
ENGLISH / ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 385: SPECIAL TOPICS IN CREATIVE NONFICTION PLACE-BASED WRITING: WRITING MOUNT TAHOMA

Spring 2016

Meeting Schedule: Tuesday (T) & Thursday (R), 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Meeting Location: Admin 211A

Professor: Wendy Call
Office: Admin 220-I
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Office Hours: Tues, 1:30 – 3:30 pm, Thurs, 2:30 – 3:30 pm, and by appointment



THE MOUNTAIN IS OUT!

“When considering the relationship the Nisqually people formed with the mountain which they called Ta-co-bet, one must include the good and evil spiritual aspects of their religious beliefs, for the mountain area housed both forces.”—Cecilia Svinth Carpenter

“Of all the fire mountains which like beacons, once blazed along the Pacific Coast, Mount Rainier is the noblest.”—John Muir

“A place is a story happening many times.”—Kwakiutl reply to anthropologist Franz Boas (as related by Kim Stafford)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this discussion-based creative writing course, we will take **Mount Rainier / Tahoma / Ta-co-bet** as topic, text, and inspiration. Students will read a variety of literary texts about Mount Tahoma, by a wide range of authors from the 19th to the 21st centuries. By studying the writing of local authors, Native writers with ancestral ties to Mount Tahoma, and well-known visitors and admirers such as John Muir and Denise Levertov, as well as visual art inspired by the mountain, we will develop deeper connections to this local landmark. Through our own creative nonfiction writing, we will explore what the mountain means to each of us. As a final, collaborative project, we will create a digital, literary homage to the mountain. **This course requires at least one day-long visit to Mount Rainier National Park.**

We will read, write, and offer feedback on one another’s work. About one-quarter of our class time together will be completing writing and revision exercises. Another quarter will be devoted to workshop sessions of your drafts. In each class session, we will discuss literature and we will write. We will read our work aloud, record it, and learn to present it in digital form. We will also learn from writers and from people with deep relationships with Mount Tahoma, through our interactions with writers, historians, and other scholars and activists who will visit PLU this semester.

This is a rigorous course, demanding both intellectually and emotionally, as well as demanding of your time and full attention. If you don’t have an *absolute minimum* of twelve focused hours (including class time) to devote to this course each week, you should reconsider your enrollment. We will read together, write together, explore a snowy mountain together, laugh together, and figure out how to spark our creativity together. We will learn more about The Mountain and its past, present, and future than you ever imagined possible. To allow the time and space for creative, place-based practice in our lives is a joy and an honor. Let’s enjoy it!

REQUIRED COURSE FIELD TRIPS & EVENT ATTENDANCE

We will all visit Mount Taboma (MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK) for a full day trip during the spring semester. During the first week of class we'll figure out a time /date that we can make this trip together. It will be on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. If you are unable to take part in the class trip, you must make your own trip, and document that you spent a full day in the park, before Sunday, April 17. (There will be an entrance fee of approximately \$10 for this trip and a travel fee TBA. If this cost is a barrier for you, please be in touch with me as soon as possible.)

This course also includes two visits to the TACOMA ART MUSEUM. (Entry is free for all PLU students, staff, and faculty.) Both of these visits are also course requirements.

We will also attend four (or perhaps even five) PLU EVENTS in lieu of or in addition to our class sessions. One of these events (on Friday afternoon, February 26) is not on our regular Tuesday and Thursday evening meeting schedule. All of the Tuesday and Thursday evening events begin and end later than our usual 6:00 to 8:00 pm meeting time. **All of these events are required.** Please review the schedule immediately and make sure you are available for these meeting times.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: This is a discussion-based class with many collaborative sessions. As such, your attendance is essential. You may miss class twice without it adversely affecting your grade. You may use those absences to do whatever you wish. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences and I respect your privacy. Beyond those two classes, any absence, *regardless of the reason for it*, will adversely affect your grade. More than four absences and you will fail the course. You are responsible for all material presented in the class(es) you miss. **Please find out what you missed from your classmates; do not ask me about it.** Students with perfect attendance receive extra credit.

Participation: As a workshop-based course with collaborative work, the full involvement of each and every student is essential to our collective success. Please arrive on time, stay for the entire class session, and fully engage yourself in classroom activity. There will be no break; please arrive ready to stay for the entire two hours. Bring all the required reading for the day, as well as all three required textbooks, to *every* class session. The smallest digital device you may use for course reading in class is a mini-tablet. Come ready to discuss the day's reading. **All aspects of our work during class—discussion, writing in response to prompts, peer review, careful notetaking during lectures, etc—are required.** Two individual conferences, at times to be determined, are required – one early in the term to discuss your hopes for this course and one late in the term to discuss the revision process.

