The Colors of Nature: Culture Identity & the Natural World

Teacher's Guide

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The Colors of Nature Teacher's Guide

Overview

From indigenous to immigrant, from African American to Asian American, from "multiracial" to "mixedblood," the diversity of cultures in America is reflected in our richly various stories—stories of creation and destruction, displacement and heartbreak, hope and possibility. Yet many readers of environmental literature, and participants in the environmental movement, have long overlooked this richness.

The provocative writings in *The Colors of Nature* illuminate the intersection of cultural identity and ecological awareness, featuring work from more than thirty contributors of widely diverse backgrounds—including Jamaica Kincaid, Joseph Bruchac, Yusef Komunyakaa, Kimiko Hahn, bell hooks, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Francisco X. Alarcón, Nikky Finney, Gary Paul Nabhan, and others. By exploring what connects culture, place, "race," and identity, these distinctive voices weave very different experiences of the American land to create a larger and more textured cloth than the largely monochromatic tradition of nature writing or of the mainstream environmental movement. They also reassert the lasting value of one's cultural heritage, and reveal how a wealth of perspectives is essential to building a livable future.

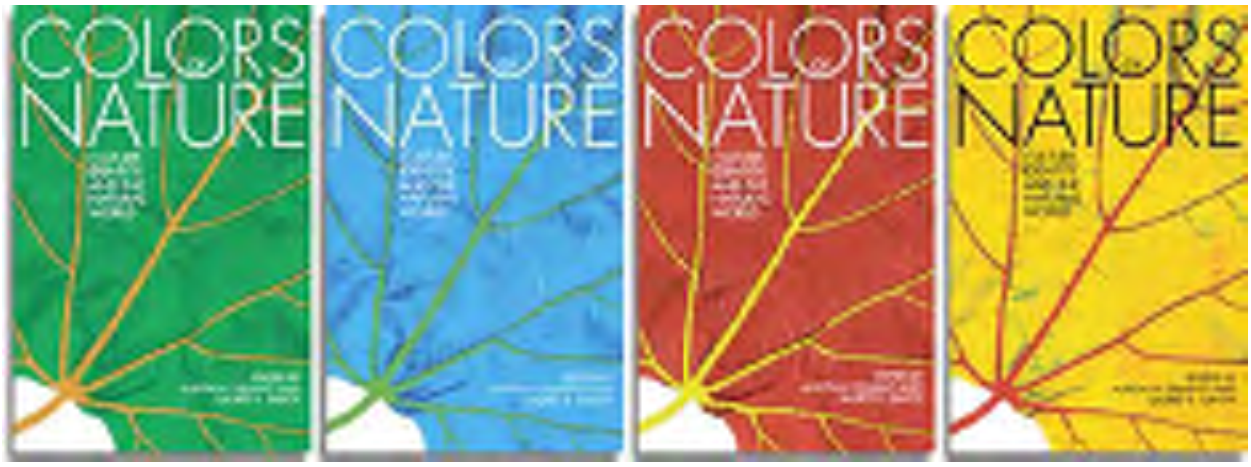
Praise for *The Colors of Nature*:

"[An] unprecedented and invaluable collection of forthright and bracing essays by writers of diverse cultural origins and disciplinary backgrounds."
–Booklist

"*The Colors of Nature* taps into the prose of writers of color in the largely white world of nature writing."
–Publishers Weekly

"An illuminating read for anyone interested in the future of American nature and environmental journalism."
–Bloomsbury Review

Read the introduction to *The Colors of Nature*, "Widening the Frame"



Desk Copy: To obtain a **desk copy** of *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*, please write to Milkweed Editions (at http://milkweed.org/about-us/contact-info/).

Using the Teacher's Guide

This teacher's guide for *The Colors of Nature* offers lesson plans and ideas, dialogue questions, prompts, strategies, resources, and general food for thought for educators in many diverse fields and across disciplines:

- Literature
- Creative writing
- Ecocriticism
- Environmental studies and history
- Multicultural studies
- Environmental justice/social justice
- African-American literature or studies
- Native-American literature or studies
- Latino (or Hispanic) literature or studies
- Asian-American literature or studies
- Ethnic studies
- American studies
- Nature writing
- Contemporary rhetorics
- Natural history
- Geography
- Other related fields

We hope the interdisciplinarity of these contributions will spur interdisciplinarity in the classroom. We also hope that classroom groups, in college and high school, can use the guide as a place to keep the conversations in the book dynamic over time.

