

Recalling the Wild (En 101)

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Dabney 301a

Office hours to be announced

This course is intended as a complement -- but never a replacement! -- to wilderness exploration with a backpack and a comfortable pair of hiking boots. You can think of it as a quarter-long trek that circles around the topics of wilderness and wildness as seen through the lens of distinct historic and cultural moments of the past two centuries.

We will be focusing our discussions on a time period when population increases and rapid industrialization might seem to make human encounters with the wild obsolete. I would like for us to investigate how ideas about "natural" and "animal" wildness are transformed and reintegrated into the human condition in different ways from the nineteenth century onward. To do this, we will be looking at literary descriptions of both realistic and magical wildernesses, the phenomenon of feral children or "wild humans," and the question of what it means to tame the wild. We'll also look at tales of humans who strive -- sometimes successfully, but often not -- to co-exist with the wilderness. You will have a chance to think and write creatively and analytically about the wild, with plenty of feedback along the way.

Note:

- This is a preliminary syllabus and slight changes may occur before the first week of the quarter. Any changes will not result in an increase in the workload.
- All readings will be available as pdfs on Canvas. If you would like to receive copies of these readings before the Canvas website becomes available, just let me know.
- Course requirements include in-class discussion, collaborative notes on the readings, two short writing assignments, and a final project that can be done individually or in a group.

- January 5 Introduction
- January 10 Wilderness and Wasteland (excerpt from Vittoria di Palma, *Wasteland*)

Fairy-tale wilderness

- January 12 The forest of Grimms' fairy tales (uncensored versions)
- January 17 Romantic Wilderness: Blond Eckbert, Caspar David Friederich

Wild humans / taming the wild

- January 19 "Wild Child" by T. C. Boyle
- January 24 "Wild Child" by T. C. Boyle
- January 26 Karen Russell, "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves"
- January 31 T. H. White, *Gosling* (excerpt)
- February 2 Helen MacDonald, "H is for Hawk" (excerpt)

Living with wilderness

- February 4 Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain* (excerpt)
- February 7 Robert MacFarlane, "Holloway"
- February 9 Gary Snyder, "Etiquette of Freedom" (excerpt)
- February 14 Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (excerpt)

Wilderness at the edge of life

- February 16 Barry Lopez: *Arctic Dreams* (excerpt)
- February 21 Pierre Berton: *The Arctic Grail* (excerpt)
- February 23 Andrew Krivak, *The Bear*
- February 28 Andrew Krivak, *The Bear*
- March 2 Andrew Krivak, *The Bear*
- March 7 Wilderness project presentations
- March 9 Wilderness project presentations & review

Assignments / grading:
The due dates of the assignments will be on the final copy of the syllabus.

We will likely use a contract grading model that spells out ahead of time what the expectations will be for various course grades. More details about this during our first meeting.