

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE
ENGLISH 383.01 T18

TOPIC IN LITERATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
EXTINCTION LITERATURE

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Classes: Tu/Th 2:00 to 3:15
ICT 114
Office hours: Thursdays 3:30 to 4:30

Course Description:

James MacKinnon writes that if you survey the scientific literature on extinctions and extirpations of species worldwide you cannot evade the conclusion that “Nature as we know it today is a fraction of what it was, but what might that fraction be? No single study has made the calculation, but an accumulation of research on the decline of species after species, of living system after living system, does point toward a figure. We live in a 10 Percent World” (38). Moreover, forty percent of species have been lost over the past fifty years alone. In this course we will read and discuss literary works pertaining to the urgent issue of species extinctions – mammals, birds, fish, insects, humans. In addition to the issue of extinction as a news story or scientific fact, what does it *feel like* for humans and other animals alike to live in a ten percent world? Does the life of an individual animal or those of a whole species matter? Why, or why not? To what extent do other-than-human animals live conscious and emotional lives? Should we accord some animals such as primates, whales and dolphins personhood or subjectivity? Can literature play a role in enhancing our awareness of non-human lives in the same way that it gives us insights into the lives of human characters? What are some of the challenges in writing from the point of view of another species, and how have writers approached this problem? What can one person and/or groups or communities of people do to help a species survive or even return in some abundance? What might a multi-species community of subjects be like? In this course students will read some of the literature of extinction, engage with the challenges of “thinking extinction,” and consider the role that novels, literary nonfiction and poetry can play in addressing the serious problems of living in the period of the sixth extinction of life on earth.

Required Books:

J.B. MacKinnon, *The Once and Future World: Nature As It Was, As It Is, As It Could Be*

Thom Van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*

Sid Marty, *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek*

Sue Goyette, *Ocean*

Freeman House, *Totem Salmon: Life Lessons from Another Species*

Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*

Students must also possess a grammar, punctuation and style manual. If you do not already own one, there are many from which to choose in the English literature textbook section (and in other locations) at the U of Calgary Bookstore. You need not choose an expensive one: for instance, the small, coil-bound *Broadview* guide is cheap, locally produced and a perfectly decent choice. Some may prefer a manual that includes short exercises in order to consolidate your knowledge of certain punctuation marks or points of grammar. Just make sure the one you choose has a section on MLA Style (the Modern Language Association Style of citations). I will let you choose the one that appeals to you the most because then you'll use it more often. Note that if you are not submitting error-free, professional quality writing, you may well find your marks are at least one, two or more letter grades lower than you would like. Buy a manual that you like: you can use it in all of your courses, the workplace and forever after. Amortized over your lifetime, it will cost you pennies per year. Literacy is not just important in an English course.

It almost goes without saying that all other assigned materials such as articles, audio clips, video, film, classroom activities, etc. are also required course materials.

Assignment Portfolio and Skills to be Learned During the Course:

Class participation (due weekly)	10%
Test (week 8)	15%
End-of-term essay (1000 - 1250 words; week 13)	15%
Inquiry-based project:	
Extinction project proposal (due Tuesday of week 3)	10%
and accompanying annotated bibliography (due week 4)	10%
Essay (500 - 750 words; due week 6)	15%
Written inquiry-based extinction project (2500+ words; due week 12)	25%
TOTAL	100%

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Students must complete and submit in a timely fashion all of the assignments in order to be eligible for a passing grade for this course. Failure to complete them will

result in an automatic failure of the course (F).

There will NOT be a registrar-scheduled examination in this course.

Late penalties: Late penalties will be deducted for late assignments. Late penalties can and sometimes do result in a failing grade on an assignment so students will want to start assignments well in advance of the due date. **The late penalty for written work is one mark per day late. That is, if your assignment merits a 20/25 (80%) but comes in two days late, the mark will drop two marks to 18/25 (76%) in order to ensure a level playing field for everyone in the course.**

ALWAYS BRING THE TEXT(S) OF THE WEEK WITH YOU TO CLASS unless instructed to do otherwise by the professor! If you aren't bringing to class the book or other text(s) we are studying in any particular week, then you are mistaking the methodologies and purposes of studying literature. That is, "just getting the general drift" of a book or lecture is far from sufficient to pass a literature course: all literature courses – indeed all courses – begin from a close and detailed reading of the texts and materials at hand.

Class participation (10%) is premised upon regular, committed class attendance and includes completing the assigned readings in advance and coming to class prepared, avidly participating in all class and group discussions and in-class exercises and activities, demonstrating respectful and open intellectual engagement with one's peers and professor. Students are also encouraged to assist one another with their extinction projects. Assistance may range from passing on ideas or suggestions for approaches, methodology, articles or books, technical aid regarding oral presentations, etc. The creative possibilities for interacting with the material and with one another are endless.

Moreover, students are encouraged to supply an acknowledgements (or credits) page listing the names of anyone who contributed to the success of their project.

An important part of intellectual work is being able to speak about it with others. Students will be expected to assume the role of active participants in the construction and dissemination of knowledge rather than merely passive consumers of it. This includes participation in discussion and in credit-free assignments and activities carried out in class.

