

San José State University
English and Comparative Literature
English 30: Literature and the Environment
Fall 2020

Instructor:	Daniel Lanza Rivers
Office Hours:	M/W: 4:15-5:05, or by appointment
Email:	daniel.rivers@sjsu.edu
Telephone:	408-924-1366
Class:	M/W: 3-4:15 PM
GE Category:	C2

Course Description:

Literature and the Environment examines how writers have used literature, poetry, graphic novels, and the arts to make sense of humans' relationship to the rest of the living world. Throughout the semester, we will ask how literature both influences and is influenced by the cultural and environmental politics of food, climate change, city life, conservation, settler colonialism, and environmental justice. The class will move through 5 units: forest ecologies, cultures of U.S. agriculture, living with extreme weather, nonhuman animals, and the "new" nature writing. Though this class is global and intercultural in scope, our readings will place a particular emphasis on the cultural and environmental dynamics of industry, equity, race, and environmental justice.

Course Format (Online: Synchronous with Occasional Asynchronous Sessions):

This synchronous course uses Zoom sessions for Lecture and Seminar meetings. On occasion, a lecture session may be "flipped" to an asynchronous session (a recorded lecture, film viewing, etc). These sessions will be identified in advance by your instructor, who will also provide guidelines for accessing the asynchronous activity for the day.

All students are expected to use video and audio functions during seminar. Maintaining a virtual "presence" will be an essential part of keeping our seminar discussions lively and engaging. Students who are unable to attend with audio and video should contact their instructor before the class session to discuss their situation.

Course Goals:

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO):

Reading and discussing assigned texts will focus on enduring human concerns, and allow students to

- a. examine significant works of the human intellect and imagination;
- b. understand the historical and cultural contexts in which such specific texts were created; and
- c. recognize the accomplishments of women and diverse cultures reflected in such texts.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

GELO 1. Recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns: This course will examine how writers have used fiction, poetry, theater, essays, and film to make sense of their relationships with the landscapes and ecological

networks they inhabit. Along with examining the political life of U.S. nature writing, this class will ask how literature has both contributed to and challenged popular thinking that locates "nature" as something separate from the daily realities of modern life.

GELO 2: Respond to such works by writing research-based critical analyses and personal responses: The class' first textual analysis paper and seminar facilitation based papers will use research-based critical analyses. The term's final project, as well as various in-class assignments such as free-writes and essay quizzes, will assess students' personal responses to the texts.

GELO 3: Write clearly and effectively (writing will be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness): Students will hone their writing through weekly responses, sustained analysis papers, and a final project.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO):

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to do the following:

1. Analyze significant works of literature that both represents and responds to humanity's relationship to nature.
2. Understand the varied and diverse historical/cultural contexts in which specific texts were created
3. Recognize the accomplishments and issues related to women and diverse cultures as reflected in the assigned texts.

Departmental Learning Objectives ("E" in syllabus)

English 30 serves four of the five learning objectives of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, by having students demonstrate the ability to do the following:

- E 1.** Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of "close reading" or close analysis in both the study of literature and the study of film;
- E 3.** Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;
- E 4.** Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;
- E 5.** Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading Breakdown:

These assignments are intended to span the spectrum of engagement to include: participating actively in class discussions, reflecting on and analyzing assigned readings, mastering foundational concepts, composing literary analysis essays and responses, and crafting your own piece of creative writing about the environment.

Classroom Participation and Preparation (30%):

This grade includes arriving prepared (with reading notes/annotations), engaging in curious and respectful dialogue with your classmates, and completing in-class writing activities. These activities may include daily reading quizzes. Participation activities cannot be made up in the case of absences, but the final participation score will be lowered to reflect 1 excused absence from these activities.

Professionalism (5%):

As a space of professional **and** intellectual development, the classroom environment is affected by the conduct of all members. This grade will be a qualitative, end of term evaluation of your professionalism during this course. This category includes: focused attention, appropriate use of technology, respectful communication, and treating our texts and topics with the seriousness they require.

