

HUMA 4228 3.0 NATURE IN NARRATIVE

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores narratives of nature in a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. In the course, we examine how understandings and images of nature are developed in and through literary works—from short stories to novels. We also read nonfiction essays and nature writing for their use of literary forms, such as metaphors and rhetorical techniques, to enrich their narratives and open readers to the ideas that they are expressing. Nature—whether the natural environment as a whole or plants and animals or even material elements such as air or water—also acts as characters in the texts, animating texts in important ways.

Students are encouraged to read all the texts in the course as narratives, as stories or points of view on the natural world or human nature, even the nonfiction works. Most of the texts in the course self-consciously play with narrative, several presenting alternative versions of the story being told from contrasting viewpoints. This emphasis on the narrativity or literary forms of texts encourages us to reflect on the constructed character of all our narratives of nature, whether fiction or nonfiction. But the course also asks how narratives can provide true accounts of our world and explores how the place of nature in the narratives shapes their truth value.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation (15%); Class Presentation (15%); Commentaries on Readings (25%); Research Paper Proposal (10%); Research Paper (35%).

REPRESENTATIVE READINGS:

William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature;” Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (selection); Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*; Franz Kafka, “A Report to an Academy;” Jake Kosek, “Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee;” Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, “Embracing Breakdown: Soil Ecopoethics and the Ambivalences of Remediation;” Murray Bail, *Eucalyptus: A Novel* (selection); Barry Lopez, *Winter Count*; Robin Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (selection).