

Mount Holyoke College, Fall 2015
Environmental Studies/English 267
Reading and Writing in the World

John Lemly and Lauret Savoy

Class: W 1:15-4:05 pm, Clapp 327

Office Hours: Lauret on M 1:30-3:00 pm, W 10:00-11:15 am, and by appointment; John on Tu 2:00-4:00 pm and by appointment

Office: John, 204 Shattuck, x2448 (jlemly@mtholyoke.edu); Lauret, Clapp 326, x2125 (lsavoy@mtholyoke.edu)

Course Description

Most people are on the world, not in it--John Muir

An introduction to reading and writing about nature, this seminar will attempt an exchange across distinct approaches to observing and describing the world around us. Do lenses of culture, discipline, and gender determine how we see and experience nature, environment, and place? Course work will include reading such authors as N. Scott Momaday, Henry David Thoreau, bell hooks, Leslie Marmon Silko, Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry, Terry Tempest Williams, and Annie Dillard; field trips; and writing assignments--weekly field notes and journals, analytical papers, and personal essays.

The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper--Eden Phillpotts

Texts and Other Materials

Class handouts (poetry, essays, etc.) on Moodle

Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound*

Alison Deming and Lauret Savoy, eds., *The Colors of Nature* (2nd edition)

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Henry David Thoreau, *The Portable Thoreau* (Walden and other writings)

Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge*



**You will also need a blank journal (nothing fancy) that is *not* used as a class notebook.

Course Requirements and Policy

For this reading and writing seminar to go well, everyone must come to class prepared to discuss the weekly readings as well as one another's work. Regular and punctual class attendance as well as active, prepared participation are essential and required. All of you will be responsible for leading and joining in discussions, sharing your own work, and helping to create a community of writers. In class and out, small groups will read one another's work during the semester.

This seminar is an intensive writing course. You will do weekly field notes and journal entries, analytic papers in response to the reading, and personal essays. You should develop your own individual voice(s) and methods of working from informal observations to more

formal, finished pieces. Experiment with different ways of keeping a journal and of reworking, recycling that “raw material.” Feel free to respond to, emulate, even imitate particular writers (classmates included), entering into a dialogue, a conversation, with their readings of the world and of other texts.

Assignments and approximate “weight”:

Regular (<u>almost daily</u>) journal entries	25%
Five (5) short essays/response writings (3-7 pages)	30%
Participation in class and online discussions	25%
Portfolio of semester’s work & contribution to chapbook	20%

We plan to produce a class anthology or chapbook or zine with selections by every student.

Our expectations: Class meetings will consist mostly of dialogue and discussion, with some intensive writing and occasional “trips” around campus, to the Art Museum, and farther afield. We will read and talk about difficult, controversial matters that may/should elicit strong opinions and feelings. How to listen carefully and respect the positions of others is central to our work all semester. In the whole seminar and in smaller groups we’ll all need to respect one another. Laptops used for note-taking, reading the texts discussed, and occasional in-class research can be part of that respectful participation. But texting/e-mail/Facebook/Twitter are distracting and rude, undermining our collective endeavor. Please don’t.

Learning Goals: Our course seeks to develop skills of careful attention to texts and to the natural world; to encourage understanding and practicing the distinction between objective and subjective observation, argument and narrative; to essay various ways of recording observations and sharing findings with one’s reader and a wider audience; to grapple together at the intersection of language, nature, history, and justice.

Schedule of Topics

9/9 Introduction to Course, Ourselves, and Words from the Land

9/16 Telling Stories about the Environment and Ourselves

Readings -

Linda Hogan, “Walking”

bell hooks, “divine inspiration: women and spirituality” from *remembered rapture: the writer at work*

Anne Lamott, “Getting started” from *bird by bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

Mary Oliver, “Pen and Paper and a Breath of Air”

Adrienne Rich, “Woman and Bird” from *What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics*

Lesley Marmon Silko, “Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories”

Gary Snyder, “Language Goes Two Ways” from *A Place in Space*



*Essay/response paper # 1 "Memory and Landscape" due in class on 9/16

*Begin your journals!