Canvas Writing Assignments: Discussion Posts and Reader Reports (30%):

Throughout the semester I will ask you to submit writing assignments on Canvas. Your submission should follow the instructions posted online, and it should demonstrate that you have completed a thorough and

nuanced analysis of the assigned reading. Canvas instructions will outline length, number of required citations, etc. These assignments will range from lower-point-value reading journals (called **Discussion Posts**), to higher-value works of textual analysis and reflection (called **Reader Reports**). There are 9 scheduled Discussion Posts and 8 scheduled Reader Reports. Students are allowed to miss one of each of these assignments without incurring a penalty. For students who complete all of these assignments, the lowest score in each category will be dropped.

Foundations Essay: Writing Ecology and Culture (10%):

This short essay will ask you to demonstrate a foundational literacy in environmental analysis by analyzing representations of logging, forest ecologies, and environmental activism in Paul Chadwick's *Concrete: Think Like a Mountain* and Eli Clare's "Clearcut" Essays. More details about this assignment will be posted on Canvas, but you are encouraged to take notes while reading and attending class discussions. Peer-review for this essay will take place in class on Monday 9/14.

Reflection Assignment: Water, Agroindustry, and Environmental Justice (10%)

This reflection assignment will ask you to synthesize our work from Unit 2 by reflecting on relationships among industrial agriculture, environmental justice, and food in our texts. More details on this assignment will be distributed via Canvas, but your reflection will need to make connections among at least 3 text from this unit (Pollan, Carson, Wald, Moraga, and/or *Queen of the Sun*).

Creative Final: Writing "Nature" in a Changing World (15%)

This final assignment asks you to conduct research on an aspect of culture and the environment, and then compose a piece of creative writing that is informed by that research. More details on this assignment will be given in class on Wednesday 11/4. One week later, Wed 11/11, students will be asked to make a discussion post identifying their paper topic and potential avenues of research. A report summarizing your external research and identifying a creative model for your writing will be due on Monday 11/23. Your rough draft will then be due in class on Wed 12/2 for a peer-review workshop. Your final draft will be due by 12PM (noon) on finals day, Fri 12/11.

Grading Breakdown:

Category	Percentage of Total Grade
Classroom Participation	30%
Professionalism	5%
Discussion Posts	10%
Readers Reports	20%
Foundations Essay	10%
Reflection Essay	10%
Creative Final	15%

Administrative Policies:

Workload Expectations:

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Late Work & Makeup Work:

Every student is allowed one two-day extension once per semester on written work, but the student must give 24 hours' notice that they are using their extension. All late work (including late makeup work) will have its final grade reduced by 10% for each day it is late. *No assignments will be accepted more than a week out from their adjusted due date.*

E-Mail Communication:

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (known as FERPA) requires careful protection of your rights and academic record. To protect your right to privacy, all of our communication will happen using our Miami e-mail accounts. Please be sure to check your MU e-mail account regularly for updates about readings and changes to the course schedule.

Classroom Protocol

In order to have curious and respectful discussions of the relationships among humans' entanglements with living environments, our classroom will need to function as an open forum where our knowledge, feelings, and experiences are part of the discussion, and where differences of perspective on consciousness, power, ethical responsibility, and meaning should fuel instead of hinder our conversations. This means that we will need to work together to privilege questions over declarations, and where we will try to leave our assumptions and generalizations at the door.

English Department Grading Standards:

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi:

- In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.
- The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

In written assignments for English 30, this scale is based on the following criteria:

- A [90-92=A-, 93-96=A, 97-100=A+] = Excellent: The "A" essay is articulate and well developed with fluid transitions and a clear and persuasive use of evidence, which is drawn from the literary text itself, lecture materials (when appropriate), and research materials. An "A" essay contains a fresh insight that teaches the reader something new about the subject matter.
- B [80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+] Above average: The "B" essay demonstrates a good understanding of its subject, a clear and persuasive use of evidence, a certain level of ease of expression, and solid organization. However, it usually lacks the level of originality and creativity that characterizes the insight found in an "A" essay.
- C [70-72=C-, 73-76=C, 77-79=C+] = Average: The "C" essay makes a good attempt at all the assignment's requirements. It has a reasonable understanding of its subject matter but its ideas are frequently simplistic or over-generalized. The writing style is also more bland and repetitive than the style shown by "A" and "B" essays and it often contains flaws in grammar, punctuation, spelling and/or word choice. It may also use textual evidence out of context.
- D [60-62=D-, 63-66=D, 67-69=D+] = Below average: The "D" essay is poorly organized and generally unclear. It has inappropriate or inadequate examples, is noticeably superficial or simplistic, and/or contains some serious mechanical and grammatical problems. A "D" essay may also reveal some misunderstanding of the assignment requirements.
- F = Failure: An "F" essay has not addressed the requirements of the assignment and is unacceptable work in terms of both form and content.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>"

