

Comparative Literature R1B: 14
Nature Poetry and the Nature of Poetry: Pastoral, Romanticism, Ecopoetry

TTH 12:30-2
242 Dwinelle

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Course Overview

Since antiquity, poets have been representing and reflecting on nonhuman nature. What does “nature” offer the poet? And how has that changed over the course of history?

We will begin by reading Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (along with excerpts from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Virgil’s *Eclogues*) and acquaint ourselves with the tradition of pastoral poetry. You will learn to identify common features of the bucolic and think about its appeal to readers in the early modern period, and we will reflect on pastoral’s representations of gender, class/rank, and sexual difference. We will then turn to two modernizing takes on the English pastoral tradition: Wordsworth’s poetry and Lee Francis’s Yorkshire romance film, *God’s Own Country* (2017). At the end of this unit, you will craft a literary analytic essay that puts at least two of these texts into conversation in order to illuminate what version of “nature” pastoral poetry tends to represent, as well as what kinds of expressive freedom the pastoral genre allows.

In the next unit, we will turn to Romanticism in Europe and the Americas for two purposes: to investigate philosophies of language that explore poetry’s relationship to the natural world, and to acquaint ourselves with some of the most iconic examples of Western nature poetry and writing.

In the final segment of the class, we will leap ahead to the present and read a survey of contemporary American “ecopoets,” with particular attention to two questions: How does climate change, and with it the idea of the “end of nature,” impact poetic reflections about and representations of the natural world? And how do contemporary ecopoets account for the modern phenomenon of environmental racism? In the second half of the course, you will craft essays that make connections between ecopoetry and the Romantic theories of language and poetics we’ve explored, while also learning to incorporate scholarly research into your own argument.

This course fulfills part of the university’s R&C (Reading and Composition)

requirement. The primary goal of the course will be to develop skills as writers and thinkers that allow you to approach these topics critically. As writers, you will be encouraged and challenged to analyze texts closely and carefully. Both class discussion and writing assignments will thus direct you to consider form in equal measure to content. By learning to identify and evaluate poetic techniques and intellectual positions in each text, you will adopt a mode of literary appreciation. Perhaps more important, you will learn to describe in writing how these texts *work*: how they construct and deconstruct, reinvent and critique the idea of “nature” as an object of poetic representation.

Course Texts

Drama

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (Arden Shakespeare edition, available at University Press Books)

Prose (course reader, available at Zee Zee Copy)

William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800, excerpts)
Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (excerpts)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet”
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (excerpts)
Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, “Argentine Originality and Characters,” from *Facundo*
Jorge Luis Borges, “The Argentine Writer and Tradition,” from *Labyrinths*
Yusuf Komunyakaa, “Dark Waters” from *The Colors of Nature* (ed. Deming & Savoy)
Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (excerpts)
Camille Dungy, “Tales from a Black Girl on Fire.” from *Guidebook to Relative Strangers*

Poetry (course reader, available at Zee Zee Copy)

Virgil, *Eclogues* (excerpts)
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (excerpts)
Lyric poetry by William Wordsworth, Juliana Spahr, Ed Roberson, Linda Hogan, CA Conrad, Camille Dungy, Allison Hedge Coke

Films (screenings TBA)

God's Own Country (2017), dir. Francis Lee
Chasing Ice (2012), dir. Jeff Orlowski

Requirements and Grades

10% Attendance &
Participation
10% Drafts & Homework
35% Essay One
35% Essay Two
10% Annotated Bibliography

Essays One and Two

The chief purpose of an R1B course is to work on writing skills and to reflect on the writing process. There will be two major essays, one around 1,800 words in length and the other 2,500 words in length, with a research component. Due dates for individual assignments have been indicated on the course schedule at the end of this document.

Drafts and Homework

For each of the two essays, you will complete a series of drafts and smaller writing assignments to prepare you towards completing the final version of the essay. We will also include some written assignments to practice ideas presented in writing workshops. If you complete all assignments and drafts in a timely and thorough fashion, you will receive an A in the "Drafts and Homework" portion of the grade.

Lateness Policy and Extensions

Essays must be turned in on time. Your essay grade will be lowered by 1/3 letter grade (B to B-, B- to C+, etc.) for each 24-hour period it is late. It is your responsibility to balance the requirements of this class with those of your other classes. That said, depending on your circumstances, we are able to provide extensions with prior consent. **Please keep in touch if you are having trouble completing an assignment!** We can discuss arrangements to accept late work **if you let us know before the paper is due that you need more time. Extension requests with less than 24 hours' notice will not be granted.**

Attendance and Participation

Over the course of the semester, you are granted 2 unexcused absences

without penalty; all other absences require advance notice and adequate excuse. Your grade will automatically be lowered for each additional unexcused absence.

Participation is a vital part of this course; while there will be occasional lectures and presentations, your active participation is a key component to the success of the class! Please come prepared to share observations and questions on the texts we encounter; we hope that our class will be a forum for lively and opinionated discussion.

