

LOVE, GRIEF, AND HOPE: APPALACHIAN LITERATURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

ENGL 352
Fall 2022
TR 11:30-12:45
Clark 212

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Office Hours: T 1:30-3 and by appt.
(Please wear a mask in my office.)

Being Appalachian often means grappling with painful dilemmas involving the natural world. We grow up being taught to love our homes, that we come from one of the most beautiful places in the world. At the same time, we grow up learning that if we don't want to be poor, we must sacrifice that natural world that sustains us, physically and also psychologically.

Through fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and music, English 352 will explore these dilemmas and grapple with other pressing questions like

- What are the psychological effects of suffering loss of place, land, home, and beauty? Are these effects related to mental health and addiction in our region? To political mindsets?
- What can we learn from the Native American perspective, past and present, on Appalachian land? From the African-American perspective?
- How do gender identities influence Appalachians' relationships with land and environmental issues? What are the connections between mythologies of gender and mythologies of land?
- How does class identity intersect with Appalachian relationships with land and environmental issues?
- How might we imagine a different relationship between Appalachians and their land? Where can we find hope for Appalachians and the Appalachian natural world as we move into the future?
- "Do I Stay or Do I Go?"

COURSE OBJECTIVES

When you successfully complete the course, you should have

- A deeper understanding of Appalachian literature
- A deeper understanding of the relationships between Appalachians and their land
- More knowledge about environmental issues in Appalachia
- A deeper understanding of your own relationship to Appalachia and to the natural world in Appalachia and beyond
- Improved close reading skills, writing skills, and speaking skills
- New ways to imagine the relationships between humans and the natural world

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

This is a literature class! For the class to function and for your own success, you must read all assigned material before class and then bring copies of that material to class. Please buy the books **far ahead of the time** we are scheduled to read them. Do not wait until a week or two before.

Required:

Louise McNeill, *The Milkweed Ladies* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988)

Eliza Griswold, *Amity and Prosperity* (Picador Press, 2019)

Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed* (University Press of Illinois, 2013)

In addition to these three books, you will be reading many pieces that I'll send you via email and as handouts. Most of our readings will be from inside the region, but we'll also be reading a few essays from outside Appalachia which I believe help us think in more complex and sometimes revolutionary ways about our place.

Obviously, all assigned readings must be completed before you come to class on the day the readings are due.

Laptops and tablets are allowed in class when we are discussing reading material that is only accessible to you via your device.

NO PHONES IN CLASS. PERIOD. (Don't make me mad.)

I AM GOING TO TRUST YOU NOT TO GET ON THE INTERNET WHILE YOU ARE IN CLASS. Please respect me and don't do this. Please recognize the value of our opportunity to have a class where we can interact with each other person-to-person and engage in deep discussions with minimum reliance on technology. Many university classes don't offer this chance. Please don't undermine our reflections and discussion by doing other things during class. Give your classmates, me, and the material your full attention for an hour and fifteen minutes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

10% Participation and Attendance

10% Reading Checks

30% Three formal papers (Each worth 10% of course grade)

15% Presentation on Hope

30% Course Project (due Thursday December 8 at 11:30 a.m.)

5% Final Paper Reflecting on Course (due Thursday December 15 by 10 a.m.)

1. Attendance and Participation (10% of final grade).

English 352 is a **discussion-based** class and will include, in addition, small-group work, in-class writing, and in-class reading checks. Consequently, your on-time attendance and your active participation is necessary for your personal success and for the success of the class community.

Unexcused absences: More than three unexcused absences will result in a zero for attendance and participation. Small-group work, in-class writing, and reading checks cannot be made when your absence is unexcused.

If you have more than 8 unexcused absences, you will fail this course.

Lateness to class will not be tolerated. Three tardies will count as one absence.

Excused absences: If you have Covid, your absences are excused. You and I will work together to keep you up with class. Please don't take advantage of this policy.

