

ENC 3254: 27513  
Nature Writing  
Fall 2022

Class: M/W/F: 12:50-1:40 PM  
Office Hours: TBA

Instructor: Scott Thompson  
Email: [TBA](#)

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”  
— Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (1949)

“Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.”  
— Terry Tempest Williams, *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (2001)

“To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part.”  
— Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

“But we little know—until tried—how much of the uncontrollable there is in us...urging across glaciers and torrents, and up dangerous heights—let the judgment forbid as it may.”  
— John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (1894)

### The Course

The quotes above serve as both an inspiration and a point of challenge for us as we embark on this course together. Over the next few months, this class will require you to read and think deeply about the landmark figures and contemporary nature and environmental writers. One of our fundamental questions to consider concerns the balance between the personal (read: “human”) and the wild when attempting to write and document the natural world. You’ll interrogate and explore this axis in your own writing through a variety of creative and research-based projects—assignments that will require you to draw connections between your past and present experiences in “nature” (a term we’ll also unpack a bit) and what those moments and memories mean in an increasingly volatile world.

### The Goals

What’s the point? Besides hopefully deepening your appreciation for the natural world, there are three overarching learning objectives for this course—which you’ll realize if you attack it with appropriate energy, attention, and commitment. First, you’ll become familiar with the basic tenets of contemporary nature writing by reading and exploring exceptional works of pioneering environmental authors. Second, you’ll hone and sharpen your own writing abilities through the construction of various projects. You will create works of both scientific and nature-based creative nonfiction, utilizing these braids between the personal and the researched to speak to larger shared experiences and knowledge. Finally, this course will deepen your understanding of effective research strategies, editing tactics, and revision principles of a work with the eventual intention of publication.

### The Materials

- *Desert Solitaire* (Edward Abbey)
- *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (Terry Tempest Williams)
- A physical, paper-based notebook

## Attendance

- **Missing more than 3 synchronous class periods will lower your grade**, and excessive absences (the equivalent of two weeks) will result in you being required to drop this course.
  - For example, if your absences are 4-5, your grade will be lowered by two increments for each of those absences. (A B+ becomes a B-, a C becomes a D+, etc.)
- The policy of the University Writing Program is that **if a student misses more than 6 periods during a semester, they will fail the entire course**.
  - The UWP exempts from this policy *only* those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, or religious holidays. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me prior to the date that will be missed.
- If there is a medical condition that causes you to miss a prolonged series of class periods, you must speak to the Disability Resources Center at the beginning of the semester to officially request an accommodation. I will work with the DRC to arrive at an accommodation that allows you to be successful without altering the rigor and basic requirements of the class.
- Regardless of reason, if you miss a class, it is still **your** responsibility to e-mail me and find out what occurred and what is expected for next time. I will respond within 24 hours (promise!) and get you the materials necessary for the next class period. Additionally, if something is due at the class period you miss, it's your responsibility to e-mail me the assignment (**on time**) if you want to receive credit for it. This course moves quickly, and I'll do my part to keep you on pace if you fall behind—just stay in touch.

## Major Assignments and Course Grade Categories

Your final course grade is composed of the following major assignment categories:

Plot Project	20% (1,000 words, plus creation of the project itself)
Essay 1	15% (2,000 words)
Essay 2	25% (2,500 words)
Close-Reading Assignment	5% (500 words)
Nature/Observation Journal	10% (no word limit)
Workshop Feedback Letters	5% (one single-spaced page, each)
Reading Responses	10%
Participation	10%

## Grading and Evaluation

Earning A's and B's at this level requires strong, consistent effort. Your assignments will include specific evaluation criteria, and I will provide detailed feedback on your work that illuminates progress, achievement, and areas for revision. In the past, students who have received A's put significant time and effort into this course right from the start, and simply kept at it. Be realistic in your expectations about grades; start assignments early and work steadily to avoid last-minute rushing.

In addition, the writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit: 6,000 out of the total 24,000. To satisfy this requirement, *every* project's word count must be fulfilled in your assignment's final copy. Submitted assignments that fail to reach the minimum word count will receive a score of zero.

