

NEW COLLEGE

Motto

New ways of learning

Mission statement

New College is a solidarity of students and teachers that embraces individually initiated, evolutionary learning experiences. We are a force that generates and disseminates innovations.

Vision statement

We are a community that seeks solutions to universal problems. We envision that New College graduates will be ethical, environmental, creative, civic, interdisciplinary, scholarly, forward-looking, radical, revolutionary, cutting-edge, activist, challenging, co-evolutionary, communitarian, consilient, cooperative, creative, diverse, experimental, global, integrative, and transformative.

PERSPECTIVE IN THE HUMANITIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

NEW 215

4 Hours

Fall 2004

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-11:50 a.m.
Carmichael 109

Course carries credit for New College Humanities I Seminar
Course carries credit for University of Alabama "HU" course
Course is required for the minor in Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies

Dr. Catherine M. Roach

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Office hours: 9-11 a.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays and other times by appointment

Course Description

In recent decades, researchers in the humanities have responded with great interest to problems of the environment. These researchers offer diverse and challenging analyses of the ways humans perceive and relate to their natural environment and of how we can understand and attempt to heal environmental destruction.

This course considers the methods, assumptions, and arguments of five different disciplinary perspectives on environmental studies within the humanities. We focus on the interdisciplinary dialogues of environmental studies with (1) literature and the arts, (2) philosophy, (3) religious studies, (4) psychology, and (5) feminism. From these dialogues have emerged the new areas of (1) literature, arts, and the environment, (2) ecophilosophy, (3) religion and the environment or ecotheology, (4) ecopsychology, and (5) ecofeminism.

The course is designed for students who want to participate in these interdisciplinary humanistic and cultural debates of contemporary environmentalism.

Course Set-up

The course is designed as an introductory, discussion-oriented, student-centered course. Individual class meetings are structured around discussion of the readings and issues for that day, often led by student presenters and supplemented by background material presented by the professor. The course emphasizes writing and discussion skills. It also incorporates a couple of fieldtrips (to a local organic farm and a hiking trip on Saturday Nov. 13 to Oak Mountain State Park: make sure you clear your calendar for that trip). The last quarter of the course is devoted to Independent Study Contracts for projects that you will design and carry out yourselves and present to the class.

Course Requirements

Guidelines follow later in the syllabus explaining these components in more detail:

- Preparation of the readings, seminar attendance, and participation in discussion. Attendance is mandatory, as is preparing for class, and both are crucial to the liveliness of the seminar. Note that participation in discussion involves attentive listening as well as contributing your own thoughtful comments and questions. Good class discussion is not a series of interchanges between students and a professor, but is a sustained, wide-ranging yet focused, fun, collective inquiry. I will work to create a class atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating, and I expect participation from you. Listen to your colleagues; respond to their questions; build on their comments. Each student will also do one or two presentations in class introducing issues and questions that arise from the reading (see appendix). I will hand out a sign-up sheet for dates. *Missed classes need to be made up with an extra response paper for the day you miss, or a double-length response paper if one was already due on that day. In other words, the more classes you miss, the more written work you will have to do.* Conversely, excellence in attendance and participation will raise otherwise lower grades. Note that prepared participation in discussion is required to earn any final grade over a "B+." 20% of final grade

- 1-2 page, typed, response papers on the reading or other assigned topics, due in many of our classes. See schedule and appendix for more details. 30% of final grade
- midterm take home essay, 4-5 pgs (more instructions to follow) 20% of final grade
- Final project, done as an Independent Study Contract. Can be done individually or in groups. This project is very open; you can be as creative or traditional as you like. Its purpose is to give you a chance to explore new ways of thinking, doing, or being that you've acquired through the course. You could write an essay analyzing one, or comparing two, of the humanities perspectives of the course; you could make a video highlighting one or more local environmental issues; you could research nature rituals and prepare one for the class to do together; you could draw a portfolio of endangered species in Alabama; you could write a short story or collection of poems stemming from your nature experiences; you could do a service learning project at the University Arboretum or another local environmental organization. The possibilities are endless. You will meet with me weekly in the final quarter of the term as you work on these projects. The projects will be presented to class in the last week of the course and must be handed in to me in final form by 5 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 10. 30% of final grade

Books to Buy

The following four books are available at the Ferguson Center bookstore.

- Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* (Bantam/Turner, 1992).
- William Dudley, ed. *The Environment: Opposing Viewpoints*. Opposing Viewpoints Series. Greenhaven Press, 2001.
- George S. Howard. *How Should I Live My Life? Psychology, Environmental Science, and Moral Traditions*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.
- David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willott. *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Other Policies

- Academic honesty is expected of all students. All acts of dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating) in any work constitute academic misconduct. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

- If you have needs related to a disability, please contact me about the situation after speaking with the Office of Disability Services (348-4285). I will be happy to accommodate you.
- We may well need to make changes to the syllabus and schedule as we go along on our adventure of learning. I welcome your feedback on anything you feel isn't working well in the course. Furthermore, we will do an anonymous course evaluation halfway through the term.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Introduction to the Issues

WEEK 1 Thurs. Aug. 26
student and professor introductions; course set-up; discussion of environmental concerns.
Start reading *Ishmael* and the assigned chapters from Dudley.

Film and the Environment

WEEK 2 Tues. Aug. 31
Thurs. Sept. 2
Princess Mononoke
We will view and discuss together the Japanese *anime* movie “Princess Mononoke.” It was one of movie critic Roger Ebert’s top 10 best film picks of 1999. According to the *Pensacola News Journal*, director Hayao Miyazaki is “the greatest living animator, and this is his best work, set at the dawn of the Iron Age, when some men still lived in harmony with nature and others were trying to tame and defeat it. It is not a simplistic tale of good and evil, but the story of how humans, forest animals and nature gods all fight for their share of the new emerging order. One of the most visually inventive films.”

Self, Society, and Environment

WEEK 3 Tues. Sept. 7
Self-evaluation exercise on ecocentrism, anthropocentrism, and pro-development attitudes. Range of positions in environmental studies from conservative to radical; range of disciplines within the humanities that engage in environmental studies.

Reading:

- William Dudley, ed. *The Environment: Opposing Viewpoints*. Read all of chapter 3 (sections 1-6) and read sections 1-4 of chapter 4.
- Students will break up into small groups to prepare presentations on this reading for next week.

Thurs. Sept. 9
Writing exercise on “Self, Family, Society, and Environment”
Group work time for next week's class discussion

Opposing Values and Viewpoints on the Environment

WEEK 4 Tues. Sept. 14
Thurs. Sept. 16
Reading:

- William Dudley, ed. *The Environment: Opposing Viewpoints*. Read all of chapter 3 (sections 1-6) and read sections 1-4 of chapter 4.

Class Discussion:

Students are divided into small groups to lead the class in discussion and debate on assigned chapters from the book.

Literature and the Environment

WEEK 5 Tues. Sept. 21

Thurs. Sept. 23

Reading:

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit*.

Finish reading chapters 1-7 for Tuesday and the rest of the book for Thursday.

Response Paper (due Sept. 23):

- Summarize and evaluate Ishmael's theory of the Takers and the Leavers. Does Quinn present a compelling view of the human relationship to nature? Does the fictional format he adopts to present his view make his argument seem more compelling or less so?

Environmental Ethics and Ecopsychology

WEEK 6 Tues. Sept. 28

Thurs. Sept. 30

WEEK 7 Tues. Oct. 5

Thurs. Oct. 7

Reading:

George Howard, *How Should I Live My Life? Psychology, Environmental Science, and Moral Traditions*

Specific reading assignments to be announced.

Response Papers (due Sept. 30 and Oct. 7):

- Topics to be announced.

--No class Week 8: October 12 and 14--

--midterm take-home essay, due by Oct. 15, 5 p.m., on my door in Carmichael 101F—

Ecotheology, Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism

WEEK 9 Tues. Oct. 19

Thurs. Oct. 21

WEEK 10 Tues. Oct. 26

Thurs. Oct. 28

Fieldtrip: deep ecology in practice at a local organic

farm

WEEK 11 Tues. Nov. 2

Thurs. Nov. 4

Readings:

From Schmidtz and Willott, eds., *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*

Specific reading assignments to be announced.