Cell Phones & Technology: You may use your laptop in class only during writing exercises and to take notes or to discuss digital readings. **You may not touch or look at your cell phone in class.** Ever. Please turn your phone *off* before class begins. Computer or technology failure is never an acceptable excuse for late or incomplete work. **Make sure you make complete and regular backups.** All devices fail eventually. **I reply to email within 24 hours, Monday through Friday only.**

Plagiarism & Academic Honesty: Just a reminder of PLU policy: “PLU’s expectation is that students will not cheat or plagiarize, and that they will not condone these behaviors or assist others who plagiarize. Academic misconduct not only jeopardizes the career of the individual student involved, but also undermines the scholastic achievements of all PLU students and attacks the mission of this institution. Students are inherently responsible to do their own work, thereby insuring the integrity of their academic records.” **In simpler terms: If you turn in work that is not yours, or work you completed for another course, you will receive a failing grade – certainly for that assignment and perhaps for the course.** [Please make sure you study and understand PLU’s full policy on academic integrity.](#) Please ask me for help in clearing up any confusion you may have about what constitutes plagiarism.

Free Speech & Safety: From the Student Code of Conduct: “Faculty and university are committed to protecting the rights of community members to engage in dialogue and express ideas in an environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and exploitation. This freedom of expression does not, however, entail the freedom to threaten, stalk, intimidate, harass, or abuse. Students are therefore expected to treat every individual with respect and civility.”

Accommodations: Students with medically recognized and documented disabilities and who are in need of special accommodation have an obligation to notify the University of their needs. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please be in touch with the Office of Disability Support Services (x7206).

Grading: In accordance with PLU policy, I assign letter grades as follows:

- A *outstanding* performance
- B good or very good performance
- C acceptable performance, meets only minimum criteria
- D poor performance, does not meet all minimum criteria
- E unacceptable performance

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course, designed for writers (who must also be serious readers) with an interest in Mount Tahoma, will:

- 1) immerse you in the past, present, and future of the giant volcano that rises just 50 miles southeast of our campus;
- 2) explore deeply the ways in which nature and wilderness shape—and are shaped by—our human consciousness/es and perception/s;
- 3) develop your ability to offer constructive criticism to your classmates about their creative writing;
- 4) help you read *as a writer* – that is to say, evaluate writers’ structural, narrative, lyric and stylistic strategies;
- 5) hone your writing revision skills through rigorous practice; and
- 6) develop all the skills needed to create a collaborative literary product, including writing, digital design, audio / video recordings, and photography.

REQUIRED READING

Two of the three **required** course texts are available via the Garfield Books website:

The Measure of a Mountain: Beauty and Terror on Mount Rainier, [Bruce Barcott](#) (Sasquatch, 1997)
1057061-074-6 (*Moam*)

Sunrise to Paradise: The Story of Mount Rainier National Park, Ruth Kirk (University of Washington Press, 1999) 0-295-97771 (*StP*)

Where the Waters Begin: A Traditional Nisqually Indian History of Mount Rainier, (Northwest Interpretive Association, 1994) 0-914019-33-3 (*WtWB*) This book is out of print and will be available on Sakai.

You must procure your own copy of each text. Barcott’s and Kirk’s books are both easy to find used. You *must* have all three books by the end of the first week of class and bring them *all* to each class session.

SIGNIFICANT additional REQUIRED reading for this course will be posted to Sakai and / or handed out in class. You must (1) print out these readings and bring them to class, carefully read and well marked-up, or (2) bring your laptop / e-reader to class with detailed notes you have taken on the readings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following work is **all required** for the course; your grade will reflect your success in completing all of the following:

1) **Weekly forum post** (10% of your final grade)

Every Friday (February 12 through April 29) by 3 pm you will post to Sakai Forums a 300- to 400-word reflection on what you learned from the exercise, readings, discussions, and experiences related to English 385 for the week. *Every Monday, by 6 pm, you will post replies to at least 3 of your classmates' weekly posts.*

2) **Class Participation** (10% of your final grade)

In this class, neither writing nor reading is a solitary process. Please come to class ready to discuss the reading, explain what you learned from it, and ask cogent questions about the material, of your classmates, and of me. You will share drafts of your writing, helping one another improve your work. Coming to *every* workshop session ready to discuss your classmates' drafts and your critique of them is essential. Attendance at and participation in several other events, both on and off campus, as detailed in this syllabus, is required and will be a significant part of your class participation grade.

