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ENGL 741-001  
Tue 7-10 p.m.  
Colson G10

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## Green Approaches to Modern American Poetry

Modern American poetry in many ways seems to resist an ecocritical approach. At first blush, this body of writing appears too androcentric, obsessed as it is with the urban, the mechanic, the crafted, and the general state of human culture. As such, ecocritics have, until very recently, tended to overlook these texts, just as scholars of modern poetry have largely ignored the possibilities of environmental criticism. And yet, in its fascination with and anxiety about the shape of modernity, this poetry revisits and refigures what “nature” might mean and how it becomes manifest in the modern American context.

We will investigate a variety of “green” approaches in order to explore the environmental investments in a diverse body of poetic texts from poets including Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, H.D., and Langston Hughes. We will also devote some time to honing your use of poetic terms in literary analysis.

### **Methods**

This is a sandbox course. Rather than forwarding a specific thesis, we will together populate our sandbox with a series of key words for discussion. Our poetic and theoretical readings then engage with those key words, potentially troubling their definitions and boundaries. The goal is for you to intellectually play with the materials and tools to see what you can create (or destroy!).

### **Texts**

Sandburg, Carl. *Chicago Poems*, UCP; Section I and V of *Windy City* (eCampus)  
Williams, William Carlos. *Selected Poems*; *Paterson*. Norton.  
H.D. *Selected Poems*. Norton.  
Moore, Marianne. *Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*. Penguin.  
Hughes, Langston. *Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Norton.  
Stevens, Wallace. *Collected Poems*. Random House.

### Course Assignments

Course work includes participation, reading responses, one in-class presentation, and a 20-25 page final paper.

**Participation** Lively, thoughtful conversation is expected in every class. This means you must be present in every class. In each session, I expect you to make at least three kinds of contributions: Comment, Question, Build. A comment is any observation about our text. A question is an opening into deeper analysis (i.e., not a “flat” question about the definition of a word, etc.). A build is when you acknowledge another classmate’s input and expand upon it or use it as a jumping-off point for a new line of inquiry. It’s possible to make all three moves in a single comment.

**Reading Responses** You will be assigned a group letter for the semester. As indicated on the schedule, on your group’s day, you will submit a 2-page reading response to any text for the day. This informal writing project is a space to think through and tease out any area of interest that peaked your curiosity during your reading for the week. These responses are considered part of your participation grade. They are assessed on a check, check-plus, check-double-plus scale. A history of exceptional responses will boost your overall participation score.

Reading responses are due by 8 a.m. the day of class. Email your response to me as a .doc or .docx or drop off a copy in my mailbox.

**In-Class Presentation** You will give a ten-minute presentation on the treatment of any keyword in any text of your choosing that we have covered during the first half of the semester. The presentation will include a PowerPoint or Prezi as well as a full, written text of the talk. See the assignment prompt for more details.

**Final Paper** You will compose a 20-25 page final project on a topic of your choosing related to the course. In anticipation of the final paper, you will submit a 5-source annotated bibliography and working thesis statement. See assignment prompt for more details.

**Grade Breakdown** Participation 30 Presentation 30 Final Project 40

### Class Policies and Procedures

**Late Work** I do not accept late work and I do not grant extensions. All work is due at the time noted in the assignment prompt. Late work receives a zero.

**Panic Card** Every student has two panic cards for the semester. Each panic card gains you an extra 24 hours to submit your work, no questions asked. For each panic card not used, you will receive a half-grade extra credit bump in your final reading response or participation grade, whichever is most to your benefit. The exception is the in-class presentation which must be given on the day assigned. Plan accordingly.

**Academic Integrity** The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

**eCampus** eCampus will serve as my primary way of communicating with you throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to check eCampus every day.

**Accountability Partners** On the first day of class, you will be assigned an accountability partner. Make sure you have a reliable way of contacting your A.P. If you have a question about the syllabus or a project, the first person you will contact is your A.P. Most questions can be solved this way. Do not contact me until you've spoken with your A.P. first.

**Inclusivity** The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

**Email** I can be easily reached via email. I check my email between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please remember that emails are both letters and professional communications. I do not reply to improperly formatted emails. Craft your prose accordingly. I will be using your Mix accounts. It is your responsibility to check your email daily.

**Emergencies** Emergencies can arise during the semester. Your wellness and safety is my top priority. I am happy to help you access WU resources as needed. Interns of course work, if you would like me to consider

an extension due to an extreme emergency (serious illness, etc.), be prepared to provide me with paperwork. We will then meet and create a reasonable completion schedule together.

**Work Schedule.** I reserve the right to amend this schedule and syllabus. If I do so, I will inform you of it ahead of time. Lists of specific readings are available on eCampus.

## Schedule

**1/13** Welcome; To See a Man about a Dog; How to Play in a Sandbox

**A 1/20** The Trouble with Wilderness; Poetry workshop

**B 1/27** Carl Sandburg and Urban Ecocriticism

**C 2/3** William Carlos Williams and Material Feminism

**D 2/10** *Paterson*, Pastoral, Toxicity

**E 2/17** H D, Landscape and Topography

**F 2/24** H D, Ecofeminism Check-in

**3/3** Gal Presentations

**A 3/10** Marianne Moore and Animal Studies

**B 3/17** *An Octopus*

Spring break!

**C 3/31** Langston Hughes, Race and Environment

**D 4/7** Case Study: Wallace Stevens

**E 4/14** Wallace Stevens; Beginning the Remix

**F 4/21** The Remix

**4/28** Final Paper Lab

*Final Papers due 5/1. Have a beautiful summer!*

## Group Assignments

**A** Arnold, Wilson; **B** Clifford, Milton

**C** Coole, Minroe; **D** Liebson-Morse, Cormack

**E** DeShong, Leo; **F** Horrocks, Hbag