Course Description*

In his 2006 book, *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben argues for a drastic rethinking of our concepts of the *natural* as a way of approaching environmental concerns. “Whatever we once thought Nature was,” writes one reviewer, “wildness, God, a simple place free from human thumbprints, or an intricate machinery sustaining life on Earth,” that idea will have to “change forever” as we, ourselves, increasingly become the single biggest agent of planetary change. Just over ten years later, we find a number of literary examples that represent such an undertaking, considering the history of our thinking about nature(s) of various kinds and questioning the appropriateness of that thinking for our time. This composition course introduces the process of writing critically about literary texts by focusing on a series of readings that propose, feature, or imagine unconventional notions about or interactions with the natural world. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate how fictional texts of various kinds (novels, short stories, film, etc.) can help us to reflect on or revise our understanding of what is natural in productive ways. Some of the texts we’ll cover deal with “nature proper” and will supply powerful critiques of current environmental policies and practices or offer opportunities for imagining more conscious and resilient futures. Others will explore the term more broadly, taking on the scientific validity or the politics of claims to a particular “nature”—the oxymoronic “human nature,” for instance.
As a continuation of English 1101, this course serves as an introduction to the more sophisticated study of argument and textual analysis, focusing on the composition of increasingly complex analytical essays about written and visual texts. Students must demonstrate advanced competency in critical analysis and interpretation of texts.

*This is a composition course specially designed for STEM majors or students interested in STEM topics. The theme reflects a topic of growing interest in those disciplines, and the assignments are designed to develop important critical reading and writing skills crucial to participate in academic and professional conversations such as this one.

**General Learning Outcomes**

- To develop reading, understanding, and interpreting of a broad range of written and visual texts from a variety of genres, including but not limited to nonfiction, fiction, poetry, drama, and film.
- To extend the skills of analytical writing, critical thinking, and argumentative interpretation of meaning established in English 1101.
- To enhance the understanding of literary principles and the use of basic terms important to critical writing and reading.
- To construct essays using textual evidence from both primary and secondary sources
- Develop an understanding of genre and the role of genre in textual analysis.
- Understand connections between primary and secondary sources and how those connections affect and generate intertextuality.

**Writing Process and Rhetorical Objectives**

- Demonstrate the ability to connect primary and secondary sources in a logical, persuasive, and correct way.
- Expand the length and complexity in the writing and thinking process.

**Minimal Competency Requirements**

**Essay Level:** Continuation of the learning objectives of ENGL 1101, that is, creation of clear theses, effective introductions and conclusions, and logical, persuasive patterns of essay organization. Additional requirements include the ability to develop a logical argument advancing a particular explication or interpretation of a literary text, focusing on the ways in which the incorporation of secondary materials enhances argument.

**Paragraph Level:** Continuation of the paragraph development skills required in ENGL 1101. Additionally be able to manage quotations from primary and secondary texts as a means for developing paragraphs, neither letting the quotations dominate the paragraphs inappropriately nor under-explaining the quotations once used.

**Sentence Level:** Continuation of ENGL 1101, consistent evidence of sentence variety and control of syntax to achieve clarity. Consistent use of apt and varied diction. Additionally be able to use quotations in sentences while maintaining grammatical correctness and competent punctuation. Demonstrate a command of mechanics, grammar, and usage conventions of Standard Edited English as required in ENGL 1101. Documentation Style: Use the MLA style for documenting sources.

**Technological Objective**

- Demonstrate the ability to use word processing and to find and evaluate electronic resources.
**Required Texts**

*Lab Girl*, Hope Jahren (978-1101874936)

*Decomp*, Stephen Collis & Jordan Scott (978-1552452820)

*Hall of Small Mammals*, Thomas Pierce (978-1594634055)

*I will be supplying additional texts, including writing aids, research guides, articles, films, and audio throughout the semester. Whenever appropriate, you should print texts and bring them with you to class or bring with you the means of accessing these texts in class.*
Course Policies

Attendance:

Students missing more than three class periods in a semester should not expect to pass the course. It is very important you understand that I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences and will not accept doctors’ notes, etc. Your reasons for missing class are your business, and I will not ask you to explain yourselves, but any time you do not appear in class, you will be counted absent for that day.

