

**Writing 3901F: You're a Strange Animal: Writing Nature, Writing the Self****Section:** 001**Time/Room:** AHB-3R07 Mon 12:30-3:30**Instructor:** Dr. Tom Cull**Email:** tcull3@uwo.ca**Office:** 3270 Lawson Hall**Office hours:** Wed 12:00-2:00***Break free of technology to become creative!***

**To provide the best learning experience for you and to encourage your creativity, all writing exercises will be created with pen and paper, both of which you should bring to each class. A small note pad or writing booklet for taking notes when we are on field trips is highly recommended.**

**DESCRIPTION**

Nature is a slippery fish. In this course, we will use poetry, fiction and non-fiction to capture (and release) some of the fundamentals of nature writing. We will write about nature, in nature. Campus will be our classroom. We will spend about half of our time exploring natural (and not so natural) features of Western Campus: hissing geese, tree species, birds of prey, groundhogs, creepy-crawlies, green spaces, parking lots, taxidermized animals in the basement of Natural Science, the river, the food court, the football field. In effect, we will become literary naturalists; we will learn to pay attention to nature, and think about how it may be captured—and released—through literature. You will need the following: notepad, pen, sturdy footwear, a sense of adventure.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to

1. identify fundamental elements and themes of nature writing;
2. generate ideas in a variety of genres: poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction.
3. analyze and respond critically to published writing and the work of their peers;
4. identify and correct errors in composition, grammar, and mechanics; and
5. incorporate feedback into revisions.

**Required Textbooks**

Writing about Nature: A Creative Guide, Revised Edition by John A. Murray, 2003 (available at The Bookstore at Western)

**Course Requirements**

Image Poem	15% (Sept 25)
Flash Fiction	15% (Oct 23)
Creative Non-Fiction	15% (Oct 30)
Exercises Portfolio	20% (Nov 27)
Finals Assignment	35% (Dec 4)
	<b>100%</b>

## SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

***In this course you will be required to submit the final version of each of your assignments electronically, through OWL to turnitin.com and provide your instructor with a hard copy in class the day the assignment is due.***

Late assignments will receive a penalty of 5% per day. To qualify for an extension, you must have a valid reason and contact your instructor prior to the deadline. Please see the medical accommodation policy below.

If necessary, please submit essays to the Writing Department Drop Box outside Lawson Hall Room 3270, making sure you include your instructor's name and your section number. However, do not

- fax assignments
- e-mail assignments

Keep copies (electronic, paper, or both) of all assignments submitted.

## Attendance policies

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy in this class:

- You may miss up to three hours (the equivalent of one week of class) of class meetings during the term without explanation. That means that the first three class hours you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.
- However, if you miss a total of four to nine class hours (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than nine hours of class meetings (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g. if you've missed three hours, and need or want to miss another class meeting) discuss these reasons with your instructor within one week of that absence. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation. That advisor may then contact all of your instructors. See also: '**Medical Accommodation Policy**' below.

**Attendance also extends to tardiness.** If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time as late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class. Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

**Note:** a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of 'make-up class' in another course ***will*** count as non-attendance, and ***will*** attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario ***shall not require*** a student to write a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student's other scheduled class times. If you are asked or 'required' to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean's office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is ***your*** choice; your absence will not be excused.

### **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism**

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

### **Prerequisites**

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

*The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101F/G, 2125F/G (or the former 2121F/G), 2111F/G, 2130F/G, or 2131F/G; or b) a final grade of 70 or more in one of Writing 1000F/G, 1030F/G, 1031F/G, or c) Special Permission of the department.*

### **Medical Accommodation Policy**

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading)