9/23 N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

*Response paper # 2 "The Way to Rainy Mountain" due on Moodle by midnight 9/22-23

9/25 – 9/26 Overnight at Noble View

9/30 Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

10/7 Close Looking at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

10/10 – 10/13 Fall Break!!

10/14 Henry David Thoreau, *The Portable Thoreau* (Walden and other writings)
Thoreau and His Contemporaries

Additional readings -

Selection from Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*

Selection from Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*

Selections from 19th-century poets (Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson)

10/21 Holland Glen

*Essay/response paper # 3 comparing Dillard and Thoreau due in class on 10/21

10/28 Contemporary Poetry Sampler: Language of Image and Experience

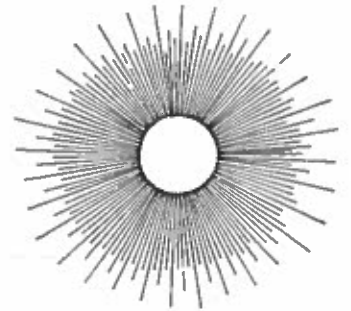
Readings (Poetry Sampler), including works by the following poets:

Adrienne Rich, Lucille Clifton, Rita Dove, Robert Hass, Denise Levertov, W. S. Merwin, Mary Oliver, Pattiann Rogers, Gary Snyder, Luci Tapahonso

11/4 Poetry Sampler (continued)

*Writing assignment # 4 "Imaginative Language" due in class on 11/4

11/11 Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound*



11/18 *The Colors of Nature* (Alison Deming and Lauret Savoy, eds.)

11/25 – 11/29 **Thanksgiving Break**

12/2 **Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge***

12/9 **Writing, Reading, Final Words and Chapbook Planning**

*Final essay/response paper (# 5) "Imagined Landscapes" due by 12/22 at noon

Additional Course Guidelines

Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

You should register with AccessAbility Services, located in Wilder Hall B4 (www.mtholyoke.edu/accessability/for_students and 413-538-2634)

Staff in the office will provide you the appropriate letter, which you should give to us.

Office Hours & Appointments

Lauret on Lauret on M 1:30-3:00 pm, W 10:00-11:30 am, and by appointment.

John Tu 2:00-4:00 pm and by appointment. We're glad to speak with you about your interests in this material or about broader questions of language, nature, and the environment. The course will be most satisfying if you tailor its varied possibilities to your emerging interests.

Policy on Sources and Citations

In your writing, you must cite all sources fully—whether you quote word-for-word, paraphrase, or rely more generally on ideas from another sources or use a source we have all read. This responsibility extends to both printed and online sources. There are many acceptable citation formats: at a minimum, a citation should include the author, title of the work, and place and date of publication. Our concern is not so much plagiarism or "cheating" as the need to take part in a mature discourse about ideas, acknowledging sources that shape your thoughts and contributing to that ongoing conversation. It is, we think, an intellectual question, more than a concern with potential dishonesty. For detailed discussion of such matters: www.mtholyoke.edu/lits/ris/Plagiarism. Failure to use sources appropriately is a violation of the college Honor Code and will be punished.

SAW Center

The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing (SAW) Program is an excellent resource for student writers. It is staffed by students who are trained as peer writing mentors.

See <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/saw> or call 413-538-2651 or 413-538-2173. The SAW Center is located in the MEWS on the main floor of Dwight Hall. Its hours: Mon & Tues 3-9pm; Wed & Thurs 9am-12pm, 3-9pm; Friday 9am-12pm; Sunday 1-9pm.

****A Few Important Events Beyond Class Hours****

- LITS is hosting a traveling exhibit of "Dust, Drought and Dreams Gone Dry" in the Information Commons from September 9-October 23, 2015. The exhibition was developed by the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the libraries of Oklahoma State University and Mount Holyoke College. MHC has contributed content to the national exhibit from our Caroline Boa Henderson collection, in Archives and Special Collections. Henderson, MHC class of 1901, farmed a land claim in the Oklahoma Panhandle from 1907 until 1966. Her first-hand accounts of the Dust Bowl years are preserved in the archives through the letters that she wrote to friends and family members, along with other writings that she published in *Practical Farmer* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Also on display is primary source material from the Henderson Collection in an accompanying exhibit "Love for the Earth, Loyalty to the Land." LITS will host a film screening of Ken Burns's PBS documentary and lectures by Al Werner, MHC Professor of Geology, and Hannah Holleman, Amherst Professor of Sociology. See below and the Schedule of Events for details and please go by LITS to see the exhibits! The ALA exhibition and tour are made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (Exploring the Human Endeavor).