Your participation grade will be based on the following:

Your asking and answering questions in class, contributing valuable insights to discussion, and listening respectfully and attentively to what others say in class.

Your active participation (speaking, listening, note-taking, serving as spokesperson for the group) in small-group work.

Your completion of all assigned reading before coming to class. We can't function as a class unless everyone has read the material. (See "Reading Checks" below.)

Your bringing to class the assigned materials or an electronic device (not a phone) for reading the materials. Please also bring pen and paper to class. Phones must be turned off and put away.

Your bringing good thoughtful questions, written down, to ask visitors to our class.

Here are criteria for how I will grade participation:

<p>■ A: You are prepared for every class period and contribute to class discussion every (or almost every) day; this preparation includes bringing the course materials on a daily basis. You have insightful and relevant contributions and clear engagement with the day’s readings/activities. You respond to your peers’ comments and questions, ask questions of your own, and help facilitate dialogue.</p>
<p>■ B: You are prepared for every class period and contribute to most class discussions; you usually have the course materials. Comments are relevant and insightful and demonstrate a careful reading of the texts assigned. You respond to other’s comments on a regular basis and take on an active role in class activities.</p>
<p>■ C: You are typically prepared for class and contribute to class discussion approximately half of the time; you bring the course materials about half of the time. Sometimes your contributions are off-topic or prevent dialogue from moving forward. During group work, you take on a quiet role.</p>
<p>■ D: You rarely comment or add insight to class discussion; you rarely bring the course materials. You do not display your preparedness for class, which is reflected in your lack of contributions and/or low quiz scores. You may show little interest in the material or may be off-task during class (reading non-relevant material, sending texts, etc.).</p>
<p>■ F: You arrive late to class, are unprepared for class discussion or activities, distract others, or disrupt productive work; you often fail to follow the classroom policies and procedures and/or have missed five or more classes.</p>

See more about participation at the end of this syllabus under “Classroom Community”

- 1. Reading Checks** (10% of grade) We will have regular **unannounced** reading checks to make sure you’re keeping up on the reading and to reward people who are doing so. Some of these checks will be in the form of short-answer quizzes and some will be in the form of in-class writing. These reading checks cannot be made up. If you are sick, you and I will talk and create a short make-up assignment for you. Reading checks will be graded with a plus, check, or minus. A “plus” will be recorded as an A, a “check” as a B, and a minus as a failing grade for the quiz.
- 2. Three Formal Short Papers** (each paper is worth 10% of your course grade for a total of 30%). Throughout the semester, you will write formal short papers responding to prompts that I will give you. The prompts will be related to our readings and discussion. These papers will be between 500 and 750 words. I’ll give you the minimum length requirement for each paper—two full pages or three full pages—with the prompt. You can always write more.

Papers should be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font, and printed. It is due at the beginning of class on its due date.

If you miss a paper because you have Covid, you will have the opportunity to do a make-up paper in November. (See Course Calendar)

- 3. Hope Presentation** (15% of course grade) On November 15 and 17 you will give short—five-to-seven-minute—presentations to the class about a reason to hope for the

Appalachian natural world. These presentations will be based on independent research you do. I'll give you more ideas eventually, but such a presentation could range from a topic in renewal energy, to a work of art you've discovered that offers a new way to think about the natural world, to an organization you've found that promotes healthy relationships with our environment—and other possibilities are really endless. These are just examples.

You can do this presentation by yourself or you can work in a pair.

4. **Course Project** (30% of course grade). A course project will be due on December 8 at the beginning of class. You will have a lot of freedom determining what this project will be. You can do a traditional literary analysis of a text or texts if you want to. You can also do a creative project; a historical research project; an interview project; a community service project; something entirely different if you can explain to me what you want to do and its value and relevance to our class. **A proposal for your project will be due on October 25.** The length of the project will depend on the project itself, but most of the written projects will need to be at least 1300 words (at least 5-6 pages).
5. **Final Reflective Paper** (5% of course grade). We won't have a final in this class, but I do require a final reflective paper of one to two pages. I'll give you directions, but basically, this paper is to help you pull together your thoughts on the class and what you learned. Its deadline will be during the final time for our class, which is 8-10 a.m. on Thursday, December 15—but I will be very grateful if you turn it in earlier than that.

