

ENG 7040: Creative Writing in the Landscape

Mon. and Wed. 2:00-4:45
Santa Fe Hall Room 209

Middlebury Bread Loaf School of English
Santa Fe Campus
June 18 – July 27, 2018

Dennis Denisoff

Office Hours: M/W 4:45-5:30 or by appointment
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Course Description

A coffee shop. A cabin. A dry creek bed. We all find different locations conducive for creative writing, but we rarely appreciate the full impact of the environment on the work we produce. This course takes advantage of our inspiring surroundings, combining creative writing (fiction, nonfiction, and poetry) with the study of nature literature. Through readings, exercises, and fieldwork/play, we will explore topics such as solitude and community, the genius loci (spirit of place), trans-species relations, and gender politics. In addition to developing a sense of the English nature-writing tradition, students will also engage with diverse creative modes in order to challenge their own understanding of what the written word can do. Marks will be based on creative assignments, an artist's statement, and a portfolio of revised course materials.

Distributional Group Designation

Group 1: Writing

Required Readings (any editions of purchased books will suffice)

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*
Merrill Gilfillan, *Chokecherry Places*
John A. Murray, *Writing about Nature*
Annie Proulx, *Close Range*
Course Reading Packet (to be made available)

Assessment

Assignment	Value (%)
Class Participation / Attendance	20
Workshop Participation and Written Peer Feedback	15
3 Assignments (5% each; lengths vary)	15
writer's statement (1,000-1500 words)	25
final portfolio (10 pages)	25

Weekly Seminar Schedule

Date	MATERIALS DUE	
WEEK 1 READINGS: - John Murray, "The Journal" & "The Essay" - Aldo Leopold, "February" to "July," and "Arizona and New Mexico"		
Jn 18 Mon		
Jn 20 Wed	WORKSHOP 1	Workshop piece 1 (start of class)
Jn 23 Sat	Workshop piece 2 (e-mail by midnight)	
WEEK 2 READINGS: - John Murray, "Word Pictures" and "Figurative Language" - Viktor Shlovsky, "Art as Technique" - Leslie Marmon Silko, "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo" - Alison Townsend, "White Wings..." and "Between Green..."		
Jn 25 Mon	WORKSHOP 2	
Jn 27 Wed	ARROYO HIKE (6:00-8:00)	Assignment 1 (e-mail by midnight)
WEEK 3		
Jl 2 Mon	No class today	Workshop piece 3
Jl 4 Wed	No class today	Assignment 2 (e-mail by midnight)
WEEK 4 READINGS: - John Murray, "Style" and "Fiction and Poetry" - Merrill Gilfillan, <i>Chokecherry Places</i>		
Jl 9 Mon	WORKSHOP 3	
Jl 11 Wed	HYDE PARK HIKE (during class time)	Assignment 3 (start of class)
WEEK 5 READINGS - Edward Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> - Janisse Ray, "Exaltation of Elk"		
Jl 16 Mon	WORKSHOP 4	
Jl 18 Wed	WORKSHOP 5	
Jl 19 Thurs	One-on-one meetings to discuss statements and portfolios, by appt.	
WEEK 6 READINGS - Annie Proulx, <i>Close Range</i> - Gary Snyder, various poems		
Jl 23 Mon	WORKSHOP 6	
Jl 25 Wed	Final class and end-of-term reading	
writer's statement and final portfolio		

Description of Assessment Criteria

class participation

This mark is based on students' attendance and constructive, engaged contribution to discussion. Useful contributions include questions, thoughts, and general conversation on course subjects reflecting a knowledge of the readings and consideration of previous comments.

workshop participation

Students will be given marks for their contributions to class workshops based on the amount of contributions, their quality, their level of support as well as critique, their sensitivity to the writers' intentions, and other elements. Participation includes verbal comments during workshops and written comments on other workshop members' submitted materials.

assignments

Students will write three creative take-home assignments with instructions that build on class lectures, excursions, and discussion.

writer's statement

Each student will write a statement of what the art of writing is, as reflected in their individual aims and practise. These statements might address the art of fiction or creative nonfiction, or some other form of prose writing in which the student has engaged in this course, but the statement must address the subject of writing in the landscape.

final portfolio

At the end of the course, students will submit a selection of 3 or more revised pieces (consisting of at least 10 pages in total) representing what they feel is their strongest work from the term.

Each piece will be accompanied by:

- earlier drafts from the term marked with suggestions and commentary from workshop members, and
- a brief statement (100-200 words) explaining the intent of the piece and how you, as author, addressed the suggestions and comments of other workshop members.

These materials can simply be stapled or alligator-clipped together.