3) **Workshop Critiques** (10% of your final grade)

You will prepare a written critique of each of your peers' drafts presented for peer review/workshop during the second half of the semester. We will review the required elements of a good critique before our first workshop session.

4) **Weekly Writing** – 2-4 pages / week (25% of your final grade)

Each Tuesday (Thursday the first week) at 6 pm, during the first half of the semester (February 11 through March 22—seven in all), your Weekly Writing is due. This must be well-revised work that you have crafted carefully. Sometimes we'll workshop these pieces in class. Sometimes you will share them—in whole or in part—with the whole group. Sometimes you will turn them in and I will give you feedback. Please see the course schedule for the length and focus of each Weekly Writing assignment.

5) **Essay #1: An Exploration of/on Wilderness** – 4-5 pages (10% of your final grade)

6) **Essay #2: Why Am I Here** – 5-6 pages (10% of your final grade)

7) **Final Presentation** – 15 minutes (5% of your final grade)

A 15-minute audio-visual presentation (for our class, including a Q&A session) that presents your group project and/or portions of your “Why Am I Here” essay to the class.

8) **Audio Essay** – three minutes / approx. 500 words (5% of your final grade)

Many writers reach their primary audience through the ear, rather than the eye. We will create audio recordings of our work, each just three minutes long—the length of a typical broadcast radio essay.

9) **Collaborative Project** – as chosen through Forum discussions (15% of your final grade)

During the second half of the semester, we will each plan, develop, and execute a literary (text/language-based) project that draws inspiration from Dr. Alex Wilson's appeal to all of us to protect Mount Taboma. This project will be digital; the specific details will be determined by our collective interests and skill sets. It will involve some combination of text, audio and/or video recordings, and images. Several class sessions late in the semester will be devoted to this project. The project must be done and published / distributed / presented *before* the final exam session. You will also complete a two-page process essay in which you explain and evaluate your work on the collaborative project.

Important note: Extensions of due dates are *rare*, only in response to emergencies, and *must* be approved by me at least 24 hours in advance. **Late work is not accepted, under any circumstances.**

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Please note that this schedule, readings, and other course plans are subject to change. Just like the active volcano in our midst, the world is an unpredictable place.

WEEK #1—WHO ARE WE AND WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

- T, FEB 9 INTRODUCTIONS—WHY ARE WE HERE?
- R, FEB 11 WHY ARE YOU HERE?
Reading: *MoaM*, “The Mountain is Out,” “Start Walking,” and “Pressing Through Cloud,” (Chapters 1-3); *StP*, Part I; and “[Ruth Kirk, pioneering guidebook author](#),” (2013) *High Country News* (link on Sakai)
Writing due: 500 words (revised) on one of the nine “themes” of “[Mount Rainier National Park: 100 Years In Paradise](#)” photo archive (link on Sakai)
- F, FEB 12 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #2—IMAGES OF THE MOUNTAIN

- M, FEB 15 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM
- T, FEB 16 WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK AT TAHOMA?
Reading: *MoaM*, “Company” and “The Only Sensible and Suitable Name,” (Chapters 4-5); *WtWB*, Parts 1, 2, and 3; excerpt from *Complete National Parks...* (2009) (at Sakai)
Writing due: Revised 800-word essay on your relationship with / experience of Mt. Tahoma
- R, FEB 18 IMAGES OF TAHOMA IN ART
Reading: Essay on Bierstadt from *Looking Together* (2009) by Jonathan Raban (on Sakai), “A Nation’s Park,” by George Catlin (on Sakai), and images of Mount Rainier / Tahoma (links on Sakai)
FIELD TRIP: **MEET AT THE TACOMA ART MUSEUM AT 6:00 PM**
- F, FEB 19 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #3—THE MOUNTAIN AS PLANT & ICE

- M, FEB 22 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM

7:00 PM **GUEST LECTURE** ~ PLEASE BE PREPARED TO STAY UNTIL 9:00 PM
Elizabeth Fenn, Professor of Western American History, University of Colorado-Boulder,
Winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in History
Philip A. Nordquist Lecture Hall (Room 201), Xavier Hall

F, MAR 4 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #5 – THE MOUNTAIN AS “WILDERNESS”

