LOGISTICS

Class Meetings: Mondays 4:00-6:45pm, Daniel Hall 310

Course website on Canvas. The university, absurdly, requires that this syllabus indicate that you ought to wait for me 10 minutes, in case I’m late, before leaving class.

Instructor Information: Professor Matt Hooley. Email: mhooley@clemson.edu (please be sure not to use g.clemson in the address!). Phone (which I do not use): 864-656-3151. Office: Strode 317 (during Spring Term 2022, all office hours will be conducted over Zoom. Please email me to set up a time that works for both of us.)

Covid Stuff: First, it is my very strong preference that everyone in the class would choose to be vaccinated and boosted; something I have done myself, having informed myself about the virus currently ravaging humans all across the world and about the ironclad immunological protocols and structures that make basic vaccines of all kinds, including those for Covid, safe. This, as I said, is my preference, but it is not allowed to be a policy for the course or for the university, whose political autonomy is curtailed by the state government. Accordingly, no student’s grade will be affected by the decisions they make about the Covid vaccine. Unfortunately, because we cannot be sure that all members of the Clemson community choose to protect themselves, their loved ones, others at Clemson, or the family and friends of those with whom they interact at Clemson, we all need to take additional measures to slow the spread of this virus. For now, at least, this means that we will wear masks in our classroom, and as we move through indoor spaces to and from classrooms.

OVERVIEW

The environment is what we call the parts of the world that are beyond us, that are other than human. And yet, the tools we have to think about the environment are themselves deeply human: our curiosity, memory, relations, imaginations, care, and critique. This course explores texts that wrestles with this paradox, particularly in the context of histories of resource extraction, political violence, and ecological catastrophe. What do human practices of knowing tell us about animals, objects, and landscapes that exceed our ability to completely understand them? Can reading and writing improve our relationships with ecosystems that we can't know but nevertheless need to live? This course will be rooted in the social and environmental histories of the Americas, and will build toward analyses of Black and Indigenous texts that bear on questions and frameworks central to the environmental humanities broadly.

COURSE TEXTS

Many of the readings we’ll do together this term will be available to you via Canvas. Three texts, however, are so essential to our work this term, that I’ll ask you to acquire them. Information about each is below. These texts are available at our campus bookstore and are also available (often more cheaply) via online stores like bookshop.org. If you want to buy the books online, please do so ASAP so that they arrive in plenty of time for you to read them at the allotted time (see course calendar). While it is your responsibility to make sure you have the books in time to read them for the assigned class meetings, I understand that some students might have financial difficulty buying these books. In some cases, it is possible that students will solve that problem by downloading them, one way or another. However, I also want to extend my help in helping you access these books, if you are not in a financial position to acquire them yourself. Please just send me an email and we’ll figure something out, so that you can participate in the course.

1. Wendy Burk, *Tree Talks: Southern Arizona*, Delete Press, 2016
2. Chris Abani, *The Secret History of Las Vegas*, Penguin Random House 2014
3. Joan Naviyuk Kane, *The Straits*, *Voices from the American Land*

EVALUATION & ASSIGNMENTS

Participation 20% of Final Grade

One of the most difficult and most important responsibilities we have this term—particularly as we transition back (and potentially again away from) 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 less concrete terms it means that we should all have completed all of the assigned reading and have contributed to the collective reading journal before each class. 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. Often, we’ll have in-class writings to start our class conversations, and those will be assessed for genuine effort and completion. 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.

Take Home Essay Exams 75% of 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. The points given to each exam increase as the term goes ahead, in order to give you time to learn the genre and get comfortable with the assignment: the first is worth 100 points, the second is worth 125 points, and the last exam is worth 150 points.

Final Essay 15% of Final Grade

At the end of the course, undergraduates will write a 4-5 page essay that returns your 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.

Graduate students: you will write a 8-10 page essay that examines a text related to the course readings but which we have not read yet. I’ll consult with each of you in advance of the final to plan this essay.

CALENDAR OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Jan 24 William Cronon, “The Problem with Wilderness,”

Jane Bennett, “The Force of Things”

Jan 31 Bennett, “The Agency of Assemblages”

Wendy Burk, *Tree Talks*

Feb 7 Bennett, “Edible Matter” through “Neither Vitalism”

Wendy Burk, *Tree Talks*

Feb 14 Bennett, “Stem Cells” to end

“In” Class Essay 1

Feb 21 Rob Nixon, “Introduction”

Chris Abani (reading assignment tbd)

Feb 28 Joe Masco, “The Enlightened Earth”

Abani (reading assignment tbd)

Mar 7 Abani (reading assignment tbd)

Take Home Essay 2

Mar 14 Robin Kimmerer, “Planting Sweetgrass” and “Tending Sweetgrass”

Mar 28 Kimmerer, “Picking Sweetgrass”

Apr 4 Kimmerer, “Braiding Sweetgrass”

Apr 11 Kimmerer, “Burning Sweetgrass,”

Take Home Essay 3

Apr 18 Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”

Joan Naviyuk Kane, “The Straits”

Apr 25 Boarding School Readings (TBD)

Kane, “The Straits”

May 6 Final Essay Due

COURSE POLICIES & OTHER STUFF

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.

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. These are the policies I use under normal conditions. It is also true that this term and the ongoing threat of COVID present abnormal academic conditions, and so it’s possible that matters of attendance will have to be reconceived, in which case I’ll let you know.

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?