In addition to addressing thematic and interdisciplinary concerns, the guide offers classroom activities designed to build writing skills by suggesting assignments that deal with craft elements including setting, description, voice, diction, poetic form, image, research, narrative and reflection.

Contents

(Listed alphabetically)

Editors' Bios:

LAURET E. SAVOY writes and photographs across threads of cultural identity to explore their shaping by relationship with and dislocation from the land. A woman of African-American, Euro-American, and Native-American heritage, she is a professor of environmental studies and geology at Mount Holyoke College.

ALISON H. DEMING has won numerous awards for her extensive poetry and creative nonfiction publications. She is a professor of creative writing at the University of Arizona.

The Inner Life of a Setting

by Elmaz Abinader

In *The Colors of Nature,* authors invite you into a space, whether it's New Orleans, Nigeria, under a particular tree, or at the end of Ridge Road. The "setting" exists as a general location with particular points of interest and characteristics. When a narrator creates the setting, that place is contextualized--located in a certain historical time, cultural location, social setting, geography, terrain, climate, livelihood, and more. When one of those elements changes, everything about the setting and how one perceives it also changes.

SETTING ELEMENTS

Immediate place: Each scene happens in a place—physical , mental, and emotional. While looking at immediate place, notice what is there by nature; for instance, a bedroom has a bed, a dresser, and a mirror. What is there by selection? Maybe a poster of Che, a collection of comic books, shells, clothes all over the floor, an altar.

Historical/political place/time: When does this scene take place in terms of the historical moment? Is it a time of peace? Economic depression? Fundamentalism? How is historical time manifested in the work? Consider these two layers:

> Layer one: The world outside of us determines sometimes how we are regarded, how much we can/cannot achieve, where we are in society, etc. For instance, on November 26, 1941, a Japanese-Californian could go into the market, buy her groceries and go home. On December 7, 1941, that changed.
>
> Layer two: What is happening in the world that affects the lives of the characters, directly or indirectly? For instance, when oil prices rise, how does that affect a family with workers who commute?

Cultural Elements: There are several cultures: The ruling culture (sometimes called the mainstream), the visible cultures, and the submerged cultures. Each has a context along with the others. Before you look at the cultures, consider the determinants of culture: language, custom, ritual, food, etc.

The ruling culture:

- What are the values of the ruling culture (for example, education is important; you *go along to get along*)?
- What are the language and its variations? For instance, what are the accepted regionalisms?

- What are the foods: those that are available and those that are imported? Is food plentiful? What are the traditional dishes?
- What are the prevailing customs used by the mainstream: texting, standing in queues, paying with credit, watching television . . .
- What are the recognizable mores? (For example, belief in god, murder--other than in war--as illegal; second-hand smoke as frowned upon, most people want to work, etc.)
- What are the common social behaviors (handshakes vs. kisses upon greeting; parents pick the children's spouses, etc.)?

The visible cultures

These are acknowledged cultures—sometimes called "minorities" and often referred to with boxes next to them on forms. The nuances of these cultures are often blurred as we saw in post 9/11 backlash. However, mainstream culture recognizes their cultural rituals and sometimes assumes other behaviors to be part of this. For example, Quinciniera is a common celebration in the Chicano community; low riding, however, is *attributed* to members of the Chicano community.

The submerged cultures

Submerged cultures may have national or cultural basis, some have a particular belief system; others are based on common interests. Some examples are: Rastas, Polygamous families, Goths.

Social elements: How do people regard one another in social relationships as well as familial ones?

- How are elders/children regarded?
- How do people mate?
- How is hierarchy established? How do folks treat one another on the hierarchy (Hey, don't call me Dr. Sweetheart, call me Sandee)?
- Are there class differences? Are there interactions, movements, interrelationships?

Livelihood and climate:

Each region/area provides particular elements that help determine lifestyle. One is climate . . . what effect does the climate have on behavior in the setting? Is it possible to hang out at the beach most of the year? Rain and sunlight, temperate weather, hurricane territory, all that determines how people live, what they wear, what kind of living structure they have, and what they do for a living and if a livelihood is available to them.

Livelihood often is related to the level of skill and education; to social class, status and labor. The world sometimes divides into the owners and the workers, other times into more stratification. What is the view from the seat of the narrator?

*

Most of these setting elements are embedded in the story and can be found with close reading. Knowing them or recognizing them illustrates the particularity of the setting, but recognizing that the narrator is the interpreter also affects our understanding of the place as to whether it's natural or constructed.