Disruptive Behavior:

Students may be dismissed from any class meeting at which they exhibit behavior that disrupts the learning environment of others. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to: arriving late for class, allowing cell phones to ring and/or answering them, excessive texting or use of social media, taking selfies, speaking or otherwise behaving disrespectfully to the instructor and/or to other students, checking email or surfing the web, doing work for other courses, and using personal audio devices for purposes not related to course content. Each dismissal of this kind will count as an absence and will be applied toward the attendance policy above. You may, however, feel free to eat or drink and to bring and use your various technologies for course related activities, which I will specify.

Submission of Work:

All out-of-class essays should be submitted to me via the appropriate drop box in Course Den.

Email Policy:

University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student’s responsibility to check his or her email.

Please email only from your UWG account. Do not send messages through Course Den. Though I will often reply much sooner, please allow 24 hours for a response during the week (48 hours over the weekend), before sending a follow-up email. Email is another opportunity to practice good writing techniques—always include a greeting and a closing with your name. Also, be sure to proofread for clarity, spelling, and grammar. Remember: well-written, courteous emails will get you far in life, and are MUCH more likely to receive prompt replies.

Late Work and Make-Up Work:

I do not accept late work except in the following circumstances: you know you have an upcoming conflict and have arranged a different submission date or time with me before the assignment is due, you have an emergency about which you have emailed me before the end of the day on the due date of the assignment missed. Missed in-class assignments can never be made up, but missing only one or two will have a negligible effect on your grade.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty - The Department of English and Philosophy defines plagiarism as taking personal credit for the words and ideas of others as they are presented in electronic, print, and verbal sources. The Department expects that students will accurately credit sources in all assignments. An
equally dishonest practice is fabricating sources or facts; it is another form of misrepresenting the truth. Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course. See also, excessive collaboration.

**Excessive Collaboration** - By the end of the term in both ENGL 1101 and 1102, students should demonstrate the ability to produce *independent writing* (writing without collaborative assistance of peers, writing tutors, or professionals in the field) that shows an acceptable level of competence. Although classroom activities and out-of-class assignments may highlight collaborative learning and collaborative research, *excessive collaboration* (collaboration that results in the loss of a student's voice/style and original claims to course-related work) is considered another form of academic dishonesty and therefore will not be permitted.

**Role of the Writing Center** - The role of the Writing Center is to offer consultation in which tutors question, respond to, offer choices, and encourage revision in student essays. Tutors do not evaluate or prescribe solutions to problematic areas in student essays, and tutors are specifically trained to avoid appropriating the student's work. For more information, visit the Writing Center online at [http://www.westga.edu/writing](http://www.westga.edu/writing).

The University policies for handling Academic Dishonesty are found in the following

*Student Catalog* - "Rights and Responsibilities"; Appendix J.

[http://www.westga.edu/handbook/](http://www.westga.edu/handbook/)

*University of West Georgia Honor Code* - At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Updated April 19, 2013 2

Additionally, you are responsible for safeguarding your computer account. Your account and network connection are for your individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. You are responsible for all actions originating through your account or network connection. You must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal your identity in electronic messages and actions.

*Any student caught plagiarizing will receive a grade of F for the assignment in question and possibly for the course as well.*

Students with Disabilities:

If you have any special learning needs, particularly (but not limited to) needs defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and require specific accommodations, please do not hesitate to make these known to me, either yourself or through Disability Services in 272 Parker Hall.

*Americans with Disabilities Act* - Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Disability Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in
case the building must be evacuated, please notify your instructor in writing by the end of the second full week of class and include a copy of your Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Disability Services. Students are entitled to accommodations if they deliver the SAR to the instructor no later than the end of the second full week of class.

Students with documented special needs may expect accommodation in relation to classroom accessibility, modification of testing, special test administration, etc. This is not only my personal commitment: it is your right, and it is the law!

For more information, please contact Disability Services at the University of West Georgia.

Revision Policy:

Students may select one graded essay to revise over the duration of the course. All revised drafts should be submitted with the original graded essay by the last day of class. The revision grade will replace the previous grade on that assignment and be averaged into your final grade.

Extra Credit:

Learn not to expect extra credit. Do the work that gets you credit in the first place.