See handout "Criteria for Evaluation of Formal Papers" for information on how I'll grade your formal papers and the project (if the paper/project is a traditional academic paper).

Late work is not acceptable. Any assignment handed in after the class period in which it is due will lose a letter grade for each day it is late, including the day it was due. No assignment will be accepted more than four days after the due date. If you have a personal emergency, speak to me as soon as possible about your situation. Reading checks can't be made up.

If you have Covid, we will make other accommodations for you to get your work in as soon as you can.

Grading Scale:

- A 90-100
- B 80-89
- C 70-79
- D 60-69
- F 0-59

Covid Considerations: The expectation is that this semester will be far less disrupted by Covid than the past few years. If you do get Covid, please let me know as soon as you can so we can work together to enable you to keep up with the class. I'm trusting your honesty here.

Masks will be required in my office.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. You plagiarize if you submit work that contains any material or ideas that are not fully your own. If you quote or paraphrase the work, published or unpublished, of another person without acknowledging that other person, then you have plagiarized. If you quote, paraphrase, or "borrow" ideas or language from any publication, student, professor, the Internet, etc., **you must cite your source** or you will be plagiarizing. This is required even when you put the idea "into your own words."

You are also not allowed to submit for this class work you have submitted in other classes. Please do not repurpose work you've already done.

If several people sitting near each other give the same wrong answers on a quiz, it's pretty obvious what happened. Don't cheat on reading checks.

Please talk with me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty. I can also explain how you cite a source.

I've been a writer almost all my life. I know how hard it is to produce original writing and I know how serious it is when someone steals another's writing. I have zero tolerance for plagiarism. **A proven case of plagiarism will result in an F for this course.**

The following policies come directly from the University:

Academic Integrity Statement

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, instructors will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of their courses. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University [Academic Standards Policy](http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification) (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification>). Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see your instructor before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with [the Office of Accessibility Services](https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/). (https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/)

More information is available at the [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](https://diversity.wvu.edu/) (https://diversity.wvu.edu/) as well. [adopted 2-11-2013]

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, disability, age, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. I welcome any suggestions about how I might promote a positive, open, and inclusive environment in this class.

MENTAL HEALTH

Statement from The Carruth Center

College students commonly experience issues that may interfere with academic success. Stress, sleep problems, relationship and social concerns, adjustment to college, financial problems, family issues, discrimination, or anxiety and depression all affect one's ability to remember, learn, and perform. If you or a friend is struggling, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Supportive resources are available on campus, and most are at no-charge. The Carruth Center for Psychological and Psychiatric Services (CCPPS) offers consultations, short-term individual therapy, group therapy, and various mental health-related workshops. Virtual and in-person (outside of pandemic situations) services are available. Crisis services are also available 24/7/365.

Please call (304) 293-4431 to schedule an appointment or speak to a professional for help in a crisis.

For more mental health resources and information, visit the CCPPS website at: <https://carruth.wvu.edu/>

Crisis services are also available through text: Text WVU to 741741 for support 24/7 from a trained Crisis Counselor.

Classroom Community

This course's content will require us to discuss issues that may cause moments of discomfort and moments of disagreement. Some ideas may challenge your own beliefs or values. We'll be exploring issues of politics, race, social and environmental justice, and sexual and gender identity. I will work hard to create a climate of civility and respect, and I ask you to do so as well.