That being said, we are aware that some students are less eager to express their opinions in class than others. Throughout the course, we will design activities that should make all students feel more comfortable speaking in class, and that will provide you with strategies for preparing for discussion-based courses. Finally, we encourage *all* students to take advantage of office hours, both for individual writing instruction and to informally discuss the texts we are reading in class. While office hours are generally optional (essay conferences are mandatory), please be aware that time spent in office hours can also count toward your participation grade.

In addition to being an active participant in our conversations, whether by introducing your own ideas, responding to a classmate's comments, posing questions, or actively listening, you have the responsibility to engage respectfully with the ideas of your classmates and to help create an atmosphere of friendly but rigorous critical engagement. **Cell phones are not allowed in class unless otherwise specified. Laptops are generally discouraged, but will be allowed if you have a compelling reason to use one.**

Honor Code

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code:

“As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The hope and expectation is that you will adhere to this code.

Collaboration and Independence: Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things

to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, unless otherwise instructed, homework assignments are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one's own independent work.

Plagiarism: To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action.

For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see, for example: <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/misconduct/prevent-plag.html>

Academic Integrity and Ethics: Cheating on exams and plagiarism are two common examples of dishonest, unethical behavior. Honesty and integrity are of great importance in all facets of life. They help to build a sense of self-confidence, and are key to building trust within relationships, whether personal or professional. There is no tolerance for dishonesty in the academic world, for it undermines what we are dedicated to doing - furthering knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

Email

Please note that we will not respond to substantive paper questions or give feedback about papers- in-progress by email; such discussions must take place in person in office hours or by appointment.

Please allow 24 hours for a response before following up.

Accommodations

The Disabled Students' Program (dsp.berkeley.edu) coordinates accommodations and provides support for students with disabilities. If you already have a disability accommodation, please ask the DSP to let us know by email as soon as possible. If you believe you might benefit from a disability accommodation, we encourage you to contact DSP.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Week 1	8/20	8/21	8/22	8/23 Introductions	8/23
Week 2	8/27	8/28 Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i> , Book I, p. 3-8 Virgil: <i>Eclogues</i> IV WW: <i>Close Reading</i>	8/29	8/30 Shakespeare: <i>As You Like It</i> , Act 1	8/31
Week 3	9/3	9/4 Shakespeare: <i>As You Like It</i> , Act 2 WW: <i>Observation, Claim, Argument</i>	9/5	9/6 Shakespeare: <i>As You Like It</i> , Act 3	9/7 E1P1 due
Week 4	9/10	9/11 Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i> , Book X, p. 331-332, Book XIII, 460-467 Virgil: <i>Eclogues</i> II WW: <i>Body Paragraph and Topic Sentences</i>	9/12	9/13 Shakespeare: <i>As You Like It</i> , Act 4	9/14 E1P2 due
Week 5	9/17	9/18 Shakespeare: <i>As You Like It</i> , Act 5 WW: <i>Essay Organization (10 on 1 vs. 1 on 10)</i>	9/19	9/20 Wordsworth: <i>Prelude</i> (1805), Book Eighth, lines 1- 221, "Michael, a Pastoral Poem"	9/21 E1P3 due
Week 6	9/24	9/25 Wordsworth:	9/26	9/27 Lee: <i>God's Own</i>	9/28 E1D2 due

		<p>excerpts from preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> (1800) <i>WW: Refining the Thesis</i></p>		<i>Country</i> (film)	
Week 7	10/1	10/2 Peer Review Session	10/3 Conferences	10/4 Conferences w/ GSI	10/5 Conferences
Week 8	10/8 Revision plan due	10/9 Rousseau, <i>Reveries of a Solitary Walker</i> , Fifth and Seventh Walk <i>WW: Evolving Thesis</i>	10/10	10/11 Emerson, "The Poet"	10/12 E1D3 due
Week 9	10/15	10/16 Thoreau, "Sounds" and "Solitude" from <i>Walden</i> <i>WW: What is a Research Essay?</i>	10/17	10/18 Sarmiento, "Argentine Originality and Characters," from <i>Facundo</i>	10/19 Research Letter due
Week 10	10/22	10/23 Borges, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition," Komunyakaa, "Dark Waters" <i>WW: Research Tools</i>	10/24	10/25 McKibben, excerpts from <i>The End of Nature</i>	10/26 E2P1 due
Week 11	10/29	10/30 Spahr poems <i>WW: Evaluating Secondary Sources</i>	10/31	11/1 Roberson poems	11/2 Annotated Bibliography due
Week 12	11/5	11/6 Hedge Coke	11/7	11/8 Dungy poems	11/9 E2P2 due

		poems <i>WW: Engaging w/ Secondary Sources</i>			
Week 13	11/12	11/13 Conrad poems <i>WW: What is Plagiarism?</i>	11/14	11/15 Hogan poems	11/16 E2P3 due
Week 14	11/19	11/20 Orlowski, <i>Chasing Ice</i> (film)	11/21 E2D2 due	11/22 <i>NO CLASS</i>	11/23
Week 15	11/26	11/27 Peer Review Session	11/28 Conferences w/ GSI	11/29 Conferences w/ GSI	11/30 Conferences w/ GSI
RRR Week	12/3 Revision plan due	12/4	12/5	12/6	12/7
Finals Week	12/10	12/11 E2D3 due	12/13	12/14	12/15