

English 2315: Introduction to Literary Study
OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVES: NATURE AND PASTORAL LITERATURE



June 2018
SMU-in-Taos

Professor: Tim Rosendale
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Required Texts

Theocritus, *Idylls*
Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil
Shakespeare, *As You Like It*
Thoreau, *Walden*
Emerson, "Society and Solitude," and excerpts from *Nature*
Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*
Selected poems by Spenser, Marlowe, Raleigh, Jonson, Marvell, Milton, Blake,
Wordsworth, and others

Course Description

Taos is not just an outside place; it is an outside *space* that can actually help us think more clearly about important things. Literary authors have recognized the value of getting outside for a long time, and have developed important ways of thinking and writing about it. The pastoral mode (and its cousins the georgic, the idyll, the eclogue, and nature writing in general) is about, so to speak, the outside perspective.

This imaginary space, outside of civilization and the bustle of the present, makes a lot of things possible for writers: nostalgia for something simpler, whether an idyllic past or a natural landscape; meditations on the individual's relationship to society; critique of modern (especially urban) civilization in its social or political or economic dimension; longing for a different, non-alienated relationship with God (Eden, Psalm 23, Christ as the Good Shepherd); a prophetic "voice crying in the wilderness;" various dynamics of retreat, refuge, and return; or lament for a human history, whether individual or collective, that is imagined in terms of decline and decay.

This course will present a very selective history of pastoral poetry, prose, and drama. We'll begin with its classical origins, proceed through the Renaissance to the Romantic period in England, then survey some of its more recent uses by British and American authors like Thoreau, Emerson, Conrad, Dillard, and Edward Abbey. How, we will ask, can the outside perspective of pastoral help us to better understand the lives and values of both the world and ourselves?

University Curriculum: CA, CA2, W; petitionable for OC
Required course for the English major and minor

Course Policy

1. *Attendance.* Regular attendance and participation are essential in this course; you've got to be mentally as well as physically present. Poor attendance (i.e., more than one absence; I don't bother with excused and unexcused absences, so everybody gets one freebie) and/or participation will directly affect your course grade—not to mention making you bored and generally useless. More than three absences will qualify you for an involuntary administrative drop. Chronic unexcused tardiness will be treated as absence; so will a grade of F on a reading quiz or any other clear evidence of unpreparedness; so will ringing cellphones, which will also be thrown out the window (or off a cliff).
2. *Participation and preparation.* This course is primarily a seminar, not a lecture course; its success depends on how much and how well each individual participates. In order for everyone to get as much as possible from the class, everyone is expected to come to class thoroughly prepared to discuss the works assigned for the day. This means carefully reading the material (for more than just plot!), giving it serious and substantial thought, and having something interesting and thoughtful to say about it no matter which direction the discussion takes; you should also come to class with specific questions and issues you'd like to discuss. If everyone is clearly doing this, we'll all have a good and profitable time; if anyone isn't, more draconian enforcement measures will be instituted (don't ask what—it's too gruesome).
3. *Deadlines.* All work—readings and assignments—is due on the date under which it appears on the syllabus. For example, the assigned selections from Theocritus and Virgil must be carefully read, and a 1-page essay written, by our second meeting. Late papers lose a full grade per calendar day; individual extensions are given only rarely, and only under circumstances that are both catastrophic and unforeseeable.
4. *Written work.* All written work is expected to be original and freshly written by you for this course; anything else constitutes academic dishonesty and will be mercilessly prosecuted. All handed-in assignments must be neat and correct and readable, typed or word-processed, in a reasonable font and size, and turned in as hard copy.
5. *Presentations.* You'll be signing up for a short presentation. These account for 10% of your final grade—that is, enough to change it significantly—and are worth taking seriously and investing real work into. I'll certainly be grading them seriously, based on the quality of their content, organization, and presentation.
6. *Other Requirements.* In addition to reading and participation, everyone is required to write eight short (1-page) papers. These should be about something specific in that day's reading that you found interesting and worth thinking more carefully about.
7. *Email.* I may communicate with you at any time via your SMU email account, and receiving emails I send you is your responsibility. Therefore, you are required to either check this account frequently, or set it up to forward into the account you do use.

8. *Grading.* The tentative grade breakdown is as follows:

Short essays, total	40%
Final Exam	30%
Presentation	10%
Attendance, participation, quizzes, etc.	20%
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	100%



Schedule of Assignments

- Meeting #
- 1 – Introduction; What is pastoral?
Theocritus, selections from the *Idylls*
Virgil, selections from the *Eclogues*
 - 2 – Spenser, *The Shepherd's Calendar*
Shakespeare, *As You Like It* Act 1
 - 3 – *As You Like It* Acts 2-5
 - 4 – Selected poems by Marlowe, Raleigh, Donne, Jonson, Herrick, Marvell,
Milton, Blake, Wordsworth
 - 5 – Thoreau, *Walden*
Emerson, “Society and Solitude,” and excerpts from *Nature*
Writing workshop and conferences
 - 6 – Thoreau, *Walden*
Essay #1 due
 - 7 – Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
 - 8 – Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
 - 9 – Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*
 - 10 – selected short poems from the 19th and 20th centuries
Essay #2 due
Review and Reflection
 - 11 – **Final Exam**



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ENGLISH 2315

Introduction to Literary Study



Outside Perspectives: Nature and Pastoral Literature



What does it mean to take an “outside perspective” on one’s civilization and culture? One thing it often means is actually *going outside*. This course will be a selective survey of nature and pastoral literature, and a consideration of its reflective and critical potential, from its classical origins to its revival in England’s Renaissance and Romantic periods to its American incarnations in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Authors covered will likely include Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Thoreau, Emerson, Conrad, Dillard, and Abbey.



UC: CA, CA2, W

(also fulfills a requirement for the English major and minor)

Contact Prof. Rosendale at trosenda@smu.edu for further information.