

## **ENG 290: Human Values in Literature**

**John Felice Rome Center**

Summer 2024

Monday & Wednesday | 2 – 5:20 pm |

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Office Hours: By Appointment, M/W

### **Course Description**

This course aims to explore how writers and literary texts engage with nature, the environment, ecology, sustainability, human interference and conservation. We will try to reach a broader understanding of the human values attached to nature and the importance of nature in philosophy, imaginative literature and art, without forgetting the intrinsic values of nature and its beauty (indeed it is quite a beautiful natural world!).

Nature has been the subject of literature in every country and age. The course will consider a broad range of literature (prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction), imagery, philosophy, and film. We will examine the various ways that writers and philosophers have constructed nature as an idealized place or set of qualities, partly imaginary, partly concrete. Some authors found in the natural world a fit environment or a refuge and a confirmation of their faiths or spirituality; others studied nature with a scientific eye, as a neutral agent of transformation and self-transformation of life on this planet; and other writers described nature as an antagonist to mankind, unsympathetic to living beings and prone to inflict suffering. By exploring canonical and less canonical texts by Virgil, Rousseau, Thoreau, Leopardi, Hemingway, London, Calvino, poems from Native American folklore, and other writings, we will reach a deeper understanding of our natural environment.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Analyze significant works of literature that represent human relationship to nature.
- Analyze works of philosophical importance, including their temporal and cultural factors.
- Know major literary and philosophical works and key authors of world literature.
- Understand the relation of those literary and philosophical works to their society and culture.
- Explore and articulate their own subjective aesthetic and intellectual responses to such texts.
- Develop skills in reading, thinking, and writing critically through the composition of an academic essay and other homework assignments.
- Develop analytical skills and argue interpretations through class discussions.
- Identify different issues, authors, and works of art from a comparative perspective.

### **Required Texts**

Assigned readings posted in Sakai.

### **Films (available in Sakai)**

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student. Any lateness or leaving class early will impact the final course grade.

Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Absence due to sickness or injury needs to be corroborated by a doctor's note. Students late to class twice will be credited with one absence in accordance

with the JFRC's Attendance policy. Three absences will result in an automatic failure (F). Travel does not constitute reason to miss class.

### **Required Work**

The course will fulfill its learning outcomes if you comply with the following requirements:

***Participation and Reader Responses* (20%):** This course relies largely on class discussion, and the success of discussions depends upon your *active* presence, thus your presence and contributions are crucial - both to me and to your classmates. To help stimulate class discussions, you should come to class prepared for the assigned readings and participate actively through your Reader Responses: to enhance both your reading and class discussion, for each class you will find a handout in Sakai with a list of topics/questions that we will discuss. Choose one or two questions that interest you and address them through some informal notes, including a quotation or two as evidence in support of your claims. These meditations are a chance for you to consider the readings *before* coming to class. As the semester progresses, your responses should become more analytical and offer connections between the works, the authors, and the literary theories. **Please, note that I will ask you to discuss your Responses in class. Occasionally, I will ask that you submit your Responses to Sakai. I will evaluate your Reader Responses in your final Participation grade. To receive a high participation grade, you should participate in class discussion at least once every class. Failure to complete the Reader Responses accurately will impact negatively your final Participation grade. Please, see me if you struggle with speaking publicly in class.**

The participation grade also includes a degree of 'professionalism': following carefully lectures and class discussions; limiting the use of personal laptops only to take notes; punctuality to all classes; no breaks out of class other than during the collective break; and turning off cell phones. **Consistent tardiness or long breaks out of class will affect negatively your participation grade. If you use your laptop consistently and when it is not needed (such as during a student's presentation or when the class is watching a video), this will lower your participation grade.**

***Journal Entry* (20%):** You will spend some time in nature and write a journal (2-3 pages) providing a coherent, meaningful reflection and analysis of the environment, and your reaction to it. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on this assignment.

***Presentation* (20%):** Each student will present an assigned text from the readings for the course and will also lead a class discussion on the text, for which s/he will produce a series of relevant questions. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions. In the case of large groups, the presentations will be in teams.

***Paper Proposal* (10%):** About one week before the final essay is due, we will meet individually to discuss the topic, summary, and bibliography of your final paper (Paper Proposal). See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the paper proposal. **See me during office hours if you would like to discuss your paper proposal earlier or more at length than the official meeting schedule allows.**

***Final Paper* (20%):** The final paper (5-6 pages, double-spaced) will be the analysis of a literary text of your choice. The paper will show your ability to choose a focused question and thesis to guide your discussion and to follow the conventions for writing about literature. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the final paper.

***Attendance* (10%).** See the requirements for this course in the specific section on the previous page.

***Sakai:*** This course will be using Sakai. You are required to check the course site regularly for announcements, messages, readings, and assignments posted there.

***General advice:*** The kind of reading we will practice requires marking up a text and reading passages during all class discussions. **If it is a PDF file posted to Sakai, you can download it and save it on your device, highlight the important quotes in yellow, and/or take notes of the page numbers and your comments.**

### Grading

94-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
90-93: A-	84-86: B	74-76: C	60-66: D
	80-83: B-	70-73: C-	59 or lower: F

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml). You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

I expect that all work you produce for this course will be your own and that you will not submit work you have already completed for other courses. **Submitting the same Reader Responses of another student (if collected) will be considered plagiarism. Paraphrasing or otherwise copying the work of another person without citing the source of the words and ideas will be considered plagiarism.**

**Using AI for writing the final paper or for any of the assignments will result in an F in the assignment or even an F in the course and might jeopardize the rest of your studies at Loyola.**

### Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. *As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.*

### Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, during the first week of classes.

**And finally... Welcome to this class! I find the study of literature both intellectually and emotionally fascinating (as well as a lot of fun), and I look forward to exploring it together. Please do not hesitate to converse with me about the course or the readings throughout the semester. As far as possible, I want to make sure the class meets your own academic goals as well as those I have outlined in this syllabus.**

### Course Schedule (syllabus may vary, make sure to check the updated copy in Sakai)

#### Week 1

- M 20** Introduction to the course.  
What is nature? The Image of Nature in Genesis. The Book of Nature. Aristotle's *Physics* (Book II).
- W 22** The tradition of the pastoral literature. Virgil's *First Eclogue*. St. Francis, *Canticle of the Creatures*. The "green language". Readings by Emerson, Thoreau, Keats, Ammons. Native American poems.



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**Week 2**

**M 27** The myth of the 'good savage'. Readings by Rousseau, Shakespeare, Daumal.

**W 29** Human interference and conservation. Readings by Melville, Faulkner, Leopold, Ginsberg.

**Week 3**

**M 3** **Journal Entry due.**

Into the Wild. Readings by Calvino, McCandles, Treadwell.

**W 5** The Sublime. Readings by Burke, Shelley, Mary Shelley, Leopardi, Tennyson, Hemingway, London.

**Week 4**

**M 10** **Meetings for paper proposals** (paper proposal due today).

**W 12** Gender and nature. The myth of Mother Nature. Readings by Donne, Wordsworth, Dickinson, Byron.

**Week 5**

**M 17** **Final papers due.**

The scientific description of nature. Readings by Darwin and other writers.

**W 19** Modern protection of the environment. Readings about industrial pollution and ecoactivism. Conclusions.