

Writing 3401F: Dirty Nature Writing**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:** Monday before
or after class by Appointment***Break free of technology to become creative!***

To provide the best learning experience for you and to encourage your creativity, I will request that during class, laptops remain closed and cellphones and other gadgets be put away. A note pad or writing booklet for taking notes when we are on field trips is highly recommended. You may use laptops or tablets for in-class writing in response to creative prompts, although I encourage old style freehand writing.

DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to write about nature in an age of global climate change, mass extinction, and environmental degradation? Moreover, what uses does the contemporary nature writer have for Romantic ideas of the sublime and Pristine Nature? In this course, we go beyond the classroom to track down nature in all its complex entanglements. Prepare to get your hands dirty: each class is organized around a hike, field trip, guest lecture, or environmental action.

We will

- explore the rich ecology of our campus and the river that runs through it
- meet and learn from Indigenous knowledge holders, activists, ecologists, biologists, hydrologists, artists, and community leaders
- participate in river cleanups, water quality testing, tree tours, arts exhibitions, electro fishing, benthic macroinvertebrate testing, restoration projects, and more!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: What will I gain from this class?

- ability to identify and interrogate fundamental elements and themes of nature writing
- experiential learning focused on ecology and the living world about from multidisciplinary perspectives (scientific, cultural, historical, spiritual, etc).
- an understanding of place-based approach to ecological justice and health.
- Development of critical analysis of ideas of “nature” as found in literature and other textual/cultural artifacts.
- practice a range of academic and creative responses to course material
- participate in a classroom community of care, learning, and action around Deshkan Ziibi and the Thames River watershed.

Course Readings

All course readings can be found on OWLBrightspace

Course Assignments

Personal Reflection #1	20% Sept 29
Personal Reflection #2	20% Oct 27
Personal Reflection #3	20% Nov 24
Final Assignment *	30% Dec 8
Participation	10% Ongoing

***You may not use an undocumented absence to request an extension on the final assignment. Should you use your undocumented absences for one of the other assignments, you will be granted a 48-hour window to submit your assignment.**

Assignment Description

The Personal Reflection Assignments will take the form of short personal essays (500 words). You will be given prompt questions and criteria for each reflection assignment, and we will review essay examples in class and review the generic conventions of the personal essay form. You also have the option for two out of the three personal reflection assignments to submit instead a poem (single page) or micro-fiction (max 750 words). The Final Assignment is a larger project; it can be poetry, personal essay, fiction, multi-media, or some hybrid form. Full descriptions of each assignment will be posted on Brightspace.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

A+ 90–100 One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A 80–89 Superior work which is clearly above average

B 70–79 Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

C 60–69 Competent work, meeting requirements

D 50–59 Fair work, minimally acceptable

F below 50 Fail

Assignment Format

All projects must be typed and include your name, course name, section number, and the instructor's name on the first page. For source documentation (if applicable) and document format, you will be expected to follow the conventions of MLA style. In this course, you will be required to submit the final version of each of your written assignments electronically (.doc files only), through Brightspace. No hard copies are required. Do not email assignments; do not drop off assignments anywhere on campus. Please be sure to keep copies of all assignments submitted, as well as any notes and drafts. If you need assistance with the course

OWL site, you can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, you can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk (phone: 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800).

Late assignments will receive a penalty of 2% 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.

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).

Class Ethos

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 Undergraduate Chair of English and Writing Studies and the Writing Studies Program Director.

Madeline Bassnett, Department Chair: m.bassnett@uwo.ca

Jamie Johnston, Undergraduate Program Director, Writing Studies: 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.

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.

Statement on Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

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

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>." (Please note that the above required statement does not rule out additional cautions by the instructor – including, perhaps, reminding students that plagiarism includes double submission of an assignment to two courses without the permission of both instructors. Above all, every instance of egregious plagiarism "with intent to deceive" must be reported to the Director of Writing Studies, in order to determine the penalty and to check for previous offences. A second offence will result in more serious penalties at the Dean's level.)

Statement on the use of AI

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering and preliminary research purposes only (unless otherwise indicated in the assignment instructions). These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. It is essential, however, that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize, develop, and articulate their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism in any form. Note that for all assignments completed outside of class, the instructor can require you to attend an inperson interview to discuss your work and/or to review research notes, rough drafts, outlines and other materials used in preparing the assignment before a mark is finalized. Assignments should always reflect students' own thoughts and constitute independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, supports independent inquiry, and encourages original written contributions.

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

“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.”

Academic Considerations

University policy on academic considerations is described here. This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests through the Student Absence Portal, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar’s webpage:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline. All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation, which may include a Student Medical Certificate. Recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request without supporting documentation in this course.

