

Barbara Ladd
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Emory University
Upper-Division Course (for majors and others; satisfies writing requirement)

For most students interested in American literature, the West and Northwest are the main sites of environmentalist writing; and, for most of them, this work is a post-World War II development (e.g. Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, published in 1949). Traditions of American environmentalist writing are much broader, however, both regionally and historically. Several years ago, I began thinking about literature and environment in connection with my research interests in southern literature and culture. The U.S. South is a site of significant environmental devastation and ecological crisis-- the loss of wetlands, clear-cutting of forests, strip mining and its impacts, toxic waste--and southern writers like James Dickey, Linda Hogan, Janisse Ray, and Ron Rash among others have produced a distinguished and ecologically aware body of work. In my course, I direct attention to these environmentalist writers from the U.S. South but also to earlier writers whose work is relevant to contemporary ecological discourses, and in future offerings of the course I hope to include more of this earlier work--William Byrd, Robert Beverley, John James Audubon, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, and others. Questions of sustainability underpin much of our course content and, because this is a course in literature and culture, in narrative and story, our conceptualization of "sustainability" is primarily humanities-based, i.e. we are chiefly concerned with its implications for cultural values, its narrative potential. My students have so far been especially interested in what it means when discourses of sustainability displace discourses of expansion, growth, and development, in how we understand ourselves, the trajectory of our lives, time, and temporalities when "sustainability" rather than "growth" alone is a fundamental cultural principle.

English 389: Southern Literature and Ecocriticism

Spring 2016

Professor: Barbara Ladd

Description: In this course we will explore southern literature through the lens of environmental issues, climate change, and ecocriticism. Readings include novels, short stories, poems, films, essays, and other forms.

Texts: James Dickey, *Deliverance* (book and film); John Lane, *Chattooga: Descending into the Myth of Deliverance*; Zeitlin, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (film); Linda Hogan, *Power*; Donald Harington, *The Architecture of the Arkansas Ozarks*; Charles Chesnutt, *Conjure Tales* (Brodhead, ed.); Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*; Ron Rash, *Serena*. Some shorter readings will be made available on Blackboard or on Course Reserves at Woodruff Library. Supplementary reading includes sections from Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* and the following:

From *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*. Ed. Ken Hiltner. London and New York: Routledge, 2015: Buell, Lawrence. "Representing the Environment," 97-

101; Cronon, William, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 102-119; White, Lynn Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," 39-46. Also Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (Winter, 2009): 197-222, and Snyder, Gary, "Unnatural Writing" and "Language Goes Two Ways," *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds*. Washington: Counterpoint, 1995. 163-180. Other readings may be included as needed and if time permits.

Work: 2 short papers (one of which will be associated with the research/presentation assignment); quizzes and in-class and out-of-class reflections; a major research paper with presentation; a final exam. No laptops or other electronics to be used in class. Print copies of the texts will be available in the bookstore. (For explanation of this policy, see "Why No Laptops in This Class" under "Course Documents" in Blackboard.)

Research paper with presentation: This is an independent research project modeled on the academic conference. It requires a preliminary abstract (which counts as an out-of-class writing assignment), a 4-page paper on your topic, turned in for distribution to the class and written to be read aloud to the class as part of an oral presentation scheduled for the final weeks of class (your second short paper of the semester). I and members of the class will read your paper before your presentation, listen to *you* read it (you may not talk "about" it or supplement it with visuals—you must read it as written), ask you questions about it, and comment in writing on your paper and presentation. After receiving our commentary, you will revise and expand your paper into a 12-15-page research paper to be turned in at the end of the semester.

Grading: 1st short paper (10%); quizzes and short in-class or out-of-class writing assignments (20%); 2nd short paper of 4 pages to be read in class and critiqued by classmates (10%); presentation preparation and performance (10%); research paper (20%); final examination (20%); attendance (10%). Excellent preparation, participation, and attendance may result in a raising of your final average.

Attendance Expected: Excessive instances of tardiness and absences will affect your final grade. In a TTh Class, "excessive" means more than 3 absences. Attendance, preparation, and participation are part of the course requirements. In-class writing assignments (quizzes) cannot be made up under any circumstances. There is no difference between an absence with cause and an absence just for the joy of it, unless you have an extended illness that requires you to miss more than 3 classes and is documented by Emory College. Otherwise, if you miss 4 classes, your attendance grade will be a C; if you miss 5, the attendance grade will be a D; if you miss 6 or more, the attendance grade will be an F.