Recycled Papers:

I do not mind if you are working on a similar assignment in another course and would like to combine your efforts there and in my course; however, you must disclose to me your plan for modifying your work in other courses to fit the parameters of assignment sheets for my course.

Taking Notes:

Learning to take comprehensive detailed notes is an absolutely critical skill for your college years. You are expected to take notes throughout every class session, and your notes should include key points and ideas raised in our conversations about the texts as well as my lectures and visual presentations. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to obtain a set of notes from a classmate—I do not provide my students with my lecture notes, nor do I post lectures on Course Den. It’s fairly easy to record notes from Power Point presentations, but you need to practice synthesizing and summarizing information transmitted through spoken lectures and class discussions as well. That said, if you ever need an idea or concept repeated or clarified, don’t be afraid to ask!

Assignments and Grading

Participation: 10%

This grade can be a significant asset or liability for borderline students. You are responsible for keeping up with the reading, displaying your knowledge of the texts by being active in class discussions, and participating in group work and peer-editing sessions. You can boost this grade by attending at least one conference/e-conference with me.

Peer Editing Guidelines – Students working in groups of 3 or 4 will take turns reading their drafts aloud while the rest of the group listens, taking no notes. When the writer finishes reading, the other members of the group will each prepare a brief written response based on their initial impressions of the piece. Following this activity, group members will switch papers, carefully reading their group members’ essays
and making comments on what stands out as particularly effective, what seems to need more development, and what questions the essay leaves them with. Students should swap papers as many times as possible in the time allotted, aiming to have as many people in the group read each draft as time allows. If time allows, groups should engage in a constructive discussion about the papers. We will discuss these procedures and sometimes modify response questions before each peer editing class period.

Conference Guidelines – I recommend that students have an individual conference with me during my office hours at least once during the semester. For the conference, students should come prepared with a draft (however rough) of their essay and a list of questions so we can discuss the essay one-on-one before it is submitted for a grade. In addition to your own questions about your draft, which can focus on whatever aspect of the draft you feel needs work, I will be asking you questions about the draft in order to help you think about revision strategies. These conferences are optional, but the better prepared you come to talk about your draft, the more useful they will be when revising.

In-Class Assignments: 15%

This category encompasses any work you complete in class.

Roughly half of this grade will come from discussion questions and reading responses you will generate at the beginning of each class period on the reading assignment we will be discussing that day. For the first ten minutes of each class period, students will reread and generate questions or brief reflections on a section of the reading I will specify (probably on the board, unless the prompt requires a lot of explanation). You will be responsible for demonstrating your knowledge of the reading and for constructing clear, succinct critical questions or observations. Please note that these are not reading responses in the sense that you tell me whether or not you liked the reading or agreed with it. I value your opinions, of course, and you will have opportunities to voice them appropriately, but the point of these short assignments is to practice academic interrogation and argumentation in a low-stakes setting. For that reason, in lieu of questions or reflections, I will occasionally ask you to complete short writing assignments related to your major assignments during this time. These assignments will ask you to do things like: practice thesis statements, introductory paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs; write short summaries, paraphrases, and utilize the correct quotation of paragraphs from the reading; and effectively challenge an author’s argument or use it to support one of your own. Often, you will be able to revise and use this material in your major assignments later. Though I will give you feedback on these assignments, you will receive full credit for seriously attempting them.

The other half of this grade will come from your participation in the student-led unit. This will involve working in small groups to present one of the shorter course texts in a conference-style format. More information on the specific expectations for this presentation will be distributed on 2/14, but you might want to skim the shorter readings scheduled for the last two thirds of the course to get a general sense of what texts most align with your interests or pique your curiosity.

Essays & Projects: 75%

Students will complete 3 major written assignments and 1 multimodal project outside of class. These assignments include:

Written Assignment 1: Essay Analysis of a Scholarly Article Related to Lab Girl– (4-6 pages) 15%
Written Assignment 2: Proposal & Annotated Bibliography for Project – (5-7 pages) 20%
Multimodal Project Related to Decomp – 15%
Written Assignment 3: Research Paper on a Course Text or Topic of Your Choice – (6-8 pages) 25%
These assignments must meet the length requirement and conform to MLA documentation and formatting standards to receive a passing grade. More specific assignment sheets will be distributed closer to the due date of each assignment.

