

DRAFT SYLLABUS (may be subject to revision)
Writing 4880F/English 4871F: Creative Writing Seminar
From Ecopoetics to Cli-fi: Writing in Response to Climate Change
Fall 2025

Western University is located on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lûnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples.

Prerequisites

At least 1.0 Writing course at the 2200-level and above or permission of the Department.

OR

1.0 from English 3000-3999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the prerequisites 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.

Course Description

Focusing on the topic of climate change, this course will encourage and support students to develop a sustained work of fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction through shared reading, writing, and workshopping. We will examine how other creative writers grapple with climate change, discuss topics such as mourning, extinction, care, activism, and hope, and explore our own relations to the land and creatures we live with and among. Regular writing exercises and workshopping will allow us to try new approaches, support each other's writing, and deepen and strengthen our creative work.

Course Objectives

Actively engage with ideas, contexts, experiences, and theories of climate change
Develop and refine a sustained piece of creative writing
Engage in constructive workshop discussion and critique
Revise creative work based on feedback and analysis
Communicate with clarity, respect, and care

Course Ethos

Our class will honour the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We will use each other's preferred and chosen names and pronouns; we will engage in respectful and generous conversation with each other; we will avoid language that is hurtful, violent, or exclusive. My goal is to create an atmosphere of trust, community, and mutual responsibility, where each of us can feel heard and respected. Please feel welcome to contact me with any concerns you might have during this class.

Required Texts

Catriona Sandilands, ed. *Rising Tides: Reflections for Climate Changing Times*. Caitlin Press, 2019. (\$24.95) Students are welcome to purchase second hand copies of this book.

<https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook->

[search?campus=UWO&term=W2025A&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/WRI4880F](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2025A&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/WRI4880F)

Methods of Evaluation:

Project Proposal:	10%
Workshop Participation	10%
Reading Questions	10%
Midterm Portfolio:	25%
End-of-Term Reading:	5%
Final Portfolio:	40%

Project Proposal

Due: Midnight, Friday Sept. 19, Brightspace

Length: 300-500 words

Worth: 10%

This short project proposal should identify the following: the genre you'll be working in (poetry sequence/long poem or individual poems; or fiction: short story/novel, creative nonfiction), topic/theme, initial plot/character notes, narrative structure. Do you anticipate undertaking any research or fieldwork for this project? (Please note that this is not required.) Do you have ideas about how you might engage in some way with environmental or climate change concerns? I fully expect your ideas to develop and change as you begin to write. The goal of this assignment is to give me a sense of your interests and to give you some structure and focus as you begin your project for this course.

Workshop Participation

Ongoing

Worth: 10%

Includes in-class participation in weekly workshop discussions and your written responses to each other's work. These responses should be saved and handed in with the mid-term portfolio and the final portfolio. You must submit your work **and** respond to your peers' work in each workshop period, unless otherwise notified.

Reading Questions

Ongoing

Worth: 10%

Each week, you'll be asked to bring one question about the weekly readings to class, as a way of contributing to and generating discussion. These can focus on topics of craft, content, experience, theory, or anything else that emerges for you from the readings.

Mid-term portfolio

Due: October 22, midnight, Brightspace

Worth: 25%

This assignment is a work-in-progress towards the final portfolio. It should include: 3-4 poems or 8-10 pages of prose (fiction or creative nonfiction); relevant workshop notes from your workshop peers and/or your own notes based on their feedback; evidence of revision, with inclusion of all previous drafts; revision notes; workshop responses that you've submitted to your peers. More detailed instructions will be provided in class.

End-of-term Reading

Oral presentation, December 3

Worth: 5%

This is a chance to share your finished work with the class. Please select enough material for a 10 minute reading. Please note: no extensions will be granted for this assignment, and this assignment is not eligible for undocumented academic accommodation.

Final portfolio

Due: December 3, midnight, Brightspace

Worth: 40%

This is your final project, which builds on the work you did for the mid-term portfolio. Your submission should include: 8-10 poems or 20-25 pages of prose (fiction or creative nonfiction); relevant workshop notes from your workshop peers and/or your own notes based on their feedback; evidence of revision, with inclusion of all previous drafts; revision notes; workshop responses that you've submitted to your peers.

More detailed instructions will be provided in class.

Assignment Format

All projects must be typed; make sure that prose assignments are double-spaced and that poetry assignments are single-spaced. All assignments must have 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

Assignments are due on the date specified in the weekly schedule. **Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day unless you have been granted an extension.** I am willing to discuss **short** extensions, as long as you request extensions **before** the due date.

Technology Use

Please keep this classroom a low technology zone. During class discussions, I will request that laptops remain closed. Bring your textbook to class, along with paper and pens for notetaking. You may use laptops or tablets for in-class writing in response to creative prompts, although I encourage old style freehand writing. You may also use laptops during workshops, to share and respond to each other's work. Cellphones and other gadgets should be silenced and put away.

E-mail

I check email on a regular basis Monday to Friday and will respond to emails within 24-48 hours. I will always reply to your email, so if you haven't heard back from me, please send your email again. Please do not expect an immediate response on weekends.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and it is especially important for your process and development as a writer. It is also important because of your ongoing responsibility to the collectivity of the classroom. Seminar classes depend on you: your discussion, ideas, and workshop participation. While there is no specific participation grade, repeated absences (i.e. more than **2** missed classes without legitimate medical or personal reasons AND approved Academic Consideration requests) means that you will see a significant reduction in your grades for both the Workshop Participation and Reading Questions components.

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the **in-class reading must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

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.

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 is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence 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.

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/>

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. This includes unapproved and unacknowledged use of AI tools (which are not permitted in this course; see below)

All coursework 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>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies/Undergraduate Program Director (Writing Studies). Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

AI Technologies

In this course, the use of AI (such as automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, etc.) is **prohibited at any stage** of the writing process. Using these tools will be considered to be in violation of Western's Academic Integrity Policy. If AI use is suspected, I will ask you for notes, rough drafts, outlines, and any other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered.

To put it more positively: I value *your* thoughts, research, and writing, and a primary goal of this class is to support and encourage you to think for yourselves and to create your own creative work. The assignments are designed to support you in generating ideas for a new project; to give you a chance to hone your critical skills as readers and writers in workshop; to offer you an opportunity to receive and consider ongoing feedback that will help you push your writing to the next level; and to provide a supportive and responsive structure for you to create an extended piece of writing. AI can introduce mistakes, make up sources, and reinforce stereotypes. It also creates writing that is full of clichés, that is void of personality, and that is antithetical to the creative process and practice. *Your* perspectives are unique. The AI is a derivative machine. I am always happy to meet with you to chat about your ideas and your writing. Please talk to me, not Chat GPT!

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.