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), **instructors may not collect medical documentation.**”

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

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](#)

Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Other Student Support Services

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

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

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

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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/Reading Schedule Writing 3401 Fall 2023. Schedule is subject to change depending on weather.

Date	Focus	Readings/Topics
Week 1 Sept 8	Introduction to Class: What is Nature?	Reading: Chimwemwe Undi. <i>Scientific Marvel</i> . "Epithalamium Ending in Death" Anansi Press. 9781487012250 (Course Readings on Brightspace)

	What is Dirty Nature Writing? Creative Non-Fiction and class Assignments	Reading: Tony Hoagland “Peaceful Tansition” https://africmglinchey.wordpress.com/category/tony-hoagland/ Reading: Mary Oliver “Wild Geese” https://goo.gl/yeJ9Da Reading: Anna Swanson: Garbage Poems: https://www.garbagepoems.com/ https://www.canthius.com/pleasures-feed/2021/7/8/two-poems-by-anna-swanson Activity: Forest Bathing and Writing Exercise
Week 2 Sept 15	Dirty Nature on Campus Guest: Dr. Brendon Samuels	Reading: David Huebert and Tom Cull. <i>Writing Dirty Nature/ Dirty Nature Writing</i> THE NEW QUARTERLY Winter 2019, pg 42. (Course Reading on Brightspace). Reading: Katherine Larson. <i>Wedding of the Foxes</i> Essays 1 and 2: “Threshold” and “Kintsugi” (Course Reading on Brightspace) Activity: Ecological Tour of Western Campus
Week 3 Sept 22	Theme: Decolonizing Nature Writing Guest Lecture: Sara Mai Chitty	Reading: <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> by Robin Wall Kimmerer: Chapter 1 Skywoman Falling (Course readings on Brightspace) Reading: Pollution is Colonialism: Introduction: https://surl.lt/pnteuh Reading: Zoe Todd: From Classroom to River’s Edge: Tending to Reciprocal Duties Beyond the Academy: https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/aps/index.php/aps/article/view/27448/pdf Activity: Guest talk/activity, Sara Mai Chitty
Week 4 Sept 29	Water and Watersheds. Guest: Erin Carroll	Reading: Leanne Betasamosake Simpson: <i>Theory of Water</i> (chapters 1, 2, 3) (Course readings on Brightspace) Reading: Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Watershed Report Cards. Medway Creek: https://thamesriver.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/RC_Medway.pdf Activity: ElectroFishing and Benthic sampling

		Assignment #1 Due
Week 5 Oct 6	Climate Change	Natalie Diaz's poem "The First Water is the Body" https://emergencemagazine.org/poem/the-first-water-is-the-body/ Activity: Climate Practices Workshop, University College Garden
Oct 13		Thanksgiving No Classes
Week 6 Oct 20	Trees	Reading: A Community of Trees (Embassy Cultural House Online Exhibition): https://www.embassyculturalhouse.ca/a-community-of-trees.html Activity: Tree Planting at UTRCA
Week 7 Oct 27	Building Resilient Communities	Hope and Action Festival: Building Resilient Communities. No Classes on Oct 27. Instead sign up to volunteer at Hope and Action Festival at Fanshawe Conservation Authority Fri Oct 24, and Sat Oct 25. Assignement #2 Due
Nov 3		FALL READING WEEK NO CLASS
Week 8 Nov 10	The Dirty Nature of Fiction Guest: Sydney Brooman	Reading: Sydney Brooman, <i>"Dirt Mouth"</i> , <i>Room Magazine</i> , July 2023 "Danny Boy" <i>The Pump</i> (Course readings on Brightspace) Activity: Author reading and class writing exercise
Week 9 Nov 17	Biodiversity in the age of extinction Guest: Dr. Nina Zitani	John Berger: Why Look at Animals: https://goo.gl/Ama1au (Course readings on Brightspace) Dr. Nina Zitani Readings https://www.biodiversitygardening.com/ https://theconversation.com/how-to-fight-insectageddon-with-a-garden-of-native-plants-90585

		https://www.ninazitani.com/
Week 10 Nov 24	Getting Your Hands Dirty: Nature and Activism	Reading: Miriam Love and Tom Cull. "A River Runs Through It." An Alternative Cultural History of London, Ontario: Art and Activism. Eds Jamelie Hassan and Ron Benner. (Course readings on Brightspace) Reading: Elizabeth Colbert, "How Plastics are Poisoning Us" https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/07/03/book-reviews-plastic-waste (Course readings on Brightspace) Wernor Herzog Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkbT5007scc (to watch in class) Activity: River Cleanup Assignment #3 Due
Week 11 Dec 1	Final Project Consultations	Rain/Overflow Date: Consultations on Final Projects
Week 12 Dec 8		Wrap-up discussion Publishing Nature Writing Class Readings Final Assignments Due