Unless required to do so by an assigned classroom learning activity, surfing the web and/or checking email or social media during class is rude behaviour, strictly forbidden, and will seriously detract from your class participation.

Given that we are living in what has been called "the sixth extinction" of life on the planet earth, we have quite a lot to talk about and work on! Intermittent attendance (absences from class) will detract heavily from your participation grade. Think of the course and the classes not as a marks factory but as a community or team of curious, inquiring researchers.

Technology in the Classroom

Recent studies have shown that handwritten class notes are markedly superior both in terms of acquiring a more thorough understanding of course material and retention of that material in one's memory. The instructor reserves the right to outlaw the use of phones, tablets and computers in class.

Please do not attempt to read the assigned books on your phone! You cannot possibly ingest the quality of the language in literary texts on a screen as small as that of a phone. Just as visual arts courses examine the quality of the paint strokes in a painting or the forms in clay, literary studies are based on engagement with the language of the text. We are not studying course materials for thirteen weeks simply in order to extract "the main idea," the "theme" or "the general drift" of a text!

Along similar lines, I highly recommend that you annotate and underline the primary course texts (preferably in paper rather than ebook format). Don't try to preserve pristine copies of your texts for resale (and I may or may not teach these books again in the near future so sales opportunities may be minimal). As proven in numerous studies of learning processes, reading your underlining and annotations are very efficient ways of acquiring and consolidating your knowledge of textual material.

Extinction Project

Proposal:

Students will acquire the name of a particular species in a random draw. Most of the species are local and regional species, and most are threatened or endangered (some are not). That species will be the object of your extinction project study. During the course you will become a local expert on that species: its scientific and popular names; its lifeways; its manifestations in literature; its status in terms of population health; stories about that creature; its role in its habitat / its relationships with other creatures; etc.

You may, if you wish, trade your species with someone else in the course on the draw date, but not after that date. (Hint: don't miss this class.)

A proposal of 250 – 500 words states the topic, rationale for the topic, and the approach or approaches you will use in your extinction project. I will provide a few examples of proposals in class.

Annotated bibliography: your bibliography will contain five excellent and well-chosen sources (articles, books) for information about your species. You will read and describe in your one-paragraph annotation for each source the precise ways in which that source will contribute to your knowledge of the species and to your project.

NOTE: For purposes of this assignment, you will highlight the five most potentially useful and brilliant sources you have found so far, but you must not restrict yourself to five for the whole assignment. I have chosen the number five simply to get you well into your project.

Essay (500 – 750 words). By week 6, you will have already learned quite a few things about your selected species, and we will have read *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek*, parts of which are written from the points of view of the particular bears involved in the events of the narrative. You will write a short piece as if from the point of view of an individual of your chosen species, partly as a way of exploring the challenges of writing about and more particularly from the point of view of an other-than-human animal and partly as a way of examining in more detail how Sid Marty, author of *Black Grizzly*, does it. This exercise will also allow you to get to know your species not just from the outside or from your research but by using the combination of your knowledge, your imagination and your empathy to try to view an animal as having a narratable life. This assignment will also require you to be up-to-date in your course readings and keep you on track for the successful and timely completion of your project.

There will be no extra credit assignments or opportunities to re-do and resubmit your work. That is simply impossible with current class sizes, and moreover it has been my experience that without such second measures students usually do a good job the first time they complete the assignment.

A word about genre: Please do not refer to nonfiction books as fiction. That is, do not call nonfiction books novels. You can refer to them as nonfiction, literary nonfiction, creative nonfiction, works of prose, or books, but do not refer to nonfiction as fiction because it is not fiction. Mistaking the genre of a text can very seriously skew your reading of it.

Double-sided printing is highly encouraged in order to save paper and trees.

Using factory recycled paper or even paper that has already been used on one side only is permissible and even admirable. Just draw a line diagonally through the material printed or written on the “wrong” side and make sure your pages are stapled in order.

Please DO NOT use any plastic cover sheets for your assignments. They have an annoying tendency to flap shut while one is trying to read them, and using more plastic than is absolutely necessary contributes to waste and pollution. Just a simple staple in the upper left-hand corner of the page is perfect. (Please staple your work before handing it in. I do not carry a stapler with me to and from class.)

Written assignments are due in class at the beginning of class on their respective due dates, and they must be handed to the instructor. At this point, I cannot accept any electronic submissions (which is too bad as it would save paper and trees). If you absolutely cannot hand me your work, then do not shove your professional work under my (or anyone else’s) office door. It can and does get trampled, lost, put under the wrong professor’s door, etc. Instead hand them in via the English Dept. office between 8:30 and 4:30 (the office is closed from 12:00 to 1:00) or the Essay Drop Box just outside the English Department office. NOTE: The English Office is on the 11th floor of the Social Sciences Bldg.

However you submit your work, your name and mine must be on the first page or cover page. If my name is not on the front page, the office staff cannot know into whose mailbox to place your work.

Grading System:

Course grades are based on the University of Calgary four-point Undergraduate Grading System and the standard percentage conversion chart of the Department of English.

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the 4-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events <http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse->

[english-club](#). Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact:

maboym@ucalgary.ca

Find *The English Pages* research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>,

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the students' responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at www.ucalgary.ca/access.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students' Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman's Office:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.