Ecohorror & Environmental Literature

Dr. Joshua Myers 13-14, Spring 2024

Email: jmyers3@bsu.edu M/W/F 2-2:50 p.m.

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**Office Hours:** M 10-1, W 10-1, TH 10-12, or please schedule a specific appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ecohorror and Environmental Literature invites students to explore the fascinating overlap between science and culture by taking an interdisciplinary approach to storytelling. In a world beset by increased natural disasters – storms, droughts, wildfires, floods – discussions and debates about the causes and consequences of environmental issues frequently form the basis for narratives of adventure and horror.

More than just scary stories, such tales reflect how monsters and madness often indicate deep-seeded human anxieties and emotions about important environmental issues. Toxic terrors of pollution, mythic mushrooms, evolutionary evils; there seems to be no limits to the interplay between nature and the human imagination.

Looking at these thrills and chills of fictional stories, alongside the non-fiction of science and nature writing, students will discover how human behavior has influenced, and been influenced by, the intricacies of place and nature. In this way, students will address how society can use written communication to prevent humans from being the next endangered species.

LEARNING OUTCOMES & GOALS

* Learn about the growing field of Environmental Humanities and its many worldly applications.
* Enhance students’ critical thinking abilities through careful reading and thoughtful analysis.
* Recognize the interdisciplinary nature of reading and research in order to produce well-reasoned and thorough scholarship.
* Situate the genre of horror, and its many subgenres, in appropriate historical and cultural contexts to better understand horror as a mode of storytelling and artistic production.
* Engage in discourses about environment, nature, and the written expression of such matters.

REQUIRED TEXTS & SUPPLIES

* Occasional short readings will be provided to students by the instructor.
* Notebook and a writing implement (pencil, pen, etc.)
* The following books, provided by the Indiana Academy:
  + *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold
  + *Carnivorous Nights* by Margaret Mittelbach
  + *Wildwood: Tales of Terror & Transformation from the Forest* edited by William P. Simmons
  + *Picnic at Hanging Rock* by Joan Lindsay
  + *Burnt Offerings* by Robert Marasco
  + *The Beauty* by Aliya Whiteley

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

In-Class Activities and Reading Quizzes 10%

(several – agglomerate score)

Short response/reflection papers 10%

(1-page papers, completed in-class, about selected class readings)

Participation 15%

(graded monthly, see next page for specifics)

Horror Report 20%

(Individualized report on a work of ecohorror {book, film, song, video game, etc.}

Creative Project (To be determined as a class) 20%

Final Project and Presentation (To be determined as a class) 25%

**Grade Scale:** A (95-100%); A – (90-94%); B+ (87-89%); B (83-86%); B – (80-82%); C+ (77-79%); C (73-76%); C – (70-72%); D (69% and below)

**Assignment sheets with specific graded instructions and requirements for each project will be made available at the appropriate time during the semester. Since this is a newly developed course that I just designed, we will determine together what shape and form the two large projects (the creative and final projects) will take. Ultimately, though, you will have plenty of time to complete all assignments and plenty of opportunity to receive assistance from me. Thus, there are no re-writes/revisions of an assignment *after* the grade for that assignment is returned to you – no exceptions! You can always talk to me about your individual work and progress throughout the semester, so please don’t hesitate to reach out. However, if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the assignment then you must reach out BEFORE you submit the project for a final grade (not after).**

EXTENSIONS & LATE WORK

**I DO NOT GRANT INDIVIDUAL EXTENSIONS**

* **Everyone, including me**, must complete their work while also balancing their many other responsibilities.
* **IF** I extend a deadline, I will make that extension available to the entire class.
* **Getting sick or missing class just when something is due is NOT a valid excuse for being unable to submit an assignment that you’ve had weeks to complete.**
* **While I don’t grant extensions, I will always except late work with an accompanying loss of points. The amount of missed points ultimately depends on the circumstances AND how late the assignment is. In those situations, I will give the student a specific timetable via email.**
* The only exceptions to any aspects of the above policy are cases that have been appropriately documented with the Academy (for example, a family emergency or a severe illness of which the administration has been made aware).

PARTICIPATION

In an attempt to be considerate of all personalities – those who feel comfortable talking and those who do not – the following is how I will grade your monthly participation:

* **If you actively participate by contributing to discussion (i.e. you talk):** then you are NOT required to take notes when I tell the class to write something down (though, certainly, I *strongly* recommend and encourage that you always take notes).
* **If you do not actively contribute to discussion (i.e. you are quiet/shy/not a talker**): then you ARE required to take extensive notes, especially when I tell the class to write something down. ALSO: to compensate for your not talking, you should be visibly attentive with your body language to show that you are actively paying attention (nodding your head, smiling, generally showing that you are aware of what is happening in class).

**ANY of the following behaviors will result in a loss of participation points for EVERY student (no matter which group, talker or non-talker, that you fall into):**

* Unauthorized use of electronic devices, laptops, or phones. ESPECIALLY blatant phone usage during class, such as texting when you are supposed to be listening.
* Sleeping/nodding off /laying with your head down, etc.
* Blatantly consistent doodling/drawing
  + (Most people like drawing on their notebooks, me too! So, I get it! However, please don’t continue to blatantly be doodling when I am speaking directly to you or when I am standing right next to you – it’s rude to be so visibly disengaged or inconsiderate of another person’s presence).
* General refusal to participate (not taking notes, not working with groupmates, etc.)
* Disrespectful attitudes or behavioral problems (note: any such instances will also be documented with Ms. Schultz).
* More than 2 **un**excused absences during the month. If you’re not in class, you cannot participate.