Our class will be a community, not a collection of separate individuals receiving information from a professor. I want us to get to know each other, talk with each other, and listen to each other. I expect you to be thoughtful and respectful during class discussion. Be conscious of your tone and speak to others the way you like to be spoken to. You do not have to agree with each other—but disagree in the spirit of intellectual exchange and be sensitive about other people's ideas and feelings. Please talk with me outside of class if you are having problems with controversial course material or if you are uncomfortable with the way class discussion is going.

I like to teach using technology when it's helpful, but my teaching philosophy prioritizes human-to-human interaction. I don't use Ecampus or other platforms very much. I'll be mostly using email to communicate with you. Please rely on the syllabus to keep track of when papers and other assignments are due. I am happy at any time to tell you what your grade in the class is. Just email me or visit office hours.

COURSE CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE, Fall 2022

The schedule is subject to changes with advance notice from me.

You must have read all material before the class for which it is assigned. You must bring to class the appropriate book and copies of reading assignments that are due for that day. If the readings on the calendar aren't from one of the three books you purchased, I'll be providing them to you as email attachments—E—or as physical handouts—H.

Introduction to Appalachia Literature about the Natural World

R Aug. 18 Introduction to Class and to each other

T Aug. 23 Class cancelled.

R Aug. 25 Readings: Breece Pancake, “First Day of Winter” (E)
 Bianca Lynne Spriggs, “Praisesong for a Mountain” (H)
 Crystal Good, “Valley Girl” (H)
 Anita Skeen, “While You Sleep” (H)
 Marc Harshman, “With No Questions” and “What I’ve Seen” (H)

DUE: Start of Semester Survey. These questions are on p. 13 of this syllabus.

T Aug. 30 Readings: James Still, excerpt from *River of Earth* (E)
 William Brewer, “In the Room of the Overdosed, an Ember” (H)
 Victor Depta, “The Protests at Blair” (H)
 Irene McKinney, “Atavistic” (H)
 Torli Bush, “Last Night I Dreamed I Went to Parcoal Again” (H)

The Milkweed Ladies

R Sept. 1 Reading: Louise McNeill, *The Milkweed Ladies*, 1-39

T Sept. 6 Reading: *The Milkweed Ladies*, 41-91

R Sept. 8 Reading: *The Milkweed Ladies*, 93-122

DUE: FORMAL PAPER ONE

The Gas Industry and Hydrofracking

T Sept. 13 *Amity and Prosperity*, 3-102

R Sept. 15 Visit to the West Virginia and Regional History Center, 6th floor, Downtown Library. We’ll meet in the Center that day.

T Sept. 20 Reading: *Amity and Prosperity* pp. 105-231

R Sept. 22 Reading: Finish *Amity and Prosperity* pp. 235-305

The Native American Perspective

T Sept. 27 Readings: Cherokee Narratives and Songs (H or E)
 Marilou Awiakta poems, “An Indian Walks in Me”; “Women Die Like Trees”; “When Earth Becomes an ‘It’”; “Anorexia Bulimia Speaks from the Grave.” (H)
 The Cherokee Nation, “Memorial of the Cherokee Citizens” (E)

DUE: FORMAL PAPER 2

R Sept. 29 Readings: Thomas King, essay, “The Truth About Stories” (E)
 Tommy Pico, from “Nature Poem” (H)

T Oct. 4 Readings: Robin Kimmerer essays, “The Gift of Strawberries”; “Shkitagen: People of the Seventh Fire” (E)

R Oct. 6 Make-up Attendance Day If you have an absence due to illness in the first half of the semester, you can make up that absence by attending today. If you don’t need a make-up day, then this is a day off for you. I’ll announce our activities for this day when we get closer to it.

The Coal Industry and Mountaintop Removal

T Oct. 11 Reading: excerpts from *Strange As This Weather Has Been*: “Bant” (14-22); “Corey” (23-31); “Dane” (43-50). (E)

R Oct. 13 Reading: *Our Roots Run Deep As Ironweed*: Introduction (1-9); Maria Gunnoe (11-26); Joan Linville (44-58).

