

AMST 258 / EVST 258
Yale University, Fall 2019
Wednesday, 1:30PM – 3:20PM
Linsly-Chittenden Hall, Room 212

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Office Hours by Appointment

WILDERNESS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN IMAGINATION

“Wilderness” is one of the weirdest words in the English language. It can refer to a human experience (“until I found God, I was in the wilderness”) or a nonhuman environment (“if you keep going west, you’ll get to the wilderness”). It can designate a dangerous wasteland (“the hiker died in the wilderness”) or a site of state power (“the ranger patrolled the wilderness”). It can be good or evil, civilized or savage, sacred or profane, self or other—in other words, it can be almost anything.

Despite—and indeed, because of—these ambiguities, wilderness has played pivotal roles in the territory that has come to be known as the United States. Along with the frontier, the borderlands, and other imaginaries, it has inspired pilgrims, pioneers, and tourists. At the same time, though, it has staged struggles between men and women, whites and people of color, upper classes and working classes. As both a cultural construct and a material reality, therefore, it has brought us together and torn us apart—in short, it has epitomized our interdependent yet inequitable world.

In this course, we will learn how North Americans—including Natives, Latinxs, Blacks, Whites, and other ethno-racial groups—have reimagined and reshaped the wilderness. By engaging with a variety of media—from literature and visual art to law and public policy—we will recover conflicting wilderness imaginaries. And by reading in the environmental humanities—including history, anthropology, literary criticism, and other (inter)disciplines—we will discover how these wilderness imaginaries have impacted—and just as importantly, failed to impact—the human and more-than-human worlds. While our inquiries will take us from prehistory to the present, they will converge on the future; now that we are destroying our ecosystems, extinguishing our fellow species, and transforming our atmosphere, we will ask, is there still such a thing as wilderness?

As we wrestle with these questions together, we will also work through them independently. Thus, over the course of the semester, each student will develop a research project into a different aspect of the wilderness, the frontier, the borderlands, and/or another imaginary.

Course Objectives: As we explore the wilderness, you will cultivate a variety of skills:

- A. *Writing:* Through individual assignments and in-class exercises, you will learn how to conduct independent academic research. Among other things, you will practice engaging with archival sources, intervening in scholarly debates, and developing original arguments.
- B. *Reading:* By looking at, listening to, and experimenting with a range of media, you will become a more confident critical reader. Whether you are faced with a contemporary film or an old text, you will be able to analyze its style, structure, and significance.
- C. *Speaking:* In our collaborative class discussions, you will practice talking through difficult subjects, especially the construction of gender, race, class, and other identity categories. If you are concerned about your ability to discuss these themes, please let me know.
- D. *Historical Reasoning:* As we learn how wilderness ideas have responded to and participated in historical struggles, you will gain insight into our planet’s past, present, and future.
- E. *Intercultural Understanding:* By comparing the ways in which different peoples have related to and resided in the wilderness, you will experience both the similarities that unite peoples and the differences that define them.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Week 1 – August 28th – Introductions

- Texts, images, and other media circulated in-class.

Week 2 – September 4th – What was Wilderness?

- John Muir, “Through the Foothills with a Flock of Sheep” and “In Camp on the North Fork of the Merced” from *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)
- “Yosemite National Park Rules and Regulations” (1923)
- Ansel Adams, *Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras* (1927)
- Roderick Nash, “The Condition of Wilderness” from *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967)
- William Cronon, “Introduction” and “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” from *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1996)

Week 3 – September 11th – Wilderness on a Warming Planet

- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses” (2009)
- Bruno Latour, “Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene” (2014)
- Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin” (2015)
- David N. Pellow, “Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge” (2016)
- Standing Rock Allies Resource Packet (2016)
- Nick Estes, “Fighting for Our Lives: #NoDAPL in Historical Context” (2017)
- Short essay assigned in class

Week 4 – September 18th – Exploring New Worlds

- Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* (1542)
- Werner Herzog (dir.), *Grizzly Man* (2005)
- Hester Blum, “Introduction: Polar Ecomedia” from *The News at the End of the Earth: The Print Culture of Polar Exploration* (2019)
- Short essay due by 11:59PM on September 21st

Week 5 – September 25th and 27th – Research and/on/in the Wilderness

- Look up a place in which you have lived on one of the USGS Topographic Map Explorers: (<http://historicalmaps.arcgis.com/usgs/>) or (<https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer>)
- On September 25th, we are holding class in the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.
- On September 27th, we are traveling to the Thimble Islands with Jon Myers, a composer, and Nicole Palffy-Muhoray, an entomologist. We will make visual maps, take field recordings, and explore the island. We will meet at 9:00AM and return by 4:00PM.
- On September 25th and 27th, we will hold one-on-one research meetings.