Narrator Reveals the Setting

The setting also interacts with its own story. The narrator is the tour guide to the journey of the setting. Placing characters inside the setting, and their particularities in sync or in opposition to it, illuminates the interplay of the different setting elements. Contradictions and complexities deepen the relationship to the environment. Imagine a man from Nigeria walking through an uptown restaurant in Chicago; now imagine the same scene in 1948.

General	Contextual	Relates to Narrator
General development of specific locations—What's there?	Significance of setting to story—How does the setting apply to this particular story?	Significance of setting to narrator—How does the setting affect the narrator? How does the narrator impact and interpret the setting?
Surrounding locations – where is it placed? City? Country? What is the historical moment?	How do the specific characteristics of location affect the interplay with the setting?	Narrator's interaction with surrounding location—Is there a physical interaction? Dialogue? Impact?
Interaction with location—What are the norms for the location? Who are its inhabitants?	What are the principles and cultures of locations and how they are played out in society?	Narrator's response to culture—What kind of participant is the narrator/character in this setting? Natural? Oppositional? Investigative? Passive?
Define finer points of location—Are there particular "characters" that mark the setting or a landmark or historical moment?	What does this setting mean to the world? What possible assumptions do we bring to the reading?	What is the journey, either spiritual or physical or both, that is taken by the narrator/character in this setting. What impacts our understanding of it?

The Language of Nature

by Joy Ackerman, Antioch University New England

How are environmental values and ideas about nature limited and expanded by the perspectives of race, class, gender, geography, or physical ability? In *The Colors of Nature*, the writers tell stories about their own life experience to frame their ideas and concerns about the environment. Through a series of writing and creative exercises, we engage in critical and reflective ecological thinking to explore the ways in which our individual identity and cultural assumptions shape our own ideas and values about the more-than-human world. We also work on our writing skills, using these important eco-cultural questions as an opportunity to address issues of identity and authorship.

Encountering Nature

We begin our exploration of the language of nature by voicing our personal experience of the world, as a starting point for essay topic selection. The aim of the first exercise is to begin to write about our own nature experience through a free-write and a first draft.

Free Write A 'free write' is a short burst of unedited 'stream of consciousness' writing, often in response to a prompt. Free writes can be used as a starting point for an essay, getting writers 'ahead' of the first block – 'what will I say?' Writers should have paper and pens, or keyboards, at the ready, and the timekeeper should let the writers know the 'time's up' signal.

In *Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg offers these guidelines for the free-write:

1) Keep your hand moving.
2) Don't cross out.
3) Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar.
4) Lose control.
5) Don't think. Don't get logical.
6) Go for the jugular.

The prompt for this free write is 'Describe an encounter with nature.' A ten-minute timed period is plenty.

Follow-up Activities for Free-Write:

Pair-Share: Writers take five to ten minutes to share with a partner about their writing experience, and their nature encounter.

Reflect: Consider your writing experience: what surprises, questions, or ideas emerged for you—either about the writing process, or about your experience with nature? Share one discovery with the group.

Write: Draft a three- to five-page essay based on the nature encounter you explored in your free-write.

Human Nature: The Experience of Difference

Alongside the development of our draft essay, we examine others' writing about the experience of nature. Our own identity and subjectivity influence the way we experience and 'read' the world, including nature and written texts. The focus in this exercise is on the voices available in *The Colors of Nature*, and what we can learn about our own and others' experiences of 'difference.' A good companion resource on the topic is Nealon and Giroux, *The Theory Toolbox,* chapters on Author(ity), Identity, and Subjectivity.

Read in *The Colors of Nature* the essay by Louis Owens, "Burning the Shelter" (p. 211-214). This four-page essay could be read in class, silently or aloud.

Consider (through individual writing in or out of class, or through small-group or whole-group conversation)

> Essay summary prompts
> Who are the actors or characters in Owens' experience? Where does his story take place? What happens?
>
> Personal response prompts
> Whom do you identify with in this essay? What questions or feelings does the essay evoke for you? What did you learn about yourself, or your ideas about nature, through this story?
>
> Author identity prompts
> What are the 'us/them' categories in the essay? How does the author reveal his 'situation' in terms of culture, class, race, gender, etc.? What difference does the author's self-revelation make to your reading or interpretation of the essay?

The **Human Nature** assignment can be extended, or modified, for individual exploration followed by class or online discussion. In the following exercise, critical reading and written expression are encouraged through directed note taking. Reading notes can become a resource to support and verify out of class reading, and to inform and deepen class discussion.

