

**Writing 3401F: 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:** Via Zoom by Appointment***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 and interrogate fundamental elements and themes of nature writing;
2. generate ideas in a variety of genres: poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction.
3. analyse 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.

**Course Readings**

**This course has no textbook or course package. The weekly readings appear in OWL in **Course Readings** and on the syllabus.**

**Course Requirements**

Image Poem	15%
Flash Fiction	15%
Creative Non-Fiction	15%
Exercises Portfolio	25%
Finals Assignment	30%
	<b>100%</b>

## **Assignment Format**

All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and instructor's name on the first page. Please type assignments (where appropriate) and use 12 point font.

## **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.

## **Email Policy**

Emails will be monitored Mon-Friday; students will receive a response in 24 – 48 hours. When emailing me please include your name, course, and section (or day). Please remember that all correspondence in university course should employ a professional tone and format (e.g. salutation and sign off).

## **STATEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION**

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity and wisdom that students bring to this class be valued and acknowledged as a strength and a benefit to all. My hope is that together, we can build a community of care and responsibility towards one another that, in turn, fosters creativity and engagement.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and responsibility in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions; please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention.

I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and I want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address issues that may arise. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing an issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue such as your academic advisor, or a faculty member. I have included below the contact information for the Director of Writing Studies and the Writing Studies Program Director.

Dr. Kathleen Fraser, Director of Writing Students: [kfraser@uwo.ca](mailto:kfraser@uwo.ca)

Dr. Jamie Johnston, Undergraduate Program Director, Writing Studies: [jjohns6@uwo.ca](mailto:jjohns6@uwo.ca)

## 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

"Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, which can be found here:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.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.

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 Western 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 your section's OWL HomePage.*

### **Prerequisites**

Prerequisite(s): At least 65% in one of [Writing 2101F/G](#), [Writing 2125F/G](#), [Writing 2111F/G](#), [Writing 2130F/G](#) or [Writing 2131F/G](#); or at least 65% in one of [Writing 1000F/G](#), [Writing 1030F/G](#), or [Writing 1031F/G](#); or at least 65% in each of [MIT 1020E](#) (or both of [MIT 1021F/G](#) and [MIT 1022F/G](#)) and [MIT 1025F/G](#); or permission of the Department (consult the Undergraduate Program Director, Writing).

### **Academic Accommodation**

*Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.*

Senate language requires all requests for accommodation for a grade component of 10% or more to go to academic counselling. That same section, however, allows for (and encourages) instructors to deal directly with accommodation requests for grade components less than 10%. Here's the relevant Senate language:

“Accommodation by Instructor for work worth less than 10% of the overall grade in a course: Instructors are encouraged, in the first instance, to arrange participation requirements and multiple small assignments in such a way as to allow students some flexibility. A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline.

In arranging accommodation, instructors will use good judgment and ensure fair treatment for all students. Instructors must indicate on the course outline how they will be dealing with work worth less than 10% of the total course grade. In particular, instructors must indicate whether medical documentation will be required for absences, late assignments or essays, missed tests, laboratory experiments or tutorials, etc. Where medical documentation is required, such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Academic Counselling/Dean's office, who will make the determination whether accommodation is warranted. Given the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy ([https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/general/privacy.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/privacy.pdf)), **instructors may not collect medical documentation.**”

### **Medical Accommodation Policy**

“The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean's office (the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These documents will be retained in the student's file and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy. Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and severity of the illness are

such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.”

### **Documentation from Family Physicians/Nurse Practitioners and Walk-In Clinics**

A Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

### **Documentation from Student Health Services**

At the time of illness, students should make an appointment with a physician/nurse practitioner at Student Health Services. During this appointment, request a Student Medical Certificate from the Physician/Nurse Practitioner.

### **Documentation from Hospital Urgent Care Centres or Emergency Departments**

Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them, or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that their ability to meet their academic responsibilities was seriously affected.”