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or Writing Studies, and Writing Studies requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision

on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

**"Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help."**

### **Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing**

Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

### **Class Meeting Schedule (subject to change)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Readings/Topics</b>
Week 1 Sept 11	Introduction to Class: What is Nature? What is Nature Writing?  Class trip: Forest Bathing  Writing Exercise: Images	Pick up Text book at the Bookstore  Poems: Hoar Frost: <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/hoar-frost">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/hoar-frost</a> March Evening: <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/march-evening">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/march-evening</a> Wild Geese: <a href="https://goo.gl/yeJ9Da">https://goo.gl/yeJ9Da</a> To a Head of Lettuce: <a href="https://goo.gl/wouJKK">https://goo.gl/wouJKK</a> The Owl: <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/owl">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/owl</a> Pow-wow at the End of the Word: <a href="https://goo.gl/QvukVo">https://goo.gl/QvukVo</a> A Toast to the Baltimore Oriol: <a href="https://goo.gl/EYmbuJ">https://goo.gl/EYmbuJ</a>  <b>Image Poem Assigned</b>
Week 2 Sept 18	Class visit: Eric Mandawe  Image Poem Workshop. River Walk  Writing Exercise: River of Words	Image and Description <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70212/learning-image-and-description">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70212/learning-image-and-description</a>  Nature Writing: <a href="http://towncrier.puritan-magazine.com/author-notes/tanis-macdonald/">http://towncrier.puritan-magazine.com/author-notes/tanis-macdonald/</a>  What is Nature: <a href="https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/raymond-williams-keywords.pdf">https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/raymond-williams-keywords.pdf</a> (read defn of the term "nature" in Williams)
Week 3 Sept 25	Trees. Tour of Sherwood Fox Arboretum.  Exercise: Tree Interview  <b>Image Poem Due in Class</b>	Review of the Secret Life of Trees: <a href="https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/09/26/the-hidden-life-of-trees-peter-wohlleben/">https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/09/26/the-hidden-life-of-trees-peter-wohlleben/</a> Peter Wohlleben Interview <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWj1tWZ2_tg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWj1tWZ2_tg</a>  <a href="http://tvo.org/video/documentaries/call-of-the-forest-the-forgotten-wisdom-of-trees">TVO Special: http://tvo.org/video/documentaries/call-of-the-forest-the-forgotten-wisdom-of-trees</a>

Week 4 Oct 2	Flash Fiction: Class Visit—David Heubert (wrting exercise)	David Heubert's Enigma: <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2687087047">http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2687087047</a>  <b>Flash Fiction Piece Assigned.</b>
Week 5 Oct 16	Flash Fiction Workshop  Creative Non-Fiction Campus Walk.  Exercise: Photography Ekphrastic or Early Memory	Annie Dillard: <a href="http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG200-lad/dillard.htm">http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG200-lad/dillard.htm</a>  Textbook: Chapter 13: Research  <b>Creative Non-Fiction Piece Assigned</b>
Week 6 Oct 23	Creative Non-Fiction Workshop <b>Flash Fiction Due in Class</b> Exercise: Season's Shift	Textbook Reading: Chapter 7, Figurative Language
Week 7 Oct 30	Exercise: A walk in the Woods  Graphic Exercise: Graphic Mapping <b>Creative Non-Fiction Due</b>	<a href="http://www.artnews.com/2014/06/05/comics-artist-lynda-barry-on-teaching-non-artists-to-draw/">http://www.artnews.com/2014/06/05/comics-artist-lynda-barry-on-teaching-non-artists-to-draw/</a>  textbook Reading: Chapter One: The Journal.
Week 8 Nov 6	Class Visit Adam Helters  Exercise; Cute Animals or Animals in the News	Wernor Herzog Film: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuJ31bu01mM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuJ31bu01mM</a>
Week 9 Nov 13	A River Runs Through Campus! (River cleanup)  Exercise: Dirty Nature	Textbook Reading: Chapter 16: Nature Writing and Environmental Activism.  George Monbiot: <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/09/forget-the-environment-new-words-lifes-wonders-language">https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/09/forget-the-environment-new-words-lifes-wonders-language</a>
Week 10 Nov 20	Animals. Tour of Zoological Collection Exercise: Animal POV	John Berger: Why Look at Animals: <a href="https://goo.gl/Ama1au">https://goo.gl/Ama1au</a>  The End of Animals? Guardian Article: <a href="https://goo.gl/diBPmc">https://goo.gl/diBPmc</a>
Week 11 Nov 27	Final Assignment Workshop <b>Exercises Portfolio Due</b>	Textbook Readings, Chapter 12 : Revision.

Week 12 Dec 6	<b>Final Assignments Due</b>	Wrap-up discussion Publishing Nature Writing
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