



# Nature Writing and Empire

## Syllabus

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University of Illinois  
American Indian Studies  
AIS 490 Sections A3/A4  
ENGL 461 Sections AA/GA  
Spring 2007  
Wednesday 9:00-11:50  
Armory 145  
(505 E. Armory, Champaign)

Prof. James Treat  
[treaty@uiuc.edu](mailto:treaty@uiuc.edu)  
(217) 265-0328  
Native American House 2004  
(1204 W. Nevada, Urbana)

### Welcome to the course!

This interdisciplinary seminar explores the relationship between human experience and the natural environment through a focused study of nature writing. The course is organized around important but overlooked books and essays by American Indian writers, offering fresh perspectives on key themes in the popular and scholarly literature. Together we survey the history of nature writing in America, evaluate the uses of literary nonfiction in American Indian contexts, consider the emerging discourse of ecocriticism, and experiment with the techniques of nature writing in our own lives. Class discussions are supplemented by guest speakers, audiovisual materials, campus events, and optional field trips. Students have the opportunity to gain a basic understanding of nature writing and of American Indian perspectives on this venerable genre; to reflect on the significance of "nature" and "writing" in contemporary life; and to develop their critical skills and creative abilities for use in academic, professional, and personal settings.

Follow the links above, at left, or below for more information about the course.

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## Course Schedule

January 17	Introductions	
January 24	<i>This Incomparable Land</i>	
January 31	<i>The Colors of Nature</i>	Questions due
February 7	<i>The Colors of Nature</i> (cont.)	
February 14	<i>Talking to the Moon</i>	Topics due
February 21	<i>Talking to the Moon</i> (cont.)	
February 28	<i>Secrets from the Center of the World</i>	Abstract due
March 7	<i>Dwellings</i>	
March 14	<i>Dwellings</i> (cont.)	Bibliography due
March 21	Spring Break	
March 28	<i>In the Bear's House</i>	Narrative due
April 4	<i>Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country</i>	
April 11	<i>Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country</i> (cont.)	Outline due
April 18	<i>Almost Ashore</i>	
April 25	Presentations	
May 2	Conclusions	Paper due



## Required Textbooks

The course textbooks can be purchased at the [Illini Union Bookstore](#):

Thomas J. Lyon, *This Incomparable Land: A Guide to American Nature Writing* (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2001).

Alison H. Deming and Lauret E. Savoy (eds.), *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World* (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2002).

John Joseph Mathews, *Talking to the Moon* (1945; reprint, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

Joy Harjo and Stephen Strom, *Secrets from the Center of the World* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

Linda Hogan, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1995).

N. Scott Momaday, *In the Bear's House* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Louise Erdrich, *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2003).

Gerald Vizenor, *Almost Ashore* (Cambridge, England: Salt Publishing, 2006).

These books are also available from the [Media & Reserve Center](#) at the Undergraduate Library.



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## Grading Criteria

All course work is governed by the [Student Code](#)—please make sure you understand your rights and responsibilities as a UIUC student, especially the policy on [Academic Integrity](#) (including the [Definitions](#) of, and [Penalties](#) for, Infractions of Academic Integrity).

Special circumstances are handled in accordance with the policy on [Class Attendance](#) and the [Policy for Accommodation and Provision of Auxiliary Aids for Students with Disabilities](#).

Course grades are determined according to the following schedule:

Class Participation – 50%

Research Project – 50%

Each course assignment is evaluated according to the [UIUC Grading System](#).

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