

Spring 2020  
Buttrick 301  
T Th, 2:35 - 3:50 PM  
[rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu)

Professor Rachel Teukolsky  
Office: Benson 319  
Office hours: Thurs. 1:25pm-2:25pm  
& by appointment

## English 3730. Literature and the Environment What is Nature?

What is nature? Is it found in a park where you wander among trees and cute forest animals? Is it an untouched, pristine wilderness? Are some of us closer to nature than others? This course examines the ways that artists and writers have constructed “nature” as an idealized place or set of qualities, partly imaginary, partly concrete. We will consider a broad range of literature, imagery, philosophy, and film, including clips from Disney nature films like *Bambi*; Steven Spielberg’s shark-shocker, *Jaws*; science fiction/eco-fiction by Octavia Butler (*Dawn*) and Margaret Atwood (*Oryx and Crake*); Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; romantic nature poetry by Wordsworth and Keats; H. Thoreau, *Walden* (“Why I Went into the Woods”); Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*; H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*; and James Cameron’s film *Avatar*.

### Required Texts

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Classics, 2003)
- H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (Penguin Classics, 2005)
- Henry Thoreau, *Walden* (Beacon Press, 2017)
- Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (Aspect Reprint, 1997)
- Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (Anchor Reprint, 2004)
- Other selected readings will be available electronically on Brightspace (BR)
- The course also requires the viewing of two films; DVDs will be available on reserve at the library’s media center.

Tues., Jan. 7 Introduction: Thinking about ‘Nature’

Thurs., Jan. 9 Landscapes & the Picturesque. David Bate, from “In the Landscape,” *Photography: The Key Concepts* (BR). Excerpts from Uvedale Price, “Essay on the Picturesque”; selected paintings and photographs (BR)

Tues., Jan. 14 Romantic Natures. William Wordsworth, from *The Prelude*, Book 1; John Keats, “To Autumn”; Friedrich painting (*Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog*) (BR)

Thurs., Jan. 16 The Sublime. Edmund Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry* (BR); Percy Bysshe Shelley, poem: “Mont Blanc” (BR)

### **Introductory Assignment due in class Jan. 16: Nature and the Vanderbilt Campus**

Tues., Jan. 21 “The Noble Savage.” Alexander Pope, from *Essay on Man*; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, from *Discourse on the Inequality of Man*; painting: Benjamin West’s *Death of General Wolfe* (all on BR)

Thurs., Jan. 23 Gender and Nature. Excerpts from Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (BR)

- Tues., Jan. 28 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Vol. 1 (pp. 15-90)  
 Thurs., Jan. 30 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Vol. 2 (pp. 93-151)
- Tues., Feb. 4 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Vol. 3 (pp. 155-225, end of novel)  
 Thurs., Feb. 6 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, author's introduction (pp. 5-10)
- Tues., Feb. 11 Henry Thoreau, from *Walden*: "Economy" (pp. 1-73), "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" (pp. 76-93)  
 Thurs., Feb. 13 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Solitude," "Visitors" (pp. 122-145); "Conclusion" (pp. 299-312)
- Tues., Feb. 18 Painting Nature, Questioning Nature: Artworks by Ruskin, Magritte, Hokusai, Goldsworthy (BR)  
**Paper #1 (5-6 pp.) due in class Tues., Feb. 18**
- Thurs., Feb. 20 Darwin. Charles Darwin, from *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* (BR).  
 Alfred Tennyson, from *In Memoriam* (BR)
- Tues., Feb. 25 H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* [read the entire novella]  
 Thurs., Feb. 27 Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, cont.
- Tues., Mar. 3 – Thurs., Mar. 5 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- Tues., Mar. 10 Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (Chs. 1-7, pp. 3-169)  
 Thurs., Mar. 12 Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, cont. (Chs. 8-9, pp. 173-238)
- Tues., Mar. 17 Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, cont. (Chs. 10-15, pp. 241-374)  
 Thurs., Mar. 19 Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, cont.
- Fri., Mar. 20 Paper #2 (5-6 pp.) due by 2pm in my mailbox, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Benson Hall**
- Tues., Mar. 24 Native American Traditions. Christopher Manes, "Nature and Silence," *The Ecocriticism Reader*; Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective" (both on BR)  
 Thurs., Mar. 26 Poems by Sherman Alexie (all on BR)
- Tues., Mar. 31 Octavia Butler, *Dawn*, Parts 1-2 (pp. 1-111)  
 Thurs., Apr. 2 Butler, *Dawn*, Part 3 (pp. 115-196)
- Tues., Apr. 7 Butler, *Dawn*, Part 4 (pp. 197-248)  
 Thurs., Apr. 9 Margaret J. King. "The Audience in the Wilderness: The Disney Nature Films" (BR); Nature film youtube clips, links on BR.
- Tues., Apr. 14 **Movie**: *Jaws*, dir. Stephen Spielberg (1975); Jonathan Lemkin, "Archetypal Landscapes and Jaws" (1984) (BR)  
 Thurs., Apr. 16 **Movie**: *Avatar*, dir. James Cameron (2009)
- Mon., Apr. 20 Final Paper (5-6 pp.) due by 2pm in my mailbox, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Benson Hall**

## Course Policy

Requirements: This course requires three 5-6 page essays, as well as other small writing assignments and reading quizzes that go towards the participation grade. The grade break-down is as follows: Paper #1 (25%), Paper #2 (25%), Paper # 3 (25%), Participation (25%).

