

Recalling the Wild (En 101)

Professor: Jocelyn Holland jholland@caltech.edu

Dabney 301a

Winter 21 / T + Th, 10:30 – 12:00

Office hour Tuesday 2 – 3 p.m.

(or any time during the week by appointment)

This is a new course, designed to investigate ideas about wilderness and “the wild” as they connect to our own sense of humanity. I have structured it as a survey in three parts, where the concept of the wild is considered first of all in terms of nature and the environment, then in terms of animals, and finally with reference to the human. With just one or two exceptions, we will be focusing our discussions on a time period (the nineteenth century through the present) when increasing population rise, exploration, and industrialization seem to push questions of the wild to the margins of human society and culture. Part of the project of the course is for us to determine, to what degree that might be true, and to what degree notions of wildness are transformed and reintegrated into the human condition in different ways. At the end of the quarter we will consider the “final frontier” with a short reflection on the wild alien.

Note: This is a preliminary syllabus and slight changes may occur before the first week of the quarter, but there will not be an increase in the workload. All readings will be available as pdfs on Canvas.

January 4 Intro: what it means to be wild

Part 1: Wild Nature

January 6 Grimms' Fairy Tales (selections – the uncensored versions!)

January 11 Henry David Thoreau, *Canoeing in the Wilderness* (selections)

January 13 Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (selections)

January 18 Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (selections)

January 20 J. R. R. Tolkien, chapters on Mirkwood from *The Hobbit*

Part 2: Wild Animals

January 25 *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

January 27 *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

Feb 1 *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

Feb 3 Helen McDonald, “H is for Hawk” (selections)

Feb 8 *The Call of the Wild*

Feb 10 *The Call of the Wild*

Feb 15 *The Call of the Wild*

Part 3: The Wild Human

Feb 17 An early example: Tacitus on Germanic tribes

Feb 22 Jean-Jacques Rousseau on man in the State of Nature

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| Feb 24 | Benjamin Franklin: "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America"; Charles Dickens, "The Noble Savage" |
| March 1 | The wild human in fiction (1): <i>The Jungle Book</i> (excerpt) |
| March 3 | The wild human in fiction (2): <i>Tarzan of the Apes</i> (excerpt) |
| | Epilogue: Space, The Final Frontier (Or: The Wild Alien) |
| March 8 | From Star Trek to Avatar |
| March 10 | Avatar |
| March 15 | Review |

Course requirements:

- In-class (or Zoom) attendance: 15%
- Perusall comments: 15%
- Homework assignment x 2 = 40%
- Final paper = 30%