M, MAR 7 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM

T, MAR 8 **NO CLASS** ~ ATTEND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY EVENTS
Reading: “The Trouble with Wilderness,” by William Cronon (on Sakai),
“[Landscapes of Exclusion: Hope Wabuke Interviews Carolyn Finney](#),” *Guernica*
(2015) and “[Hiking While Black: The Untold Story](#),” by Francie Latour, *Boston
Globe* (2014) (links on Sakai)
Writing due: A 700-word reflection on “What is wilderness?” ~ AT SAKAI ASSIGNMENTS

R, MAR 10 DEFINING WILDERNESS
Reading: “Burning the Shelter” by Louis Owens (1998) and “Glaciers and Gasoline: Mount
Rainier as a Windshield Wilderness” by David Louter (both on Sakai); and at least
four essays (your choice) about Tahoma from [historylink.org](#) (links at Sakai)

F, MAR 11 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #6 – THE MOUNTAIN AS HABITAT

M, MAR 14 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM

T, MAR 15 TAHOMA’S BIOTA
GUEST SPEAKER: DR. TOM BANCROFT, RESEARCH ECOLOGIST, WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER
Reading: *MoaM*, “Marmota,” “Mountain Dreams,” “Fischer,” and “Cliffhangers,” (Chapters
9, 10, 11, and 12); *SiP*, Part III; and
“[Mount Rainier’s Red Fox Menace](#),” (2012) *Seattle Met*
Review / study images of Mt. Rainier at [Dr. Thomas Bancroft’s website](#)
Writing due: 500-word response to one or two of Dr. Bancroft’s photos

W, MAR 16
3:30 PM **Extra Credit:** Visiting Writer Lori Ostlund’s “Writer’s Story” (3:30 pm) & Reading (7:00 pm)
& 7:00 PM attend either event *and* include a 200-word reflection with your Friday, March 18
weekly forum post

- R, MAR 17 IMAGES OF TAHOMA ~ ECOLOGICAL & CULTURAL SYSTEMS IN ART
Reading: Introduction & Chapters 1 & 2, “All Over the Place,” “Sweet Home” and “Being in Place,” from *Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*, by Lucy Lippard (1997) (on Sakai) and “[Interview with Shaun Peterson](#)” (link on Sakai)
FIELD TRIP: **MEET AT THE TACOMA ART MUSEUM AT 6:00 PM**
- F, MAR 18 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM ~
Describe your revision process and what you’re learning from it.

WEEK #7 – THE MOUNTAIN, WILDERNESS, AND US

- M, MAR 21 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM
- T, MAR 22 WHERE ARE WE?
Reading: “[The Woman Who Drew a Line Around Mount Rainier with Her Body](#),” (2011) by Jen Graves; [Mimi Allin’s website](#); and her poem “[AK Mimi Allin](#)” (links on Sakai)
Writing due: three copies (double-spaced, single-sided) *or* two copies & your laptop with the file of a full draft (4-5 pages) of your “Wilderness” essay
Bring: a pair of scissors and a glue stick—*if you happen to have them*
- R, MAR 24 NO CLASS ~ ENJOY YOUR BREAK!
4:00 PM **Essay due:** An Exploration of/on Wilderness ~ AT SAKAI AND IN PRINT AT MY MAILBOX
- NO WEEKLY FORUM POST THIS WEEK

WEEK #8 – SPRING BREAK!

~ GO TO MOUNT TAHOMA, IF YOU CAN!

WEEK #9 – MUIR & LEVERTOV AND THE MOUNTAIN

- T, APR 5 JOHN MUIR AT THE MOUNTAIN
Reading: *MoaM*, “Camp Muir” and “That Hell-Tainted Air” (Chapters 13 and 14); “[The Ascent of Mount Rainier](#),” by John Muir (1918) (link on Sakai)
Drafts due (6 pm): Thurs, April 7 (Day #1) writers post workshop drafts to Sakai Forums
- W, APR 6 **Critique due (6 pm):** Your critiques for the April 7 (Day #1) writers posted at Sakai Forums
- R, APR 7 BEYOND JOHN MUIR
Reading: Excerpts from *The Life Around Us: Selected Poems on Nature*, by Denise Levertov (on Sakai)

“Graves and Churchyards and Cairns and Cairns,” by Neile Graham (2004) and
“Describe Wildflowers to Ethics,” by Tod Marshall (2006) (on Sakai)

