

# English 358/558: Outdoor Writing

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Office Hours:

- Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
- **Also** by appointment (send me an email to schedule)

Welcome to English 358/558, Outdoor Writing (GEP Category: Environmental Responsibility).

This course is one of the English Department's array of Professional Writing courses, so we will approach the from the perspective of professional outdoor writing. That is, we will read and write *non-fiction* pieces that focus on the outdoors with the idea that what we write could be published (and make money!). We will apply (and improve) your writing skills to subjects and topics involving outdoor (environmental) communication. Some areas we can cover are outdoor activities, techniques, issues, problems, and concerns.

Because maintaining a sustainable natural environment is vital, we will read and discuss the ways working outdoor (or conservation/environmental) 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 field 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 for GEP Environmental Responsibility**

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

- 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**

- A writing handbook/dictionary
- Various other materials such as magazines, articles, and other documents related to outdoor writing that we will collect as we move along.

### **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 online in our Canvas space.

### **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 Canvas) | 45 points       |
| 2. Two author or publication analyses   | 75 points each  |
| 3. <u>Three from:</u>   | 200 points each |
| a) Personal experience  |                 |
| b) Equipment review   |                 |
| c) Where-to   |                 |
| d) Natural history  |                 |
| e) Science- or fact-based news  |                 |
| f) Profile/Character sketch   |                 |
| 4. Peer Reviews   | 80 points       |
| 5. Professionalism  | 125 points      |

## Points and letter grades

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

Course Grade	Total Points
A	940+
A-	900-939
B+	870-899
B	840-869
B-	800-839
C+	770-799
C	740-769
C-	700-739
D+	670-699
D	640-669
F	Below 640

When I evaluate assignments, I will do so from the perspective of an editor. What that means is because we deal with outdoor writing from a professional angle, each piece of writing (with the exception, perhaps, of the two analysis pieces) has an intended audience and purpose. I will evaluate each piece as to how well it addresses a particular audience and achieves its purpose.

**Meaning of grades:** Because the work in this class is based on professional writing (i.e., for publication or application on the job), the following correlation between the grades you earn and professional writing standards will apply:

A range	<b>Yes!</b> Ready for publication. Your article/piece of writing needs little to no revision before sending it to an editor for consideration.
B range	<b>Well, OK...</b> Almost there. Minor revisions are needed to address problems such as style, missing information, organization, etc.
C range	<b>Hmmm...</b> On the right track. An editor probably would understand the intent of the piece but significant revising is needed. The piece lacks organization, there are bigger gaps of missing information, numerous textual errors (e.g., style, grammar), etc.
D range	<b>Ohmigosh!</b> Major revision needed. Overall, the quality is poor. Although the piece has a recognizable subject, the writing and content require substantial improvement.
F	<b>Uh-oh...</b> A do-over. Revision is needed to the extent that an editor would not offer any suggestions but simply reject the piece.

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**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-).

**Recordings**

Students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of course material without written permission from Professor Morgan.