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Writing Skills Prerequisite:

Passage of the Writing Skills Test (WST) or ENGL/LLD 100A with a C or better (C- not accepted), and completion of Core General Education are prerequisite to all SJSU Studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended. A minimum aggregate GPA of 2.0 in GE Areas R, S, & V shall be required of all students.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center \(Links to an external site.\)](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in

Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website \(Links to an external site.\)](#) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126 and 2nd floor, MLK Library. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website \(Links to an external site.\)](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website \(Links to an external site.\)](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

Library Liaisons:

Peggy Cabrera - peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu

Assigned Reading:

Most of the required books for this class are available at the campus bookstore, and used copies should be widely available online as well. Be sure you obtain copies of each reading well in advance of the class in which they are due. Shorter readings will be posted on the class Canvas page.

Texts to Purchase or Rent:

Paul Chadwick, *Concrete Vol 5: Think Like a Mountain*

(**Not carried by the Spartan Store. You can purchase an ebook of this text [here](#)**)

Natasha Trethewey, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast* (ISBN: 978-0820349022)

Shaun Tan, *Tales from the Inner City* (ISBN: 978-1338298406)

Orion Magazine, Autumn 2019 Issue (Email Karen Gagne at gagne@orionmagazine.org for a discount rate of \$4/issue)

Course Schedule

The schedule is subject to change with fair notice (as emailed from the instructor and announced in class at least one week ahead).

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines

0	Wed 8/19	Class Canceled to Due Wildfires
		Unit 1: Think Like a Forest: Ecology & Conservation
1	Mon 8/24	Welcome to the Course Review Syllabus in Class
1	Wed 8/26	Thinking Like a Mountain Reading Due: Eli Clare, “Clearcut: Explaining the Distance” Discussion Post Due: Clare
2	Mon 8/31	Narrative, Ecology, and Environmental Activism Reading Due: Paul Chadwick, <i>Concrete: Think Like a Mountain</i> (p. 1-96: Issues 1-4)
2	Wed 9/2	Narrative, Ecology and Environmental Activism Reading Due: Paul Chadwick, <i>Concrete: Think Like a Mountain</i> (p. 97 – 144: Issues 5-6) Reader Report Due: Chadwick
3	Mon 9/7	Campus Closed
3	Wed 9/9	Reflections from Logging Country Reading Due: Eli Clare, “Clearcut: Brutes and Bumper Stickers” & “Clearcut: End of the Line” Reader Report Due: Clare, “Clearcut” Essays
4	Mon 9/14	Putting it All Together Assignment Due: Rough Draft of Ecology and Culture Essay In-Class Activity: Peer-Review Ecology and Culture Essay
		Unit 2: Cultures of U.S. Agriculture
4	Wed 9/16	Food and Culture Reading Due: Michael Pollan, <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i> (p. 15-31) Discussion Post Due: Pollan
5	Mon 9/21	Food and Culture Reading Due: Michael Pollan, <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i> (p. 32-84)
5	Wed 9/23	Food and Culture Reading Due: Michael Pollan, <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i> (p. 85-92, 95-99, 109-119) Reader Report Due: Pollan

