

ENGL 171 – Literature of Science & Nature

TR 8:30-9:45 in Hodges Rm 340

CRNs 83653 & 87096 (Honors)

“The more one knows of its peculiar history, the more one realizes that wilderness is not quite what it seems. Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it is quite profoundly a human creation - indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history.”

— William Cronon

“To use or not to use nature is not a choice that is available to us; we can live only at the expense of other lives.” — Wendell Berry



COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills that will enable us to reflect and form our own ideas on our complicated relationship with and understanding of the environment. A majority of our readings will cover topics on human interactions with nature and non-human animals. While many of our readings are from the 19th and 20th century American literary canon, others offer more current perspectives on our topic. Specifically, we will consider how humans have depended on, interacted with, and been shaped by the natural world over time. We will study how we (predominately from a U.S. perspective) have perceived and assigned meaning and value to the natural world around us. We will study how human attitudes, policies, and actions have altered or reshaped the American landscape. Coming to terms with the role of nature in our past and contemporary American culture is essential to understanding a still-evolving American national identity. It is also essential to understanding the current debates over conserving, preserving, or destroying the nation's remaining natural lands.

TEXTS

- McKibben, Bill. ed., 2008. *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*. New York, NY: Penguin.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Contact: brian.ballentine@mail.wvu.edu