Week 6 – October 2nd – Romanticism and Its Discontents

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature” (1836)
- Henry David Thoreau, “Walking” (1851-62)
- Tommy Pico, *Nature Poem* (2017)

Week 7 – October 9th – The Frontier I: Settler Colonialism

- Thomas Jefferson, Queries 1, 6, 11, 14, 18, 19 from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1780-1787)
- Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)
- Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” (2006)
- Alan Michelson, “Bio” and “Prophetstown” (2012) (www.alanmichelson.com)
- Preliminary research proposal due by 11:59PM on October 7th
- One-on-one research meetings on October 9th

Week 8 – NO CLASS: OCTOBER RECESS**Week 9 – October 23rd – The Frontier II: Racialized and Gendered Violence**

- John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854)
- Ned Blackhawk, “The Indigenous Body in Pain” from *Violence Over the Land* (2007)
- Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, “A Woman with No Names and Many Names: Lynching, Gender, Violence, and Subjectivity” from *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (2011)
- Revised research proposal due by 11:59PM on October 26th

Week 10 – October 30th – The Borderlands I: Indigeneity

- Gloria Anzaldúa, “Preface,” “The Homeland, Aztlán/El otro México” and “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan” from *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987)
- Leslie Marmon Silko, *Sacred Water: Narratives and Pictures* (1993), “The Border Patrol State” (1994), and “The People and the Land ARE Inseparable” (1996)
- Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” (2012)
- María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, “It Remains to be Seen: Indians in the Landscape of America,” from *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (2016)

Week 11 – November 6th – The Borderlands II: Land, Labor, and Identity

- La Alianza Federal de Mercedes, Selected Archives (1962-1970)
- Jimmy Santiago Baca, “Roots,” “Spring,” and “Sanctuary” from *Black Mesa Poems* (1989)
- Richard White, “Are You an Environmentalist, or Do You Work for a Living?: Work and Nature” from *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1996)
- Jake Kosek, “Introduction,” “The Cultural Politics of Memory and Longing,” and “Sovereign Natures” from *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (2006)

Week 12 – November 13th – Ecology and Environmentalism

- Aldo Leopold, “Thinking Like a Mountain,” “The Community Concept,” “The Ecological Conscience,” “Substitutes for a Land Ethic,” and “The Outlook” from *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)
- Rachel Carson, “A Fable for Tomorrow” and “And No Birds Sing” from *Silent Spring* (1962)
- David Brower, “Third Planet Operating Instructions” (1975)
- Finis Dunaway, “Introduction,” “Dr. Spock, Daisy Girl, and DDT,” and “The Crying Indian” from *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (2015)
- Research paper check-ins

Week 13 – November 20th – Environmental Justice

- United Farm Workers, A Collection of Collages, Posters, and Pamphlets (1965-1970)
- Gary Soto, “The Elements of San Joaquín” (1977)
- Ester Hernandez, “Sun Mad” (1982) and “Heroes and Saints” (1992)
- First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, “Principles of Environmental Justice” (1991)
- Linda Nash, “Modern Landscapes and Ecological Bodies” from *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (2007)
- Rob Nixon, “Introduction” to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011)
- Research paper rough draft due by 11:59PM on November 22nd

Week 14 – NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

Week 15 – December 4th – Final Presentations and Class Dinner

- Research paper final draft due by 11:59PM on December 8th

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation: This course is a seminar; it should be collective, collaborative, and convivial. Thus, come to each of our sessions prepared to talk and listen. If a text is interesting (or not), explain why. If an idea is confusing (which is totally fine), ask a question. If you agree or disagree with another comment, describe your own position. Most importantly, treat one another with respect. We are all coming to this course from different contexts, so we need to value our unique experiences, identities, and ideas. Similarly, we are engaging with some intense and perhaps irresolvable problems, so we need to create a culture of mutual understanding. In short: I welcome disagreements, but I do not tolerate disrespectful comments against other students.

To participate in our community, you must be present. In addition to our regular sessions, you must attend a fieldtrip and a group meal. Two or more absences will lower your final grade, and three or more will be grounds for failing the course.

