



FACULTY OF ARTS
Department Of English

COURSE OUTLINE

ENGL 426.01: Selected Topics in Contemporary Theory:
Animal, Vegetal, Mineral Studies

Fall 2022

Class Schedule (MW/2:00 – 3:15/SH 274/in person)

Instructor	Professor Banting
Email:	pbanting@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal); https://profiles.ucalgary.ca/pamela-banting
Office Hours:	Thursdays 2:00 to 4:00 (prearranged zoom unless otherwise specified/arranged)

Course description:

In this course we will study critical animal studies, plant studies and mineral studies (the latter variously and loosely conceived). Topics addressed across the spectrum of these theoretical innovations involve rethinking animacy and what constitutes being alive, agency, communication (including 'the wood-wide web' among trees and fungi, for instance), transformations and metamorphoses, the nature/culture 'divide,' subjects and objects, new materialism and the agency of objects, and many more. Can we learn to think *with* more-than-human animals, mothering trees, stone, soil and water rather than only about them as exploitable objects of our gaze? Have print and digital culture caused the world to vanish into books and the digital ether? How do we think about what Timothy Morton refers to as the 'hyperobject' of climate change? How can we as readers "change the (humanist) subject" to one more attuned to and respectful of the world that precedes, exceeds and sustains us? Do more-than-human creatures have a right to their lives? To what extent do we owe an ethical debt to the oceanic plankton that create half of the oxygen we breathe? *Is* intellect a marker of human superiority to other forms of life, or is photosynthesis more important? How can we alter our critical practices to take into account new scientific discoveries? What is the purpose of theory? Is theory by definition foreign? Do literary texts also constitute or spawn theory?

A few keywords: silencing nature; extinction; transcorporeality; multispecies communities; wild; tame/domestic; ethics; etiquette; freedom; language; the language of plants; story, narration; environmental justice; anecdote; life forms vs. forms of lives; alive, aliveness, liveliness; animal; vegetal; mineral; rock, stone; underground; "the animal"; forests, trees, shrubs; enchantment;

entanglements; field studies / field work; science; literature; philosophy; where does theory come from?; all my relations; kin / kinship; reading the land; animal tracks; gift economy; plant writing; Gaia; metamorphoses; microbiome; eating; and more.

Course learning outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate upper-level knowledge of a range of texts;
2. Understand and interpret literary texts in relation to their theoretical, cultural and ecological contexts;
3. Pay close attention to both literary texts and the 'texts' of the world beyond the text;
4. Engage in meaningful conversations about multispecies studies with peers;
5. Design and carry out a guided but self-directed project;
6. Question the binary opposition of theory vs. practice.

Texts and readings:

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

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*

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

Learning technology requirements:

The D2L site for this course contains required readings and other relevant class resources and materials (see d2l.ucalgary.ca). Please also download to your own preferred device both this course outline and the class and reading schedule.

Assessments and Evaluation:

Multispecies project proposal (250 – 500 words, due Sept.19)	10%
Mid-term test (November 2)	20%
Multispecies project journal (20 pp., due Nov. 21)	40%
Research essay (2500 words, Dec. 5)	20%

Quiz (Dec. 7)	10%
TOTAL	100%

Passing grade: Students must complete and submit all of the assignments in order to be eligible for a passing grade for the course. Also see the late penalty below.

Exam: There will NOT be a registrar-scheduled final examination or any final exam in this course.

Extra credits: There are no extra credit assignments.

Format: Written assignments should be submitted in .doc format, not .pdf.

Style: MLA Style, but Chicago Style is acceptable too. Just be consistent with whichever style you choose. Don't blend them.

Proposal: We will discuss what a proposal is and how to craft one in class. Essentially, a proposal contains your rationale for your project (why you chose to do what you are going to do), the context (critical, historical or theoretical), your thesis, and methodology. It will be between 250 and 500 words. Going over the list of assigned readings, the course outline and schedules, and the keywords in the outline may inspire and guide you in your multispecies project.

NOTE: Students may NOT write their research paper and do their multispecies project on the same primary text(s), topics or questions. The goal of a course is to learn as much as possible, not as little as possible. I fully understand the desire to 'specialize' or to devote extensive work to a single focus, but save that for your Honours or Master's Thesis or MA Capstone Project.

Active learning: This course will be conducted as a mixture of lecture, class and small-group work, discussion, a major project, and other forms of learning. Respectful and thoughtful participation in all such activities is compulsory. A crucial part of intellectual work in general is being able to speak about it with others. In short, students will be expected to assume the role of active participants in the co-construction and dissemination of knowledge rather than that of merely passive consumers of it.

