

Writing 3901F: You're a Strange Animal: Writing Nature, Writing the Self**Section:** 001**Time/Room:** UC 1220 Mon 12:30-3:30**Instructor:** Dr. Tom Cull**Email:** tcull3@uwo.ca**Office:** 1425 University College**Office hours:** Mon 3:30-4:30

Wed 1:30-2:30

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 30)
Flash Fiction	15% (Oct 21)
Creative Non-Fiction	15% (Oct 28)
Exercises Portfolio	25% (Nov 18)
Finals Assignment	30% (Dec 2)
	100%

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 English and Writing Studies Department Drop Box across from UC 2431, **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 only be waived for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have non-medical evidence that would support waiving an absence of one class meeting, provide it to your instructor within one week of that absence. In the case of a medical reason, please see the Medical Accommodation Policy set out below and in the document 'Information for Students in a Writing Studies Course' on this website, and either initiate a Self-Reported Absence or apply in person to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of your home Faculty. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it in person with the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of your home Faculty. Your advisor there may then contact all of your instructors.

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 Western 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.

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.

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>).”

Note: In this course you will be required to submit an electronic copy of the final version of each of your essays to turnitin.com through OWL.

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.”

Medical Accommodation Policy:

Western has a comprehensive policy covering requests for accommodation by students who are not registered with Student Accessibility Services. All students should review this policy here, under the heading ‘Accommodation for Illness – Undergraduate Students’, noting the procedures, restrictions, and notice requirements:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12

In Writing courses, students covered by this policy who are seeking academic consideration must proceed as follows.

Writing Studies’ Basic Policy: students seeking academic consideration **on medical or any other grounds** for any missed tests/exams, class attendance/participation components, or late or missed assignments must either initiate a Self-Reported Absence (**for a grade component worth up to 30% of their final grade, but excluding final exams scheduled during the exam period**) or apply in person to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate office of their home Faculty and provide a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or other supporting documentation as required in accordance with official Western policy (linked above).

Students seeking academic consideration **must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by either:

- i. A Self-Reported Absence, or

- ii. Academic consideration supported by the Academic Counselling Office.

Exception: in Writing Studies courses, a student seeking academic accommodation **on non-medical grounds** for any missed in-class tests/exams, class attendance/participation components, or late or missed assignments **worth less than 10% of a final grade** may first consult directly with her or his instructor, who will – in his or her discretion – elect either to make a decision on the request directly or instruct the student to follow the procedures set out in **Writing Studies’ Basic Policy**.

Please note that individual instructors will **not under any circumstances** accept or read medical documentation directly offered by a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds or for related 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 or Undergraduate office of a student’s home Faculty.

Students who are or who feel they should be covered under Student Accessibility Services should review Western policy here:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_10

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) 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 Studies Course” for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that instructors do 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)

Date	Focus	Readings/Topics
Week 1 Sept 9	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: https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/hoar-frost Wild Geese: https://goo.gl/yeJ9Da To a Head of Lettuce: https://goo.gl/wouJKK The Owl: https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/owl Pow-wow at the End of the Word: https://goo.gl/QvukVo A Toast to the Baltimore Oriol: https://goo.gl/EYmbuJ Image Poem Assigned
Week 2 Sept 16	Class Hike: Brendon Samuels (birding) Writing Exercise: (Bird Watching)	Image and Description https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70212/learning-image-and-description Nature Writing Tanis MacDonald: http://towncrier.puritan-magazine.com/author-notes/tanis-macdonald/ Don McKay: Baler Twine: Thoughts on Ravens, Home and Nature Poetry https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/8179/9236

Week 3 Sept 23	Flash Fiction Fiction wrting exercise Image Poem workshop	David Heubert's Enigma: http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2687087047 Flash Fiction Piece Assigned.
Week 4 Sept 30	Trees. Tour of Sherwood Fox Arboretum. Exercise: Tree Interview Image Poem Due in Class	Review of the Secret Life of Trees: https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/09/26/the-hidden-life-of-trees-peter-wohlleben/ Peter Wohlleben Interview https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWj1tWZ2_tg TVO Special: http://tvo.org/video/documentaries/call-of-the-forest-the-forgotten-wisdom-of-trees
Week 5 Oct 7	Flash Fiction Workshop Creative Non- Fiction Campus Walk. Exercise: Photography Ekphrastic or Early Memory	Annie Dillard: http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG200-lad/dillard.htm Textbook: Chapter 13: Research Creative Non-Fiction Piece Assigned
Week 6 Oct 21	Creative Non- Fiction Workshop Flash Fiction Due in Class Exercise: Season's Shift	Textbook Reading: Chapter 7, Figurative Language George Monbiot: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/09/forget-the-environment-new-words-lifes-wonders-language Rachel Carson: Silent Spring: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/06/16/silent-spring-part-1 On Rachel Carson: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/26/the-right-way-to-remember-rachel-carson
Week 7 Oct 28	Exercise: A walk in the Woods Graphic Exercise: Graphic Mapping Creative Non- Fiction Due	http://www.artnews.com/2014/06/05/comics-artist-lynda-barry-on-teaching-non-artists-to-draw/ textbook Reading: Chapter One: The Journal.
Week 8 Nov 11	A River Runs Through Campus! (River cleanup) Exercise: Dirty Nature	Textbook Reading: Chapter 16: Nature Writing and Environmental Activism. Wernor Herzog Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuJ31bu01mM Class Visit Adam Helmers

Week 9 Nov 18	Animals. Tour of Zoological Collection Exercises Portfolio Due	John Berger: Why Look at Animals: https://goo.gl/Ama1au The End of Animals? Guardian Article: https://goo.gl/diBPmc Textbook Readings, Chapter 12 : Revision
Week 10 Nov 25	Exercise: Animal POV Exercise; Cute Animals or Animals in the News Final Assignment Workshop	.
Week 11 Dec 2	Final Assignments Due	Wrap-up discussion Publishing Nature Writing Film Screening