Response Papers (due Oct. 21, 28, Nov. 4):

- Topics to be announced.

Independent Study Contracts

FOR THE NEXT FIVE WEEKS, PREPARE AND CARRY OUT AN INDEPENDENT STUDY CONTRACT. WE WILL NOT HOLD REGULAR CLASS DURING THIS TIME IN ORDER FOR YOU TO DEVOTE YOURSELF TO THIS PROJECT. THIS IS A MAJOR PROJECT AND YOU SHOULD PLAN ON SPENDING EIGHT HOURS/WEEK ON IT. EVIDENCE OF THE AMOUNT OF WORK YOU PUT INTO YOUR PROJECT WILL HELP DETERMINE YOUR GRADE.

WEEK 12 Tues. Nov. 9
Library Research Orientation Session. Meet at Gorgas Library.
Choose your topic and start filling out your Independent Study Contract form.

Thurs. Nov. 11
Hike planning session, and **completed Independent Study Contract due.**

Hike and Nature Writing

Sat. Nov. 13

Hiking trip to Alabama's Oak Mountain State Park, led by New College graduate Derrick Taff of UA Outdoor Recreation. We will hike, frolic in the woods, and hang out in the fall foliage. Bring a pen and paper with you. We will do some nature writing.

Nature Writing Exercise in the woods:

- Find a spot to sit or stand. Breathe deeply and take some time to observe what's around you in silence. Then jot down some notes and impressions. What do you see? What strikes you in particular in the visual landscape? What do you hear? How does this place make you feel? What does this place make you think about? What does it make you want to do? What are your overall feelings about being here in the woods?

WEEK 13 Tues. Nov. 16 No class this week. Sign up for individual meetings with me
in my office about your projects.
Thurs. Nov. 18 Individual meetings about your projects

WEEK 14	Tues. Nov. 23	No class or individual meetings the week of
Thanksgiving.	Thurs. Nov. 25	Use the time to work on your project & class
	presentation.	
WEEK 15	Tues. Nov. 30	Individual meetings about your projects
	Thurs. Dec. 2	Individual meetings about your projects
WEEK 16	Tues. Dec. 7	Student presentations of projects
	Thurs. Dec. 9	Student presentations of projects
	Fri. Dec. 10	FINAL VERSION OF PROJECT DUE IN MY
BOX		AT CARMICHAEL 101F BY 5 P.M.

We'll have a class party the following week (time to be announced) at which you can pick up your projects and receive your final course grade.

APPENDIX

How to do the Reading

To be sure, one thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an art . . . something for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case *not* a "modern" man: *rumination*.

--Friedrich Nietzsche

One purpose of this class is to develop further your skills in critical reading or active reading. By this, I mean that you should be self-consciously reflecting on the text as you read. Always read with a pen or pencil in hand. Reading should not be a passive exercise of passing your eyes over a page, but an active and passionate endeavour in which you cultivate your response to the reading.

I call the endeavour "passionate" because learning involves passions. Respond to the readings; get involved with them. Be attentive to how you feel as you read: confused, annoyed, excited, angry, bored, surprised, moved. Note these feelings and all questions or protests or agreements that stir inside you as you read. Ask yourself right away (and continually): why does this text make me feel this way? What do I think about this text and why?

Try to make your reading into a dialogue and debate you hold between yourself and the author. Write down your responses as you go along, either in the margins of the text or on a separate sheet of paper. Then flesh out these notes and organize 1-2 main points into your response paper.

Again, to read actively and critically, ask yourself questions and take notes as you go along:

- what is the author's point? summarize key parts of the author's argument.
- with whom or what is the author siding? who or what is the author against?
- do you agree with the author? why or why not?
- what does this make you think of? how does this make you feel?
- what questions or confusions do you have about the text?

Our classes will largely focus on the readings. It is therefore very important that you DO THE READING. Also, BRING YOUR TEXTS TO CLASS. Come ready to DISCUSS THE READING.