Participation and Civility: Responsible membership in this class includes consideration of others, which means leaving electronic devices (phones, beepers,

and other noise-making devices) at home, or making sure they are turned off. Laptops, tablets, e-readers, cellphones, etc. are not to be used in the classroom. Notes should be taken on paper, with pen or pencil.

Plagiarism and Collusion: Any paper turned into this class to fulfill an assignment must be your own work (from conception to final product) and must not have been used in another class here or elsewhere. Allow no one to edit or alter your paper in any way. (“No One” includes parents, other family members, hired help, former teachers, friends, another current teacher, a counselor, or anyone else.) Do not acquire papers from any source, including the internet. Copying and pasting from the internet is plagiarism. Your name on a paper indicates that you wrote it, without any assistance that I have not explicitly authorized, and that you understand the policy. Violations of this policy constitute an infringement of the Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Council. Documentation: It is your responsibility to understand and use the proper documentation for any paper turned in to this class. Use the MLA Style of works cited and parenthetical references. Make sure you have access to a current (past 10 years) style guide with information on the MLA Style of documentation.

For additional information on the University’s Honor Code, see http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html

Disability: If you have a disability and will need special accommodations, it is essential that you register with the Office of Disability Services, 110 Administration Building. Otherwise, accommodations cannot be granted. Even if you hope not to need accommodations, it is wise to register if you have a documented disability. Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive—in other words they begin when approved by the ODS.

SYLLABUS DRAFT

T. 1/12: introduction to course

Th. 1/14: Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" (xv-xxv); Garrard, "Positions" (pages 18-36), and Timothy Clark, "The Inherent Violence of Western Thought" (pages 55-62).

T. 1/19: Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" and William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness."

Th. 1/21: Snyder, "The Place, the Region, and the Commons," "Language Goes Two Ways," and "Unnatural Writing."

T. 1/26: Ron Rash, *Serena* (Part 1, through p. 97)

Th. 1/28: Rash continued through Part 2, p. 210)

T. 2/2: Rash continued to end of book (Parts 3, 4, and coda, through p. 371)

Th. 2/4: Linda Hogan, *Power* (chapters 1-4)

T. 2/9: Hogan continued. Finish the novel.

Th. 2/11: Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* to page 140 ("How the Heart Opens")

T. 2/16: Ray continued. Finish the novel.

Th. 2/18: Zeitlin, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (film--this film is available at the Music Library, at the Law Library, and for rental or purchase at amazon.com)

T. 2/23: Paper 1 Due

Th. 2/25: Le Guin, "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" and Harington, *TAOTAO* (chapters 1-4, to p. 124)

T. 3/1: Harington continued (chapters 5-13, to p. 308)

Th. 3/3: Harington continued. Finish the novel (chapters 14-20, and acknowledgements, to p. 425).

T. 3/8: Spring Break

Th. 3/10: Spring Break

T. 3/15: class canceled

Th. 3/17: Dickey, *Deliverance*

T. 3/22: *Deliverance* continued; please finish the book

Th. 3/24: *Deliverance* (film: available at Music Library and for rental or purchase at amazon.com); John Lane, *Chattooga: Descending into the Myth of Deliverance*

T. 3/29: Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Tales*. Read "The Goophered Grapevine," "Po' Sandy," and "Mars Jeems Nightmare." Discussion of climate change interviews.

Th. 3/31: Chesnutt continued. Read "Lonesome Ben" and "The Marked Tree"; proposal for final research project due by Sunday, April 3, 11 p.m.

T. 4/5: Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (Winter, 2009): 197-222.

Th. 4/7: No Class; mandatory conferences.

T. 4/12: Conferences continue. 4-page presentation papers due by 11 p.m. tonight. (No extensions.) I will circulate them tomorrow.

Th. 4/14: Presentations Begin

T. 4/19

Th. 4/21: Last Day of Classes

T. 4/26: Final Paper Due.

Exam: Monday, May 2nd, 3-5:30