<b>A</b>	The qualities of a B project, <b>plus imagination, originality, and engaging expression.</b> The work exhibits depth of thought, command of language, and a keen eye for communicating through the selected medium.
<b>B</b>	A sufficient, thorough execution of the assignment’s objectives. The work demonstrates coherent organization, ample supporting details, and a clear expression of ideas.
<b>C</b>	A satisfactory fulfillment of the assignment’s objectives, with baseline organization and style. <b>A “C” means your work met the demands of the assignment in a minimally acceptable way.</b>
<b>D</b>	The presence of a significant defect in context, substance, organization, style, or delivery in a lackluster paper; the project demonstrates an inadequate treatment of the assignment.
<b>F</b>	Inadequate coverage of essential points; uncertain or misguided purpose; poor organization; ineffective and inconsistent expression; significant defects in standard usage.

Note: you must pass this course with a “C” or better to satisfy the **General Education** requirement for Composition and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit. **A grade of “C-” will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition Requirement.**

I would like to be impressed by the complexity of your thinking. Please try.

If at any point you’re curious about your grade in the course or would like more detailed feedback on completed assignments or works in progress—just ask! I’m fully committed to helping you succeed this semester and welcome the opportunity to help you improve in whatever ways I can.

### Course Engagement

“Participation” is a fairly loaded term, and so I steer away from it. Rather, this course’s success will largely depend on how fully you engage with the material, with each other, and with me. Specifically, your engagement counts toward slightly under 10% of your overall course grade and is measured in a variety of ways: informal discussions during our scheduled class period, formal discussion activities (whether or synchronous or asynchronous), reading response prompts, and other opportunities where you are able to demonstrate the effort you’ve put forth in this course. It’s not necessarily “talking in class” (although that helps!). Rather, I’m looking for active involvement in our course; showing up to class prepared and contributing in small group and whole group discussions and activities—that’s “participation,” to me.

### Academic Honesty & Integrity

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the UF Student Honor Code. Detecting it is often fairly easy—all of your major assignments are sent into a copyright analysis system—and once found, most violations are automatically reported to the Academic Dean. UF’s Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.

You are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Conduct & Honor Code, which can be found at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/>.

Understanding what falls under the category of plagiarism and academic dishonesty will help prevent you from committing these acts inadvertently—and will also strengthen your own writing. If you have any questions about using work other than your own in a paper, **see me** before you turn in an assignment. “I didn’t know!” is not an excuse, and will not be counted as one, so **ask**.

### **Diversity Affirmation**

The University of Florida does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. Effective learning environments value and support diversity, and free, open discussion is a hallmark of a functioning democratic society. It’s my goal to cultivate a comfortable, lively “classroom” (even in the bizarre world of virtual learning) where we can all exchange ideas freely.

Please keep in mind that the individuals in this course come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we discuss and write about engage in controversial topics and opinions. A myriad of student backgrounds combined with provocative texts *require* that you demonstrate respect for ideas that might differ from your own.

### **Disability Affirmation**

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Those requesting accommodation should contact the Disability Resource Center, **001 Reid Hall**. That office will provide documentation to you, and then you provide this to me when requesting accommodation.

### **Writing Studio**

The University Writing Studio is located in **Turlington 2215** and is available to all UF students. Free appointments with writing tutors can be made up to twice a week for help on structural work on major assignments. See <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> to learn more.

### **Course Evaluations**

You’ll have the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. You will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email you receive from GatorEvals, in your Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

### **Physical and Mental Health Resources**

For guidance during distressing situations, please contact U Matter We Care or the Dean of Students Office. They can help you navigate resources and academic procedures for personal, medical, and academic issues.

- U Matter We Care: <http://umatter.ufl.edu>, [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), (352) 294-2273
- Dean of Students: <https://dso.ufl.edu/>, 202 Peabody Hall, (352) 392-1261
- Counseling Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> 3190 Radio Road, (352) 392-1575
- Field and Fork Pantry: <https://fieldandfork.ufl.edu/>, located near McCarty A, (352) 294-3601
- Student Health Care Center: <http://shcc.ufl.edu/>, multiple locations, (352) 392-1161

**Course Schedule**  
ENC 3254: Nature Writing  
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The calendar below is **subject to change** and may not necessarily list all readings and shorter assignments. Readings are to be completed **before the class period for which they are listed**, unless mentioned otherwise.