6	Mon 9/28	Industrial Agriculture and More-Than-Human Ecologies Asynchronous Viewing Activity: Watch <i>Queen of the Sun</i> (2011) on Kanopy & Complete Viewing Guide (Due by 11:59PM)
6	Wed 9/30	Pesticides and U.S. Society Reading Due: Rachel Carson, “Silent Spring I” from <i>The New Yorker</i> (selections) Discussion Post Due: Carson
7	Mon 10/5	Pesticides and U.S. Society Reading Due: Sara Wald, “Elixirs of Death” from <i>The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming Since the Dust Bowl</i> (2016) Reader Report Due: Carson & Wald
7	Wed 10/7	This Place is Strange: Pesticides and Activism in <i>Heroes and Saints</i> Reading Due: Cherrie Moraga, <i>Heroes and Saints</i> (p. 90-102) Discussion Post Due: Moraga
8	Mon 10/12	This Place is Strange: Pesticides and Activism in <i>Heroes and Saints</i> Reading Due: Cherrie Moraga, <i>Heroes and Saints</i> (p. 102-132)
8	Wed 10/14	This Place is Strange: Pesticides and Activism in <i>Heroes and Saints</i> Reading Due: Cherrie Moraga, <i>Heroes and Saints</i> (p. 132-149) Reader Report Due: Moraga
9	Mon 10/19	Putting it All Together In-Class Viewing: SJSU Panel Presentation “Water, Pesticides, and Environmental Justice” Assignment Due: Water, Agroindustry, and Environmental Justice Reflection Essay
		Unit 3: Living with Extreme Weather
9	Wed 10/21	Climate Change and Environmental Justice (Asynchronous Class Day) Reading Due: Philippe Squarzoni, <i>Climate Changed: A Personal Journey Through the Science</i> (p. 83-92, 104-116, 390-401) Viewing Due: Spike Lee, <i>When the Levees Broke</i> (watch 15:00 – 1:30:00) Assignment Due: <i>When the Levees Broke</i> Viewing Guide with Reflection Qs on Squarzoni [Counts toward Reader Report Grade]
10	Mon 10/26	Race, Equity, and Extreme Weather Reading Due: Natasha Trethewey, <i>Beyond Katrina: a Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast</i> (p. 1-54) Discussion Post Due: Trethewey
10	Wed 10/28	Race, Equity, and Extreme Weather Reading Due: Natasha Trethewey, <i>Beyond Katrina: a Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast</i> (p. 55-81)

		In-Class Viewing: Spike Lee (Dir.), <i>When the Levees Broke</i> (watch 1:39:00 – 2:00:00)
11	Mon 11/2	Race, Equity, and Extreme Weather Reading Due: Natasha Trethewey, <i>Beyond Katrina: a Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast</i> (finish) Reader Report Due: Trethewey
11	Wed 11/4	The “New” Nature Writing Reading Due: Anya Groner, “The Solitary Garden,” Thomas Linzey, “Filling the Democracy Gap” & David Gessner, “Storm Diary” from <i>Orion Magazine</i> (Autumn 2019 Issue) In-Class Activity: Pick selections from Orion for Mon 11/9 Discussion Post Due: <i>Orion</i>
		Unit 4: Writing the Environment in a Changing World
12	Mon 11/9	The “New” Nature Writing Reading Due: Selections from <i>Orion Magazine</i> (Autumn 2019 Issue) Discussion Post Due: Orion
12	Wed 11/11	No Class Meeting for Veteran’s Day Assignment Due on Thurs 11/12: Post Writing Nature Topic to Canvas Discussion Board
13	Mon 11/16	Fables of the Nonhuman Reading Due: Shaun Tan, <i>Tales from the Inner City</i> (p. 11-105) Discussion Post Due: Tan
13	Wed 11/18	Fables of the Nonhuman Reading Due: Shaun Tan, <i>Tales from the Inner City</i> (p. 106- End, Optional Chapters: “Hippopotamus,” “Tiger,” “Lungfish,” & “Fox”) Reader Report Due: Tan
14	Mon 11/23	What Did You Find? Assignment Due: Research Report for Creative Final In-Class Activity: Final Project Check-ins
14	Wed 11/25	No Class: Campus Closed for Thanksgiving
15	Mon 11/30	Nature in a Changing World In-Class Activity: TBD (No Reading Due, work on your Creative Final)
15	Wed 12/2	Workshop Day Assignment Due: Rough Draft of Creative Final

16	Mon 12/7	Putting it All Together Synthesis & Feedback Day
Final Exam	Wed 12/9	Final Presentation Symposium Research Presentations and Write-ups due to Canvas
Final Exam	Fri 12/11	Final Presentation Symposium Peer comments due to Canvas by 12:00PM (Noon)