T Oct. 18 Reading: *Our Roots Run Deep As Ironweed*: Donetta Blankenship (61-69); Lorelei Scarboro (121-134).
 Aldern, “Mountaintop removal country’s mental health crisis” (E)

R Oct. 20 Reading: *Our Roots Run Deep As Ironweed*: Judy Bonds (149-156); Conclusion (168-189). (You don’t have to read the funeral reflections in the Judy Bonds chapter.)

DUE: FORMAL PAPER 3

The African-American Perspective

T Oct. 25 Reading: Poems: Norman Jordan, “Appalachian Ghost” (H)
 Chanda Feldman, “Rabbit”;
 Bianca Lynne Spriggs, “Black Bone” (H)
 Crystal Good, “Country Cool”; “Boom Boom”; “Rand Poem” (H)

David Bradley, *The Chaneyville Incident*, novel excerpt (E)

Raymond Thompson photo essay, “Reclaiming the Black Image in Nature and In Photography” (E)

DUE: PROPOSAL FOR YOUR COURSE PROJECT.

R Oct. 27 Visit with Affrilachian poet Torli Bush

Reading: Torli Bush, “To Be Affrilachian”; “Whereas Appalachia Was Always Black, Queer, and Wild”; “Reflecting on a Dream in Which . . .”; “Riverside Doxology”; and TBA (H or E)

T Nov. 1 The Hawk’s Nest Disaster

Reading: Catherine Venable Moore, essay, “The Book of the Dead” (E)
 Muriel Rukeyser, poems from *The Book of the Dead*, TBA (H)

Music and the Appalachian Natural World

R Nov. 3 Readings and Listenings TBA

T Nov. 8 No school, election day

R Nov. 10 No class, I’ll be out of town.

Due: Make-up paper, Formal Paper 4. THIS ASSIGNMENT IS **ONLY** FOR PEOPLE WHO HAD TO MISS AN EARLIER PAPER DUE TO ILLNESS. Please email your makeup paper to me as a Word doc by 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, November 10.

Imagining Forward: Your Hope Presentations

T Nov. 15 Your Presentations on Hope

R Nov. 17 Your Presentations on Hope

[Nov. 22 and 24: Thanksgiving Break]

The LGBTQ Perspective

T Nov. 29 Reading: Poems: Anita Skeen, “Need”; Jenny Johnson, “Late Bloom”; Nickole Brown, “Self-Portrait As Eastern Wood Rat” (H)

Story: Ross Liggett, “Britney”

Essay: Carter Sickels, “On Transitioning and Finding Home” (E)

R Dec. 1 Visit with Jeff Mann. Jeff will be speaking to us from Virginia Tech, so we will all Zoom from home today.

Reading: Poems: “Homecoming”; “Training the Enemy”; “Three Crosses” and others TBA
Prose: “Country Boy”

T Dec. 6 Reading: Neema Avashia essay, “Chemical Bonds” (E)

R Dec. 8 Class Closure. **DUE: FINAL COURSE PROJECT**

Final Reflective Paper due by 10 a.m. on Thursday December 15. Please send it as a Word doc to my email. (I encourage you to hand it in earlier than December 15!)

English 352 Start-of-Semester Survey Due Tuesday Aug. 23

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. I’d appreciate it if you’d take your time with your answers because those will help me better teach the class. Handwritten answers are okay if they are neat and legible.

1. Where are you from?
 2. What is your major? Your year in school?
 3. Have you taken any college-level literature courses before?
- (Questions continued on next page)

4. Have you taken any Appalachian Studies courses before?
5. Have you taken any courses about environmental issues?
6. What do you like to do with your free time? What activities or issues are you especially interested in?
7. What are your concerns or worries about this class and this semester, if any?
8. What are your hopes for this class?
9. Would you like to tell me your pronouns or any other information you think I need to make this class the best experience possible for you?