If you are having trouble joining the conversation, or if you are uncomfortable with our class dynamic for any reason, please get in touch with me.

Reading: Every week, set aside enough time to read carefully and think deeply. As you work, underline important passages and take good notes. Each Tuesday by 11:59PM, add a 300-500-word entry to the reading journal on Canvas. In your entry, engage with one or more of the week's readings—close-read a passage, think through an argument, or articulate a question. Don't strive for scintillating sentences or perfect paragraphs; instead, experiment with interesting ideas. Over the course of the semester, you must add at least nine entries to the reading journal.

Bring your readings to each session. Fortunately, most of the readings will be available on our Canvas site, and you only need to purchase three physical items for less than \$35:

- Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* (Penguin, 2002). ISBN 9780142437070. \$11.50.
- Tomy Pico, *Nature Poem* (Tin House, 2017). ISBN 9781941040638. \$12.50.
- John Rollin Ridge, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (Penguin, 2018). ISBN 9780143132653. \$11.00.

Writing: In September, you will write a short essay about texts from our syllabus. For the rest of the semester, you will work on a research paper into an aspect of the wilderness. With support from the professor and your peers, you will craft a preliminary proposal, a revised proposal, an annotated bibliography, a rough draft, and a presentation. At the end, you will submit a twenty-page paper.

Grading: All grades are non-negotiable. They will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Reading Journal	15%
Short Essay	15%
Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	10%
Research Paper	40%

Deadlines

Short Essay	11:59PM on September 21 st
Preliminary Research Proposal and Working Bibliography	11:59PM on October 7 th
Revised Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography	11:59PM on October 26 th
Research Paper Rough Draft	11:59PM on November 22 nd
Research Paper Final Draft	11:59PM on December 8 th

COURSE POLICIES

Communication: If you have questions or concerns, please email me at carlos.nugent@yale.edu; I will do my best to respond within twenty-four hours. If you would like to review readings, think through research, or simply chat, just get in touch. To normalize this practice, I will schedule several one-on-one research meetings over the course of the semester.

Formatting: All papers should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in a nice-looking twelve-point font (a few good choices: **Georgia**, **Cambria**, or **Times New Roman**; some bad ones: *Mistral*, *HERCULANUM*, *DESDEMONA*). The first page should have a header in the upper left-hand corner that includes your full name, our full names, the course title, and the date. Each subsequent page should have a header in the upper right-hand corner with your last name and the page number. The file should be titled as follows: “Name_Paper # and Version_Date,” i.e. “Nugent_P1V1_090817.” The rest of the paper should be formatted in Chicago Style as defined in the most recent edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>).

Submissions: All papers should be uploaded to our Canvas site. All drafts should be compelling, complete, and above all, on time; if they are late, I might not be able to craft comments. One of your drafts is eligible for a forty-eight-hour extension, no questions asked. Other than that, all late papers that are not accompanied by a Dean’s Excuse will be marked down one third of a grade per day (from an ‘A’ to an ‘A-,’ from an ‘A-’ to a ‘B+,’ and so on). There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Academic Integrity: Among other things, this course will teach you how to engage productively with scholarly research. In this context, appropriating another scholar’s words or ideas without proper documentation is incredibly disrespectful, both to them and to yourself. Therefore, any instance of academic dishonesty (especially plagiarism, but also unauthorized collaboration) will be referred to the Yale College Executive Committee. If you have any questions about citing sources, attributing ideas or avoiding plagiarism, please get in touch. The Writing Center also has some useful tips (<http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism>).

Resources: Yale provides extensive support to its student writers. The website for the Center for Teaching and Learning (<http://ctl.yale.edu/writing>) has a vast library of writing guides. The Drop-In Writing Partners (<http://ctl.yale.edu/tutoring/writing/drop-writing-partners>), Writing Study Halls (<http://ctl.yale.edu/tutoring/writing/writing-study-halls>), and Residential College Writing Tutors (<http://ctl.yale.edu/tutoring/writing/residential-college-writing-tutors>) offer one-on-one writing consultations. Although good writing can sometimes be solitary, the best writing is almost always collaborative, so I encourage you to seize these opportunities. To ensure that I credit you for these efforts, please acknowledge your writing tutor(s) in the Works Cited section of your paper.

Yale also has good resources for students with disabilities and other learning differences. If you have a disability, or if you need special accommodations for any reason, please consult the Resource Office on Disabilities (<http://rod.yale.edu>). Also, feel free to speak with me.