

English 358/558: Outdoor Writing

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Office Hours:
▪ Monday/Wednesday 11 a.m.-
12 noon
▪ ***Especially*** by appointment

Welcome to English 358/558, Outdoor Writing.

This course examines a range of *non-fiction* outdoor writing (both genres and types) and outdoor writers (authors) as a prelude to producing our own outdoor writing.

Because maintaining a sustainable natural environment is vital, we will read and discuss the ways working conservation writers (outdoor writers) contribute to environmental sustainability by educating the public of conservation and environmental challenges. (Think of, perhaps, Sigurd Olson, Aldo Leopold, Ted Williams, Ernest Hemingway, or Susan Fenimore Cooper.)

This course contributes to UWSP's overall mission to connect students with the future by enabling you to learn how to enhance your writing in the area of outdoor communication and foster your ability to appreciate and use the power of communication to educate the public about our collective environmental responsibility.

As an upper division course in writing, English 358/558 further enhances your skills in critical reading, understanding the structure of the English language, and your ability to use language clearly, creatively, and persuasively.

Initially, we will discuss why each of us is a member of this course and where our particular interests lie. Establishing our reasons for being here will help focus the range of outdoor writing that we work with during the semester.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon successfully completing this course, you will:

- Understand the genres and types of outdoor writing and recognize how this writing addresses the interaction between outdoor enthusiasts and the natural environment
- Identify the ways outdoor enthusiasts influence environmental sustainability
- Evaluate competing claims by various sources (e.g., writers, organizations, governmental agencies) that inform environmental debates
- Learn how the message of this interaction adapts for each genre and type
- Become familiar with a variety of outdoor writers

- Learn how outdoor writers produce various types of outdoor writing in order to educate the public
- Understand style and language of outdoor writing
- Produce outdoor writing of your own

Course Materials

- *Writing About Nature: A Creative Guide* (Revised Edition), John A. Murray, University of New Mexico Press.
- A writing handbook/dictionary
- Various e-Reserve materials, magazines, articles, and other documents that we will collect as we move along.
- A way to store and access your work-in-progress (e.g., a portable USB drive, myFiles, cloud-based Dropbox) from multiple locations (i.e. home, dorm, computer lab, the library).

Course Format

The centerpiece of this course will be outdoor writing, either writing that we find and discuss, or writing that we produce and discuss. Therefore, a fair portion of this course will be conducted in a workshop setting, both in our classroom and the computer lab.

Course Work

As much as possible, there will be flexibility in the subject matter of your writing. If you have no interest in fishing, for example, you will not be forced to write about fishing. We will endeavor to make your writing useful to your field of study, anticipated profession, or areas of interest.

The work you will do to earn your final grade (1,000 points total) will be as follows:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. What is your definition of outdoor writing and what does it look like? (Posted on D2L) | 45 points |
| 2. Author or publication analysis | 100 points |
| 3. <u>Three from:</u> | 200 points each |
| a) Personal experience | |
| b) Equipment review | |
| c) Where-to | |
| d) Argument | |
| e) Natural history | |
| f) Science- or fact-based news | |
| g) Profile/Character sketch | |
| 4. Peer Reviews | 80 points |
| 5. Quizzes | 75 points |
| 6. Professionalism | 100 points |

We will break down the semester according to the following loosely organized schedule, subject to revision and for which I will distribute more specific information as we progress:

Weeks 1-6:

Introduction, Definition of Outdoor Writing, Personal experience, Where-to, and Equipment Review

Weeks 7-16:

Argument, Natural History, Science- or Fact-based news, and Profile/Character sketch

Points and letter grades

The total course points and associated final letter grades are as follows:

Course Grade	Total Points
A	930+
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729
D+	670-699
D	630-669
F	Below 630

Attendance

Simply put, plan to attend each class period. Since so much of our work in class will involve our writing and analysis, and our classmates' writing and analyses, missing class means you will miss the input from classmates, and they will miss yours. Both are valuable and should not be neglected.

That said, you imperil your success in passing this course if you miss class six or more times (roughly 20%). Beginning with the fourth absence, your grade may be lowered one step (e.g., A- to B+, C to C-).

Missing 20 percent or more of our class time will imperil your final grade. This is not a correspondence course; your participation is important for your work and that of your classmates.

Recordings

Students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from Professor Morgan. Anyone

violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device being used. Refusal to comply with the policy will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom, and possibly being reported to the Dean of Students.