Week	Day	Topics/Readings/Assignments
1	Monday	Introductions Opening Exercises
	Wednesday	Overview of Environmental and Nature Writing
	Friday	Introduction to Nature Journal Project Introduction to Plot Project <b>Read:</b> Excerpts from <i>Walden</i> , <i>Silent Spring</i> , <i>A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf</i> (on Canvas)
2	Monday	Imagery Workshops <i>Desert Solitaire</i> Introduction <b>Read:</b> <i>Desert Solitaire</i> : “Author’s Introduction” “The First Morning” (xi—p. 7)
	Wednesday	Imagery Workshops <b>Read:</b> <i>Orion Magazine</i> “The Place Where You Live” Series & Responses
	Friday	Imagery Workshops <b>Read:</b> “Drought” (Lopez, on Canvas)
3	Monday	<b>No Class (Labor Day)</b>
	Wednesday	Introduction to Essay #1 <b>Read:</b> <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 8—81)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #1
4	Monday	Openings Exercises <b>Read:</b> TBD (Canvas)
	Wednesday	Landscape Autobiographies <b>Read:</b> <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 82—150)
	Friday	Closings Exercises <b>Read:</b> “The Storyteller” “River People” (Bass, on Canvas)
5	Monday	Workshop Essay #1 (full draft due)
	Wednesday	<b>Read:</b> <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 151—205)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #2
6	Monday	Character and Dialogue <b>Read:</b> “Mono Lake” (Twain, on Canvas) <b>Due: Essay #1</b>
	Wednesday	<b>Read:</b> <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (p. 206—269)

7	Monday	Creating Storytelling and Meaning <b>Read:</b> “A Presentation of Whales” (Lopez, on Canvas)
	Wednesday	<i>Refuge</i> Introduction <b>Read:</b> <i>Refuge</i> (p. 3—57) “Winter Solstice at the Moab Slough” (Williams, on Canvas)
	Friday	<b>No Class: Homecoming</b>
8	Monday	Research Overview
	Wednesday	<b>Read:</b> <i>Refuge</i> (p. 58—114)
	Friday	Research Exercises <b>Read:</b> “Trapline: An Ojibwe Man’s Search for Identity...” (Treuer, on Canvas)
9	Monday	Activist Writing Introduction <b>Read:</b> “White Butte” (Brorby, on Canvas) <b>Due: Nature Journal</b>
	Wednesday	<b>Read:</b> <i>Refuge</i> (p. 115—173)
	Friday	Outdoor Observation Day #4
10	Monday	Activism Writing <b>Read:</b> “70117” (Verdelle, on Canvas) “Burning the Shelter” (Owens, on Canvas)
	Wednesday	<b>Read:</b> <i>Refuge</i> (p. 174—232)
	Friday	Activism Writing <b>Read:</b> “The Secret History of Lead” (Kitman, on Canvas)
11	Monday	<b>Read:</b> <i>Refuge</i> (p. 233—290)
	Wednesday	<u>Outdoor Observation Day #5</u>
	Friday	<b>No Class (Veterans Day)</b>
12	Monday	Revision Introduction Landscape Inventory Exercises
	Wednesday	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Nature Writing <b>Read:</b> “Consider the Lobster” (Foster Wallace, on Canvas)
	Friday	Revision Exercises <b>Read:</b> “The Case for Going Uncivilized” (Lopez, on Canvas) TBD (Dillard, on Canvas)
13	Monday	Introduction to Peer Workshop Groups for Essay #2 (full draft due)
	Wednesday	<b>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</b> Feedback Letters E-mailed by 11:59 PM on 11/29)
	Friday	
14	Monday	Student Essay Readings
	Wednesday	Student Essay Readings
	Friday	Submission and Publication Information
15	Monday	Plot Projects
	Wednesday	Plot Projects Culminating Responses