Readings: Complete all the readings for the day listed on the syllabus. If a reading is posted on Brightspace, please **print it out and bring it with you to class**, or have it available to consult in class on an e-reader.

Writing Assignments: Papers should be double-spaced, in a reasonable twelve-point font (like Times New Roman), with one-inch margins all round. Papers are due in hard copy in class on the day noted in the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 grade for each day they are late. If you need an extension on a paper deadline, I expect to get the request at least one week before the paper is due.

Participation: Please come to class ready to talk, learn, and engage. Your voice is important to me. The classroom is a low-stakes place to practice getting your thoughts out into the open. You can also expect pre-announced reading quizzes, especially for the longer readings.

Attendance: Attendance is a vital and mandatory part of this course. You will be allowed 3 unexcused absences, equal to a week of class time. After three absences, every additional absence will **decrease your final grade** by 1/3 of a letter. Excused absences are those for University athletic events, physician-documented illness, or the serious illness or death of a close family member. If you miss class due to illness, the absence will only be excused if you provide me with a doctor's note. If you are involved in any kind of campus activity that will affect your attendance, I expect that you will consult with me about it well in advance. **If you miss 6 or more classes, you will fail this course unless there are extenuating circumstances: a doctor's note or family emergency.**

Lateness: You must also come to class on time. Three late-shows qualify as one unexcused absence. Class begins at 2:35pm; it is essential that you are present and ready to proceed with class by that time. Rushing in five minutes or more late is disruptive to me and to your classmates. I make all announcements in the first moments of class, so if you are late you will miss these. Please be courteous and be on time.

Generally speaking, I ask that you do everything you can to make our class time focused and productive. This means arriving on time, ready to participate, and staying in the classroom for the entire class period. I prefer that you do not get up and leave the room during class except in case of emergency.

Technology: Please turn off all computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices before class starts. Since this course is discussion-based, it will be more important for you to focus your attention on your peers rather than on a computer screen. I recommend that you take notes the old-fashioned way—with pen and paper. If you would like special permission to use a laptop for taking notes in class, I ask that you come see me in office hours so that we can discuss what your computer usage will entail.

Academic Integrity: This class is governed by the Vanderbilt Honor Code. The class won't require you to do any research outside of the assigned readings. You are required simply to bring your own original and ingenious ideas to the interpretation of the texts. I ask that you do not consult outside sources in the writing of your papers. If you do, without citing your sources, then you are guilty of plagiarism. Your case will be referred to the Vanderbilt Honors Council, and you will likely fail the class. For an in-depth description of what counts as plagiarism, please see:

<[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student\\_handbook/chapter2.html#honorcode](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/chapter2.html#honorcode)>

Documented Disability: If you need to be accommodated for any kind of documented disability, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that I can work with you to help you succeed.

Grade Distribution: Paper grades are equivalent to the following numerical values:

<b>A+= 100</b>	<b>B+=88</b>	<b>C+=78</b>	<b>D+=68</b>
<b>A= 95</b>	<b>B=85</b>	<b>C=75</b>	<b>D=65</b>
<b>A/A-= 93</b>	<b>B/B-=83</b>	<b>C/C-=73</b>	<b>D-=61</b>
<b>A-= 91</b>	<b>B-= 81</b>	<b>C-=71</b>	<b>D--=59</b>
<b>A-/B+=90</b>	<b>B-/C+=80</b>	<b>C-/D+=70</b>	

The following percentages translate into letter grades for your final grade.

<b>A=100-93</b>	<b>C+=79-78</b>
<b>A-=92-90</b>	<b>C=77-70</b>
<b>B+=89-88</b>	<b>D=69-60</b>
<b>B=87-82</b>	<b>F=below 60</b>
<b>B-=81-80</b>	

Reaching Me: I will hold office hours in Benson 319 on Thursdays from 1:25pm to 2:25pm. I can also meet you by appointment, although if you schedule an appointment you must make sure to show up. Please keep in touch with me by email if you are having any difficulties or issues inside or outside of the class. Email: [rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu). Feel free to stop by office hours to chat about how the class is going.