

The Oregon Extension
Fall 2017

4 credit hours

Segment One: What Is Nature?

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE: This course approaches the question “what is nature?” from a social-historical perspective, recognizing that perceptions of nature are always viewed through cultural frames. The thought of “nature” has the power to put one into particular moods—calmness in the presence of benign energies, awe in response to the sublime, fear in the face of hostile forces, industriousness at seeing a great warehouse of resources, and carefulness due to an awareness of its fragility—and each of these moods has a social history. Nature is never an uninterpreted reality that confronts us pure and simple. We bring histories and cultural habits of thought to every encounter with the natural world. In this course we seek to isolate and understand these cultural frames—where they originated and how they shape our views of nature.

AIMS OF THE COURSE

To gain greater understanding of

- natural history of the Klamath-Siskiyou region
- Romantic influences on our sense of the sublime in nature
- the interplay between resource extraction and American views of nature in the city/country dichotomy
- developments and shifts in environmental & preservation history
- local debates between preservationists and conservationists
- ethical and philosophical questions driving “green” cultural attitudes

Students are encouraged to connect reading of core texts and ideas to your own experiences as you explore our unique location inside the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, which has been set apart for its biodiversity. Farm chores, field trips, and opportunities to practice mountaineering and hiking skills should also be approached as occasions to reflect on our cultural frames for “nature.”

COURSE TEXTS

David James Duncan, *The River Why*
 David R. Wallace, *The Klamath Knot*
 Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*
 Julie Guthman, *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*
 William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*
 Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*
 Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Book notes (for every book)
- 2) One Idea papers (2)
- 3) Memo (1)
- 4) Attendance of daily lectures
- 5) Full participation in daily small group discussion
- 6) Weekly faculty-student conferences
- 7) Field trip to local farms
- 8) Hiking excursion to Mount McLaughlin (optional)
- 9) Culminating backpacking trip

EXPLANATION OF REQUIREMENTS

1) Book notes

In lieu of taking exams on the reading, students will be asked to turn in daily book notes. Different models for this will be surveyed early in the course. The notes are expected to discuss major arguments or themes of texts; strengths and weaknesses in the quality of argument and uses of evidence in discursive texts; image patterns or character development in fictional works; and should include personal responses, such as relation to individual faith or life experiences. Notes may be collected on a daily basis by professors, so students must bring them to discussion every day.

2) One Idea Papers (2)

Isolate one major idea from the week's assigned readings, then write one page in which you describe and analyze the idea in your own words, but being as faithful as possible to the author's intent. Be prepared to read this to your Friday small group and handle questions and responses from the group.

3) Memo (1)

Memos are a more personal form of reflection. Write one page in which you share any important thoughts from the week's readings, lectures, and discussions. Be prepared to read this to your Friday small group and handle questions and responses from the group.

4) Attendance at daily lectures.

Absences must be excused.

5) Full participation in daily small group discussion

Absences must be excused. Come prepared with all reading completed and book notes in hand. Dive in.

6) Weekly faculty-student conferences

After lectures on Mondays, students will meet one-on-one with the discussion group leader to talk about note-taking, participation in daily discussion, writing assignments, and ideas that are in the air.

7) Field trip to local farms

Overnight trip to visit several experimental farms in the Rogue Valley.

8) Hiking excursion to Mount McLaughlin (optional)

9) Culminating backpacking trip

More on this later.

GRADING

Grades will be assessed in the following ways:

- Weekly faculty-student conferences reviewing the note-taking, writing and discussion opportunities of the previous week.
- Documented completion of all reading and book notes on time.
- Self-evaluations, followed by faculty-student conferences, at the end of the segment.

Assessment will be performed according to the following guidelines:

- We reserve the **A** for the combination of consistently high *effort* and *achievement* displayed across the board in your written and spoken work during the segment.
- **B** indicates high effort but less than high achievement; or moderate effort but (nonetheless) relatively high achievement.
- **C** indicates moderate effort at best and significantly less than high achievement.
- **D** indicates low effort and low achievement generally.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

See Segment One calendar.

COURSE CREDIT

Students will choose from among the following course offerings:

HIS 395 – Historical Perspectives on the Natural World

SOC 395 – Social Thought on the Natural World

ENVS 395 – Environmental Studies and the Natural World