Writing due: A letter to Muir and a poem to The Mountain

F, APR 8 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 6 PM

WEEK #10 – THE POETRY OF MEADOWS & FORESTS

SU, APR 10 **Drafts due (6 pm):** Tues, April 12 (Day #2) writers post workshop drafts to Sakai

M, APR 11 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM

Critique due (6 pm): Your critiques for the April 12 (Day #1) writers posted at Sakai Forums

T, APR 12 CAN WE LEAVE EVEN FOOTSTEPS? & WORKSHOP DAY #1

Reading: *MoaM*, “Meadow Stomping” (Chapter 15), “Porphyrin Rings” by Jennifer Oladipo (2011) (on Sakai), and poems by Elizabeth Austen (on Sakai)

R, APR 14 **VISITING WRITER: ELIZABETH AUSTEN**

3:30 PM **Extra Credit:** 3:30 pm “Writer’s Story” in Harstad Hall

7:00 PM **Class Meeting:** Poetry Reading in University Center—*PLEASE PLAN TO STAY UNTIL 8:45 PM.*

Reading: “[Meet Washington’s New Poet Laureate](#)” and other articles on Austen (on Sakai)

F, APR 15 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #11 – EARTH WEEK!

M, APR 18 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM

T, APR 19 **Drafts due (6 pm):** Thurs, April 21 (Day #2) writers post workshop drafts to Sakai

7:30 PM **EARTH DAY LECTURE**

LECTURE BY DR. ALEX WILSON, Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan—*PLEASE PLAN TO STAY AT THE EARTH DAY LECTURE UNTIL 9:30 PM*

Reading: Writing by and [brief biography](#) of Dr. Alex Wilson (on Sakai)

W, APR 20 **Critique due (6 pm):** Your critiques of April 21 (Day #3) writers posted to Sakai Forums

R, APR 21 TAHOMA & EARTH WEEK & WORKSHOP DAY #2 (3 people)

Reading: *MoaM*, “We Go to the Mountain” (Chapter 16) and *Mountain Fever*, Chapters 1 & 2 (1999), by Aubrey Haines (on Sakai)

F, APR 22 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #12 – GETTING TO THE MOUNTAINTOP

- SU, APR 24 **Drafts due (6 pm):** Day #4 writers post to Sakai Forums
- M, APR 25 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM
Critique due (6 pm): Your critiques for the April 26 (Day #4) writers posted at Sakai Forums
- T, APR 26 THE IMPACTS OF SUMMITTING & WORKSHOP DAY #3 (3 people)
Reading: *Moam*, “The Constant Presence of God,” “Naught Without Prudence,” and
 “Going Up” (Chapters 17, 18, and 19); and “[Fay Fuller Becomes First Woman...](#)”
 by Charles Hamilton; and other writings on summitting (links on Sakai)
- W, APR 27 **Critique due (6 pm):** Your critiques for the April 28 (Day #5) writers posted at Sakai Forums
- R, APR 28 REVISION INTENSIVE & DRAFTING AN AUDIO ESSAY
Reading: Revision Strategies Packet
- F, APR 29 WEEKLY FORUM POST DUE AT 3 PM

WEEK #13 – CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN TOGETHER

- MO, MAY 2 WEEKLY FORUM REPLIES DUE AT 6 PM
- T, MAY 3 REVEREND BILLY TALEN’S BOOK EVENT AT KING’S BOOKS IN NORTH TACOMA
MEET AT KING’S BOOKS AT 6:30 PM, EVENT BEGINS AT 7:00 PM AND ENDS BY 8:30 PM
Reading due: Excerpts from Reverend Billy’s *The Earth Wants YOU!* (links at Sakai)
Essay due: **“Why Am I Here” essay** ~ AT SAKAI AND IN PRINT AT CLASSTIME
- R, MAY 5 “PROTECTING MOUNT TAHOMA” PROJECT WORK SESSION #1
Assignment due: Audio Essay/ Content ~ TO BE RECORDED IN CLASS TODAY

WEEKS #14 & 15 – HEARING WHERE WE ARE

- T, MAY 10 “PROTECTING MOUNT TAHOMA” PROJECT
WORK SESSION #2
- R, MAY 12 FINAL PRESENTATIONS
-
- T, MAY 17 FINAL PRESENTATIONS
- R, MAY 19 ATTEND ENGLISH DEPT CAPSTONES



WEEK #15 – FINALS

- T, MAY 24 AT 6:00 PM DELIVER PORTFOLIOS & PROCESS ESSAY; COMPLETE EVALUATIONS