General Instructions for Response Papers

A response paper is a short essay (1-2 pages, typed, double-spaced) focused on a specific question, reading assignment, or topic. It involves no outside research, but asks you to respond with your own thoughts, questions, comments, agreements, disagreements, or

confusions.

Response papers are a tool of active learning, designed to encourage your creative engagement in the ideas and texts the course explores. The purpose of response papers is to help you think through the issues in advance of our class sessions, to enrich our class discussion, to give you practice in the written analysis and construction of moral arguments, and to allow me to provide you with early and constant feedback. You may initially find them to be annoying and a lot of work, but students almost invariably end up agreeing that response papers make the class easier by helping them understand the material and their own response to it.

Further instructions for writing the paper:

- Structure your response paper with a brief introduction (1-2 sentences), a body, and (optional in a paper of this length) a conclusion.
- Be specific. Provide specific quotations, examples, details, or illustrations to back up your point(s).
- Avoid long quotes from the text; instead, paraphrase references in your own words. When you do quote, use quotation marks and give the page reference.
- Aim to be coherent, clear, concise. Write in full and correct sentences.

I will read, evaluate, and return the papers to you as quickly as I can. In almost all cases, they will be returned by the next class.

Instructions for Student Presentations

The purpose of these presentations is to start up a lively class discussion. You don't have to do any additional reading or research, and you may use some points you develop in your response paper. Speak for 5 minutes or so. Prepare a clear and visually appealing handout for your fellow students about your "talking points."

In your presentation, discuss one to three interesting issues or questions or problems that the text raised for you. You may compare the author to someone else we've read. Feel free to criticize the author, but make sure you take time first to understand what the author is saying. You may draw our attention to what you consider key passages and ask us to figure out the passage(s) together.

Grading Criteria

The following remarks give you criteria for how I grade. Note that four topics recur: *presentation of ideas* (your own and those of authors studied); *use of evidence* (how you elaborate and support ideas); *design* (organization, structure); and *basic writing skills* (grammar, mechanics, spelling, punctuation). In all cases, *clarity and conciseness* are important.

The A paper is always mechanically correct and free of errors, save perhaps for one or two proofreading errors that a reader is willing to overlook because of the otherwise high quality. The reader knows exactly what the author wants to say. The ideas are clearly presented, interesting, insightful, and even original. The ideas are well supported by specific, apt examples and well-chosen quotes. The paper or answer is coherent and well-organized with a tight structure. There is no repetition or wasted words. It has style, perhaps a sense of humour. Reading it, one feels a mind at work. The reader is convinced that the writer cares about her or his ideas and about the language that conveys the ideas. The sure mark of an A paper is that one finds oneself telling someone else about it.

The B paper has few errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Some of the sentences may be awkward, but they are on the whole clear, and in them thought follows naturally on thought. The paragraphs may be unwieldy now and then, but they are organized around one main idea. The ideas are fairly clear, well-developed, and supported with evidence. The paper on the whole makes sense throughout. It does not contain unexplained digressions.

The C paper may have ideas to present, but they are still quite vague and broad, or else uninteresting or obvious. It does not advance an argument that anyone might care to debate (“Modern cities are interesting places”). The thesis in the C paper often hangs on some personal opinion. If the writer is a recognized authority, such an expression of personal taste may be noteworthy, but writers gain authority not merely by expressing their tastes but by justifying them. Personal opinion is often the engine that drives an argument, but opinion by itself is never sufficient. It must be defended and supported by specific evidence (examples, quotes, paraphrases). Even if it has clear and interesting ideas, a paper without sufficient supporting evidence may be a C paper. The C paper often has mechanical faults, errors in grammar and spelling, but note that a paper without such flaws may still be a C paper.

The D or F paper is often filled with mechanical faults, errors in grammar, and errors in spelling. The paragraphs do not hold together; ideas do not develop from sentence to sentence. It usually repeats the same thoughts again and again, perhaps in slightly different language but often in the same words. It has very vague, broad, or uninteresting ideas that are not developed or supported with evidence. There is little indication that the writer understands the material being presented. It may not be on topic and may be irrelevant to the assignment or question.