Attendance and being present: Active learning is premised on being present. A strong commitment to class attendance, completing the assigned readings **in advance** of the class for which they are scheduled, avidly participating in your own and others' learning, demonstrating respectful, accountable, and open intellectual engagement with the course materials and with fellow students and professor are very important components of learning. A class is a community, a group of living, breathing, thinking, responding, feeling, knowledge-creating beings. It is also a workplace, a working group, a think tank. We generate some of our best ideas and insights collectively, and this is both a good skill to acquire and one of the most pleasurable and memorable aspects of university. Intermittent attendance (more than a couple

of absences per term) for reasons other than illness results in losing one's place in terms of the material, assignments, and the others in the course, and it can be a challenge to regain one's momentum. In other words, don't skip classes if you are healthy.

Downloads: Please download from D2L and save to your own computer both 1) the course syllabus and 2) the class and reading schedule for easy reference throughout the term and so that you can access it even if your internet access is temporarily unavailable.

Formatting: All written assignments must be **double-spaced** in 12-point font with 1" margins on all four sides of the page. Times New Roman is the default font for work in English literature, though you can use another easily readable, professional font. "Fun fonts," however, do not make anyone's work appear professional.

Written assignments should be submitted in .doc format, not .pdf.

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 assignments is one mark per day late. For instance, if an assignment is assessed at 16/20, but it is two days late the grade will be deducted two marks, one percent for each day late, for a total of 14/20.

Technology: The use of laptop and mobile devices in class is totally acceptable when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. Please refrain from accessing websites and resources that may be distracting to you or for other learners during class time. Students are responsible for being aware of the University's [Internet and email use policy](#).

Surfing the web, checking email or social media, taking calls or texting during class is distracting to you and to the people in the room!! Taking calls or texting by leaving the classroom is also very disruptive to everyone and is not allowed.

Office hours: if you need or would like some guidance, assistance or advice with anything course-related, please make an appointment by emailing me in advance to set up a time.

Taking notes: Research has shown that handwritten class notes are markedly superior in terms of acquiring a more thorough understanding of course material and for retention of material in one's memory. How you take notes is up to you, but please take extensive notes, and remember to take them of any films, videos or podcasts on the course. Films are vivid and you think you will remember them in sufficient detail to analyze and think about them, but unless you are a highly visual person you probably won't.

Annotations and underlining: I highly recommend that you **annotate and underline** your course texts. Underlining and annotating in the margins are the best ways of acquiring and consolidating your knowledge of textual material and the best strategy for studying. 'Make tracks' in your text (though not, of course, in any library books, not ever) and you will be far

more likely to take 'ownership' of the knowledge we will be co-creating in the classroom. It is also vastly more efficient when it is time to prepare for class, prepare questions for your peers and carry out your research.

Conduct:

Students, employees, and academic staff are also expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at:

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

Grading System:

Assignments will be graded as a percentage. Percentages are easily converted to letter grades or the points system using the following table:

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

- Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that far exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.
- The interpretation of the undergraduate university grading system can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1-1.html>
- There is no D- grade.
- Any final grades that end in a point 5 (.5) will be rounded up to the next whole number before being converted to a letter grade (A, B, C, etc.) using the table above.

Academic Integrity:

This course, like all courses at the University of Calgary, holds students to high standards of honest and responsible scholarship. Please consult the [Academic Integrity website](#) for a detailed description of university policies, which will be enforced in this course. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Associate Dean of Arts for a ruling.

Plagiarism is a type of academic misconduct. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of another person as their own. Another equally serious form of plagiarism occurs when a student submits something they have written themselves for

credit in two or more courses without first securing written permission from all those course instructors. Consequences for plagiarism include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.

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](#) must be completed. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this process with the instructor. The University also has regulations governing the [deferral of final examinations](#).

Grade appeals:

To pursue a Reassessment of Graded Term Work or a Reappraisal of an Academic Assessment, Consult the [University Calendar](#) and request advice from the English Department at engl@ucalgary.ca. Please note that mere dissatisfaction with a grade is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

[English Department Website:](#)

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English.

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The [Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club](#) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

Writing support:

[The Student Success Centre](#) offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

[Academic regulations and schedules](#)**Student Academic Accommodations:**

The Student Accessibility Services website is available [here](#). University accommodation policies can be found at the following links:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-2.html>

Program Advising and Student Information Resources is done through the Faculty of Arts Students' Centre. Office location: SS102; phone: 403-220-3580; email: ascarts@ucalgary.ca
Website: <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>

Instructor's Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors, including presentations, posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams, remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may not be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Student information will be collected in accordance with usual classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty and teaching assistants. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Sexual violence policy:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Violence-Policy.pdf>

Other important information:

- [Wellness and Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Student Success](#)
- [Student Ombuds Office](#)
- [Student Union \(SU\) Information](#)
- [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\) Information](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points](#)
- [Safewalk](#)

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

Please participate in [USRI Surveys](#) toward the end of the course. The feedback they provide helps us evaluate teaching, enhance student learning, and guide students as they select courses.