

ENVI 280
Environmental Classics
Macalester College, Spring 2009
Olin-Rice 270, M 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Prof. Christie Manning

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Office Hours: Monday 1:15 – 3:15, Thursday 10:30 – 11:30, and by appointment

Course Description:

What has the environment meant to past generations? How have writers shaped the ways we understand our relationship with the natural world? This course explores these questions, drawing in roughly equal measure on “classic” texts from the humanities, social sciences, and sciences.

Required Books (available at college bookstore):

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*
Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
Donella Meadows, et al, *Limits to Growth*
Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*

Other required readings:

All other readings listed in the Readings Schedule are available as e-reserves through the library. Access them at <http://www.macalester.edu/library/resources/reserves/index.html>, or through the course’s Moodle website (information below). One hard copy of each reserve reading will also be available at the library reserves desk.

Evaluation:

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

1. Participation (25%)
2. Weekly discussion comment (5%)
3. First and second papers (4-6 pages) 20% each
4. Final paper (8-10 pages) 30%

Participation:

Participation grades will be based on class attendance and participation in discussions. The format of the class is guided discussion with very little lecture. I prefer a mode of learning that is shared and collective with discussions as the means for us to engage with the readings, explore major themes, discover connections, clarify, and develop new insight. Thus it is critical that each student come to class having carefully read the week’s reading. This course is also intended to help you create a learning community with one another that you can rely on and enjoy even after this course ends. You cannot do this if you do not come to class prepared and willing to share your ideas.

For those who are less comfortable speaking in class, remember that asking a good question is also a valuable way to contribute to the discussion. However, if you are having serious difficulties with participation, please talk to me outside of class so that we can develop a strategy for improvement. Laptops should not be used during class discussions.

Weekly discussion comment:

Each week you should develop one thought-provoking discussion comment based on the week's readings, and send it to me via email (cmanning@macalester.edu) *by 10 a.m. on the day of class*. I am looking for comments (or questions) that spark lively discussion and deeper engagement with the material. Good discussion comments might highlight the implications of a particular concept (to you personally or to society), comment on the relevance of the ideas today or at the time of publication, compare ideas to earlier material, contrast theories or points of view, raise a problem, suggest possible resolutions or answers, or describe a contradiction. Discussion comments will be graded on a 3-point scale (3 = outstanding (rarely given), 2 = good, 1 = satisfactory, 0 = unsatisfactory or not turned in).

Papers:

Topics for the first two papers will be distributed via our course's Moodle website (see below) two weeks before they are due; I will also post detailed information on the final paper on Moodle. The writing assignments give you a chance to demonstrate a deeper understanding and synthesis of the material we discuss each week. Remember that the best ideas are obscured with poor writing. Please take the time to carefully edit and polish your prose. Papers are due, either in hard copy or through Moodle, by the beginning of class on the day listed in the syllabus.

The MAX Center:

This resource offers drop-in consultancy on writing projects, and can provide helpful feedback and advice on your work before it is due. The center is located on the first floor of Kagin Commons, and is open for tutoring Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and from Sunday through Thursday from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Find them on the web at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/>, and be sure to check out the writing handbook at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/writinghandbook/index.html>. I strongly encourage all of you to make use of the Max Center's wonderful resources.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments.

Academic Integrity

All students will be required to abide by the Macalester College academic integrity guidelines found at http://www.macalester.edu/deanofstudents/handbook/acad_pol.htm#003. Instances of suspected academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, and using the same paper in more than one course) will be handled as outlined in the guidelines.

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, or any other needs you think may affect your ability to perform well in this class, please see me early in the semester so that arrangements can be made to accommodate your situation.

Moodle:

Our course's Moodle website duplicates much of the information in this syllabus, including the reading schedule and assignment due dates. It also serves as the distribution system for paper prompts, and provides a direct link to our course's e-reserves. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your Macalester username and password. After logging in, click on the link to Environmental Classics in the My Courses section. Anything posted to the forums will automatically be emailed to everyone registered for the course. Click on each assignment to get the paper prompts, beginning two weeks before the paper is due; there is also an option here to submit your papers to me in electronic form.

Summary of Topics and Readings

Week 1: What is a classic?

Monday, Jan. 26

Syllabus review, student introductions

Week 2: Nature writings

Monday, Feb. 2

Readings:

- Henry David Thoreau (1854) *Walden* “Where I Lived, and What I Lived for”, “Solitude”, “The Village”, “The Ponds”, “Baker Farm”, “Higher Laws”, “Brute Neighbors”, “The Pond in Winter”, “Spring”, “Conclusion”
- Sarah Orne Jewett (1886) *The White Heron*

Week 3: How shall we treat nature?

Monday, Feb. 9

Readings:

- George Perkins Marsh (1864/1874): from *Man and Nature* (7-32)
- John Muir (1894) from *The Mountains of California* “The Sierra Nevada” and “The Glaciers” (p. 1- 35)
- Gifford Pinchot (1909) from *The Fight for Conservation* (3-20, 40-52)

Week 4: The land ethic

Monday, Feb. 16

Reading:

- Aldo Leopold (1948) *A Sand County Almanac*

Week 5: Recognition that all is not well

Monday, Feb. 23

Readings:

- Lynn White Jr. (1967) The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, *Science*, 155, 1203-1207
- Rachel Carson (1968) *Silent Spring* (Ch. 3 – 10)

PAPER 1 DUE on Feb. 23

Week 6: Population

Monday, March 2

Readings:

- Paul Ehrlich (1968) *The Population Bomb* Ch. 1 – 3 (15-110)
- Garrett Hardin (1968) The Tragedy of the Commons, *Science*, 162, 1243-1248

Week 7: A discussion of overshoot and collapse

Monday, March 9

Reading:

- Meadows, Meadows, Randers & Behrens (1972) *Limits to Growth* (21-188)
- Selections from the *Limits to Growth: The 30 year update* by Meadows, Randers & Meadows (2004) (pages TBD)

*****SPRING BREAK*****

Week 8: Alternatives to the status quo

Monday, March 23

Readings:

- E. F. Schumacher (1973) Buddhist Economics from *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (available online at http://www.smallisbeautiful.org/buddhist_economics/english.html)
- Amory Lovins (1976) Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken. *Foreign Affairs*, Oct76, Vol. 55 Issue 1, p65-96

Week 9: Humanity's place in nature, nature's place in human experience

Monday, March 30

Readings:

- J.E. Lovelock (1979) *Gaia: A new look at life on earth* (1-47)
- E.O. Wilson (1984) *Biophilia* (83-140)

Week 10: The power of images

Monday, April 6 (No readings)

- Film: Koyaanisqatsi- Life Out of Balance (1983)

PAPER 2 DUE on April 6

Week 11: Environmental indignation

Monday, April 13

Reading:

- Edward Abbey (1985) *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (read entire novel, 356 pages)

Week 12: Revisiting *Silent Spring*

Monday, April 20

Readings:

- Colburn, Domanoski, Myers (1996) *Our Stolen Future* (1-86, 198-209, 231-250, 251-260)

Week 13: One proposal for a new way forward

Monday, April 27

Film excerpts: TBD

Reading:

- Lester Brown (2006) *Plan B 3.0* (available for download) (Pages TBD)

Week 14: A hopeful path?

Monday, May 4

Reading:

- Barbara Kingsolver (2007) *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (1-172)

FINAL PAPER DUE Friday, May 8