignment to make sure you’re on the right track.

Attendance and Participation 20% of final grade

One of the most difficult and most important responsibilities we have this term—particularly as we transition back to in person teaching and learning—is using the precious class time we have to build and hone ideas about the texts we read together. Being able to work collectively in this way isn’t magic, but rather a combination of careful preparation, thoughtfulness, and generosity with each other. In more concrete terms, this means that we should all have completed all of the assigned reading before class and have ideas and questions prepared for discussion (see the How to Read for Class handout on Canvas). During class, it means that we should be attentive, engaged (ideally vocally), honest, and careful with each other as we share ideas with each other. Please always bring your reading materials to class and refer to them to help keep our conversations tied directly to the assigned texts. I assess your participation every class and I will quantify twice during the term (so that your Canvas grade is more accurate than it would otherwise be): once around midterm and once at the end of the class. If you have concerns or questions about participation, please set an appointment to talk them through with me.

Because this is a discussion based class, your attendance is essential. With that said, there are often things that come up (illness etc.) that interfere with having perfect attendance. To account for this, each student is allowed *two* absences per term without it affecting their grade, *as long as they notify me at least one day before that absence and complete the make-up assignment I give them via email*. Absences after that will result in a lowered attendance and participation grade.

CALENDAR OF READING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1: On Beauty

Monday (1/23) Syllabus Day

 Smith, *On Beauty*

Williams, “Nature”

 Leary, “Natural Beauty Products: What Does the Label Really Mean?”

Monday (1/30) Smith, *On Beauty*

 Barthes, from *Camera Lucida* (Chs 10-24)

Monday (2/6) Smith, *On Beauty*

 Gifford, “Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, Post-Pastoral”

Monday (2/13) Smith, *On Beauty*

 Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*

Monday (2/27) Smith, *On Beauty*

 Kant, from *The Critique of Judgement*

Monday (3/6) Smith, *On Beauty*

 Marx, “Sleepy Hollow”

Monday (3/13) Take Home Essay 1

 Marx, “The Garden”

Unit 2: Walden

Monday (3/27) Thoreau, *Walden*

Buell, “Pastoral Ideology”

Monday (4/3) Thoreau, *Walden*

Travis Foster Class Visit (4:15-4:45pm)

Foster, “Campus Novels, Camaraderie, and White Nationalist Merriment”

Monday (4/10) Thoreau, *Walden*

 Wilder, “The Edges of Empire”

Monday (4/17) Thoreau, *Walden*

Wilder, “Whitening the Promised Land.”

Monday (4/24) Take Home Essay 2

Sunday (5/7) Final Project Due

POLICIES

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. D. It is the responsibility of every member of the Clemson University community to enforce the Academic Integrity Policy.

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 program s 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’s 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/

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the main campus of Clemson University occupies the traditional and ancestral land of the Cherokee People. Clemson’s main campus is built on land seized through US military and diplomatic incursions culminating in the Treaty of Dewitt’s Corner in 1777. This is also land on which people enslaved by the Pickens, Clemson, and Calhoun families lived and worked, and that was transformed into the campus of Clemson University through convict labor. We make this acknowledgement to remember the histories of violence that anticipate our gathering here, to recognize Indigenous and Black claims to life and land, and to recenter those claims as we commit to better ways of caring for each other and for this land. Along with this acknowledgement, we ask: what responsibilities and commitments can we make to foster more honest and generative relations with this land and with each other? Can we, wherever we go, acknowledge Indigenous claims to the land we occupy? Can learning about the lifeways and lifeworlds of the original and rightful caretakers of the land we occupy guide our own changing relation with the places we are and the communities that belong to those places? How can we share our learning with others?