**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 with disabilities work with Accessible Education** (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf)

**Students who are in emotional/mental distress** should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#)

### **Other Student Support Services**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdw/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

## Intellectual Property and Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

### Class Meeting Schedule (subject to change)

Date	Focus	Readings/Topics
Week 1 Sept 12	Introduction to Class: What is Nature? What is Nature Writing?  Class trip: Forest Bathing  Writing Exercise: Images	<p>Poems: Lucille Clifton: The Earth is a Living Thing: <a href="https://poets.org/poem/earth-living-thing">https://poets.org/poem/earth-living-thing</a></p> <p>Terese Mason Pierre Myth <a href="https://thewalrus.ca/myth/">https://thewalrus.ca/myth/</a> The Age of Trees: <a href="https://www.shrapnelmagazine.com/poetry/two-poems-terese-mason-pierre">https://www.shrapnelmagazine.com/poetry/two-poems-terese-mason-pierre</a></p> <p>Amy Lowell: Hoar Frost: <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/hoar-frost">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/hoar-frost</a> Mary Oliver: Wild Geese: <a href="https://goo.gl/yeJ9Da">https://goo.gl/yeJ9Da</a> Arthur Sze: The Owl: <a href="https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/owl">https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/owl</a> Sherman Alexie: Pow-wow at the End of the Word: <a href="https://goo.gl/QvukVo">https://goo.gl/QvukVo</a></p> <p><b>Image Poem Assigned</b></p>
Week 2 Sept 19	Theme: Writing the Land, Decolonizing Nature  Writing: Images  Guest: Dr. Jennifer Komorowski	<p><i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> by Robin Wall Kimmerer: Chapter 1 Skywoman Falling (Course readings on OWL)</p> <p>Zoe Todd: From Classroom to River's Edge: Tending to Reciprocal Duties Beyond the Academy</p> <p><a href="https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/aps/index.php/aps/article/view/27448/pdf">https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/aps/index.php/aps/article/view/27448/pdf</a></p> <p>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></p>

Week 3 Sept 26	Flash Fiction Fiction writing exercise  Image Poem workshop  <b>River Cleanup</b>	David Heubert's Enigma: <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2687087047">http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2687087047</a>  The Trouble with Wilderness <a href="https://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html">https://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html</a>  Tanis MacDonald: <a href="http://towncrier.puritan-magazine.com/author-notes/tanis-macdonald/">http://towncrier.puritan-magazine.com/author-notes/tanis-macdonald/</a>  <b>Flash Fiction Piece Assigned.</b>
Week 4 Oct 3	Trees. Tour of Sherwood Fox Arboretum.    Exercise: Tree Interview <b>Image Poem Due in Class</b>	The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben (chapters Intro, 1 and 2). See Course Readings on OWL
Week 5 Oct 17	Flash Fiction Workshop  Class trip: Peter Baker River walk	Annie Dillard: <a href="https://public.wsu.edu/~hughesc/dillard_weasel.htm">https://public.wsu.edu/~hughesc/dillard_weasel.htm</a>  <b>Creative Non-Fiction Piece Assigned</b>
Week 6 Oct 24	Creative Non- Fiction Workshop <b>Flash Fiction Due in Class</b> Exercise: Season's Shift	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>  <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> by Robin Wall Kimmerer: People of the Corn, People of Light (course readings on OWL)
Oct 31		READING WEEK: NO CLASS
Week 7 Nov 7	Exercise: A walk in the Woods  Graphic Exercise: Graphic Mapping	<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>  <b>Portfolio Assigned</b>
Week 8 Nov 14	Exercise: Dirty Nature <b>Creative Non- Fiction Due</b>	Wernor Herzog Film: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkbT5007scc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkbT5007scc</a> <i>Junkyard Planet</i> by Adam Minter: Introduction and Chapter 1 (Making Soup)  <b>Final Project Assigned</b>



Week 9 Nov 21	Animals. Tour of Zoological Collection  <b>Exercises</b> <b>Portfolio Due</b>	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 10 Nov 28	Nature Writing and Ekphrastic responses: A visit Hunter/Gatherer McIntosh Visit	<i>Under a White Sky</i> by Elizabeth Colbert: Chapter 1 (Down the River)
Week 11 Dec 5	<b>Final</b> <b>Assignments</b> <b>Due</b>	Wrap-up discussion Publishing Nature Writing