**Each time you engage in any of the above behaviors, you lose ten points from your monthly participation grade.**

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

* **texting once = – 10**
* **sleeping once = – 10**
* **one day when you refused to stop doodling while I was speaking to you = – 10**
* **3 unexcused absences (1 unexcused absence more than 2) = -10**

**EQUALS: a monthly participation grade of a 60/100.**

ATTENDANCE

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected and required of all students. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. If you arrive to class more than 5 minutes after the appointed time, you will be marked tardy.

It is the policy of the Indiana Academy that any absence from class is unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, and extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The decision as to whether an absence is excused is not determined by the instructor. Although all absences, both excused and unexcused, are tracked within the Office of Academic Affairs, professors of each class are free to use discretion with a student’s first three unexcused absences. Four or more unexcused absences in any particular class a student takes will lead to academic and residential consequences to be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Residential Life that may include detention, residential groundings, parent/principal conference, among others.

* If the absence has been communicated to the instructor and/or documented, then a make-up assignment will be given.
  + That make-up assignment will be do no later than one week from the date of when it is assigned. Failure to submit the make-up assignment within the one-week deadline will result in a zero on the assignment.
  + If a student cannot communicate with the instructor before the absence, then they must speak to the instructor during the next class they return to and arrange a make-up. Failure to communicate with the instructor upon returning to class means that no make-up assignment will be permitted.
* Again: as stated in the grading policy, **there are no re-writes/revisions of an assignment *after* the grade for that assignment is returned to you – no exceptions!**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY:

I have found that the use of laptops in the classroom environment is often more distracting than productive, so computers are generallynot permitted unless I have given permission during that class (for instance, in a writing workshop or when we are working on a specific project). Cell phones are not permitted – you can text/call/browse the internet on your own time outside of class. Violation of this policy will result in a loss of participation points, as described earlier.

E-MAIL

--- I check my e-mail regularly and often — so should you.

--- My response may not be instantaneous since, like you, I have a life outside of this classroom, including other classes. I will always reply as soon as possible, so please be patient.

--- Please feel free to e-mail me anytime, but if you e-mail me after 6 p.m. you probably will not get a response until the next morning.

--- **Considering all of the above, you will ALWAYS get a response within 24 hours. If a full 24 hours go by, and you do not receive an emailed reply from me, then you should resend your e-mail because I did not receive it.**

THUS, please be aware that email mishaps are not acceptable excuses for missed work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are responsible for the integrity of your work, and you must produce work that is

academically honest. This means that all your coursework must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work can have serious consequences. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: submitting someone else’s paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing; and, attempting to take credit for someone else’s (or an AI’s) words or ideas without properly citing them. If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, please contact me for assistance. Also, please refer to the student handbook for additional information, especially the quoted portions below:

* *Plagiarism: representing as one’s own work any material obtained on the Internet (such as term papers, articles, etc.). When Internet sources are used in student work, the author, publisher and website must be identified. (See policy on Academic Dishonesty in the student handbook.)*
* *Students are prohibited from using any electronic device to capture, record, and/or transmit test, quiz, exam, or other class information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty and students are prohibited from using electronic devices to receive such information.*
* *Plagiarism or violations of procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of an assignment, such as: a. Submitting an assignment purporting to be one’s original work, which has been wholly or partially created by another person; b. Presenting as one’s own work ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources; c. Submitting as new work, without the faculty member’s prior consent or knowledge, one’s own work which has been previously presented for another class elsewhere; d. Knowingly permitting one’s work to be submitted by another person as if it were the submitter’s original work; e. Cooperation with another person in academic dishonesty, either directly or indirectly, as an intermediary agent or broker; f. Knowingly destroying or altering another’s work, whether in written or digital form, computer files, artwork, or other format; g. Aiding, abetting, or attempting to commit an act or action that constitutes academic dishonesty.*

AI POLICY:  
 From the Humanities Division of the Academy (Languages, History, English)

* “The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity**. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.”**
* **On that note, here is my AI policy for this class: it is not permitted.**
  + To limit your temptation to use AI, much of our work will be handwritten and composed gradually during classes. These new technologies, alas, seem to require that teachers monitor student work more to have any hope of assessing their learning.

RESPECTFUL EXPRESSION

* Opinions, discussions, and different interpretations are the bedrock of academic study; however, **please participate in a manner that respects the viewpoints of everyone in the class.** I.e., no dismissiveness, name-calling, or general meanness.
* **Please exercise discretion in what you share in this class**, both in class discussions and in your writing. Stories need to have conflict, but language, by its very nature, can be misunderstood. **Instructors are responsible for reporting any evidence of a student’s possible intent to harm themselves or to harm others**. In creative writing, especially, certain topics can sometimes be tricky to navigate, so **please reach out to me if you ever have any doubts, concerns, or questions about what you want to express.**
* **Please recognize that all feedback you receive from me in this class, including graded comments, is constructive**. I genuinely want to assist your academic progress and professional growth by helping you become better writers and stronger critical thinkers! However, this means that I must hold you accountable to both course requirements and the standards of higher education. Just like learning an instrument, playing a sport, or any other life achievement, you cannot improve unless you confront your mistakes and learn how to fix them.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found here.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at **765-285-5293** or **dsd@bsu.edu.**

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