Grading summary with the letter to numeric scale

Out-of-Class Essay: A+=98%; A=95%; A-=92%; B+=88%; B=85%; B-=82%; C+=78%; C=75%; C-=72%; D+=68%; D=65%; D-=62%; F=50%

Note that students must have a C or higher to progress to the next course.

About the Writing Center

TLC 1201 678-839-6513
Writing@westga.edu www.westga.edu/writing

The University Writing Center works with students and other members of the UWG community to improve writing skills.

What We Do:
- Discuss ideas, read drafts, and work through revisions of essays; we do not proofread
- MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian, and other citation formats

Policies:
- Please make appointments in advance. We accept walk-ins, but we cannot guarantee that a tutor will be available.
- If you cannot keep your appointment, you must call or email us 24 hours in advance to cancel. If you do not notify us 24 hours in advance, you will be counted as a No Show.
- Please arrive at your appointment on time. If you are 10 minutes late or more, you will be counted as a No Show and will not be able to have your appointment.
- If you have 3 No Shows in one semester, you will not be able to have any more appointments for that semester.

Hours:
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10:00am-7:00pm
Thursday 10:00am-3:00pm
Friday 10:00am-1:00pm
**Tentative Reading Schedule**

This schedule reflects the class period on which we will be discussing these materials—meaning you should come to class having already read the text(s) scheduled for each period.

**Week 1**
1/10 – Introductions, Syllabus Overview
1/12 – Bill McKibben, “The End of Nature” (on Course Den)

**Week 2**
1/17 – Jedediah Purdy, Introduction to *After Nature* (on Course Den)
1/19 – Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses” (on Course Den)

**Week 3:**
1/24 – *Lab Girl*: Prologue & Part 1
1/26 – *Lab Girl*: Part 1; Discuss Assignment #1

**Week 4:**
1/31 – *Lab Girl*: Part 2
2/2 – *Lab Girl*: Part 2

**Week 5:**
2/7 – *Lab Girl*: Part 3
2/9 – *Lab Girl*: Part 3 & Epilogue

**Friday, 2/10 – Assignment #1 Due on Course Den by Midnight**

**Week 6:**
2/14 – Alan Weisman, Excerpt from *The World Without Us* (on Course Den); View (in class) *Elegy for the Arctic* (or listen here: [Elegy for the Arctic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGva1NVWRXk) or on Spotify)
2/16 – Alan Weisman, Excerpt from *The World Without Us* (on Course Den); Listen (in class) to *Become Ocean* (or listen here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGva1NVWRXk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGva1NVWRXk))

**Week 7:**
2/21 – *Decomp*
2/23 – *Decomp*; Discuss Assignment #2 & Project

**Week 8:**
2/28 – Discuss Student Led Unit & Choose Presentation Groups (Bring *Hall of Small Mammals* with you to class on this day.)
3/2 – “Shirley Temple Three”

3/2 – Last day to Withdraw with a grade of W from *Full Term (non-eCore)*-16 week courses.

**Week 9:**
3/7 – “The Real Alan Gass”
3/9 – “Grasshopper Kings”

**Friday, 3/10 – Assignment #2 Due on Course Den by Midnight**
Week 10:
3/14 – “Why We Ate Mud”
3/16 – “Saint Possy”

Week 11:
3/21 – Spring Break, NO CLASSES
3/23 – Spring Break, NO CLASSES

Week 12:
3/28 – Presentation of DeComp Projects
3/30 – Presentation of DeComp Projects; Discuss Assignment #3

Week 13:
4/4 – Honors Day, No Classes
4/6 – “Felix Not Arriving”

Week 14:
4/11 – “Videos of People Falling Down”
4/13 – “Hot Air Balloon Ride for One”

Week 15:
4/18 – “More Soon”
4/20 – “Hall of Small Mammals”

4/19 – English Awards Day (Campus Center Ballroom)

Week 16:
4/25 – “We of the Present Age”
4/27 – “Be Baboon”

Friday, 4/28 – Assignment #3 Due on Course Den by Midnight

There is no final exam in this class; however, all essay revisions are due by the final exam day, which is Tuesday, 5/9.