September 15th at 6 pm: Film screening of part one of the PBS documentary *The Dust Bowl* by Ken Burns, with framing by Hannah Holleman in the Stimson Room of Williston Library.

September 17th at 6 pm: Film screening of part two of the PBS documentary *The Dust Bowl* by Ken Burns in the Stimson Room of Williston Library.

September 22nd at 7 pm: Hannah Holleman, professor at Amherst College, presents "Dust to Dust: Lessons for Today from the First Global Ecological Crises" in the Stimson Room of Williston Library. Prof. Holleman's talk will discuss social factors and historical developments contributing to the Dust Bowl on the U.S. Southern Plains, while illustrating that this calamity was one dramatic regional manifestation of an international crisis of soil erosion by the 1930s.

October 6th at 7 pm: Alan Werner presents "Good to the Last Drop: Climate Change, Droughts, and Water Availability" in the Stimson Room, Williston Library. Prof. Werner's talk will focus on the science behind the Dust Bowl, climate change and global water issues.

October 22nd at 4:30 pm: Leslie Fields, head of Archives and Special Collections at MHC, presents "More Than Words: Caroline Henderson and the Art of Letter Writing" in the Archives and Special Collections on the bottom floor of Dwight. Caroline Boa Henderson, Class of 1901, farmed a land claim and raised a daughter in the Oklahoma Panhandle throughout the Dust Bowl years. Henderson was also an avid writer recounting both her struggles and perseverance.

*** 17th Annual North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, Sept 26th and 27th, 2015**

Celebrate sweet [and stinkin'] sixteen – that's years of the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival, September 27 and 28 in Orange Massachusetts. There's something for everyone at this fabulous family destination, held on a beautiful historic farm amidst autumn foliage. <http://garlicandarts.org/>

- * "Forty Years After: Chinua Achebe and Africa in the Global Imagination," Oct. 14th-15th, UMass. Scholarly conference on this pioneer author with ties to UMass; see John for details.

- **The 2015 Carol Hoffmann Collins Global Scholar-in-Residence** at Mount Holyoke College is **Gita Sen**, founder of DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era) and international expert on gender equality and women's human rights. She will give a keynote lecture on **Tuesday, October 20th** (Gamble Auditorium, 7 pm) "Women's Human Rights: Promises and Pitfalls of a Globalized World." <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/global/global-scholars/gita-sen>

- **Marion Copeland**, "Impact of Natural History on Renaissance Art and Literature," Oct. 21st, 4 pm, UMass Renaissance Center

- **Dr. Coleen Fox**, Dartmouth College will deliver a lecture, "You Kill the Dam, You are Killing a Part of Me: The Environmental Politics of Dam Removal in New England," on **Wednesday, November 4th**, 4:30 pm, Dwight 101.

- Each semester **The Poetry Center** at Smith College brings in several outstanding poets. Here is this fall's lineup:
 - Thomas Lux**, Tuesday, September 22nd, 7:30 pm, Weinstein Auditorium, Wright Hall
 - Amy Uyematsu**, Thursday, October 15th, 7:30 pm, Neilson Browsing Room
 - Arda Collins**, Tuesday, October 27th, 7:30 pm, Paradise Room, Conference Center
 - Juan Felipe Herrera**, Tuesday, December 1st, 7:30 pm, Weinstein Auditorium, Wright Hall
 Go to <http://www.smith.edu/poetrycenter/wp/> & <http://www.smith.edu/poetrycenter/wp/season.pdf> for details.

- Plus author readings at the **Odyssey Bookshop** (<http://www.odysseybks.com/event/month>) and more!!