Read: Choose three essays in *The Colors of Nature* to read more deeply. (Alternatively, the instructor can assign a limited menu of essays to insure that there is overlap in reading assignments, to support small-group discussion on selected essays).

Write: For each essay, write a three-paragraph response paper. The first paragraph is to summarize the essay, the second paragraph is to describe your own response to the essay (questions, feelings, reactions, insights), and the third paragraph is to address the following questions:

- What are the identity categories in the story? Are they explicit or implicit? How are these categories named and developed or ignored and blurred?
- How does the author reveal his/her 'situation' or identity in terms of culture, class, race, gender, or other marker of 'difference'?
- In what ways does the author's own self-revelation influence your reading and interpretation of the essay?

Discuss: In class, or online, discuss your responses to one essay that you and another writer have both read. Report out the key points of your analysis to the large group.

Essay (continued): If you are continuing with the Nature Encounter essay, present resources on peer review and guidelines for good essays. Writers may exchange essays and/or submit them to the instructor for feedback.

Word Play

What's in a word? Words are dynamic and flexible, with meanings that emerge, evolve, and sometimes conflict. This exercise allows us 'time off' from our essay writing to play with the language we choose and use for our experiences and values of nature. The exercise also loosens up the constraints of formal written expression and allows us to dive into a creative endeavor in critical ecology.

Assignment: The aim of this exercise is to provoke critical reflection (on your part and on the part of your audience) on our cultural assumptions about nature through an informal, accessible exhibit or performance. Choose a word from the following list:

> nature, wilderness, wild, native, conservation, environment, ecology, property, sanctuary, pollution, creation, restore, reclaim, anthropocentric, ecosystem, organic, green, preservation, endanger(ed), park, preserve, exploit, resource, frontier, earth, creature, savage, biodiversity, natural . . .

Your task is to interpret the word--through collage, quotes, cartoons, painting, rhyme, mime, music, dance, sculpture, song, games or magic tricks--you choose the medium--for a presentation to the class. You may wish to draw on both formal definitions and contemporary

interpretations of the word as you think about how to 'problematize' your choice. A typed, double-spaced, one-page analysis of your work, including documentation of sources, will accompany your presentation.

Presentation: Presentation time may include a 'gallery walk,' combined with performance time/space, depending on the nature of the exhibits. Comment sheets for audience/class response are recommended, and might include space for the title/author of the presentation, questions to the artist/performer, insights about the word/subject of the presentation, and suggestions for further exploration. AAC&U VALUE rubrics for creative thinking and/or critical thinking can provide guidelines for feedback.

Discussion: Compare your presuppositions about one of these terms, with how your ideas or views changed through the research and creative process, or through interaction with a presentation. What challenges and insights emerged?

The Nature Encounter Essay

Revise your draft nature encounter essay, drawing on your learning through reading *The Colors of Nature*, your experience with the Word Play exercise, and related discussions about critical questions concerning your social location and experience of nature. If you can get others to read your paper, use peer/instructor feedback or guidance from the campus writing center, to work on your essay structure, style, or grammar.

Some questions about the substance of your work to consider:

"What is the heart of my experience?" Before revising your essay, you will want to reflect, discuss, or explore through journal writing why you chose this experience. Consider why this experience stands out for you. What does it mean to you?

"What is the meaning of my experience for me, and for others (my 'identity' group, or a broader segment of humanity)?" Seemingly insignificant events result in powerful stories when the meaning of the experience for the author is connected to a broader human experience or existential question that the audience might share.

"How do I take my reader to the event, and bring him or her home again?" Think about the shape of your story (for example, things go from bad to worse, then get better; or you start out feeling 'good' about nature, and end up with different or 'mixed' feelings). Think about the location of the key moment in the experience, in relation to what leads up to it, and how you make sense of it afterwards.

References

Association of American Colleges and Universities, VALUE: Value Assessment of learning in Undergraduate Education. http://www.aacu.org/value/

Goldberg, Natalie, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2005 (expanded edition).

Nealon, Jeffrey T., and Giroux, Susan S., *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the New Humanities*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2011.

6 Writing Exercises; 1 Discussion Exercise

by Faith and Holly Adiele

1: RETURN

BLOOD: USING PERSONAL HISTORY TIMELINE TO WRITE MEMOIR

TEXTS: ADIELE, Notes on the New World; OLADIPO, Porphyrin Rings

PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION: Biracial writer Adiele made two shocking discoveries that led to the writing of her essay: At age 16, she learned that, after considering suicide, her white mother had given birth to her in a home for unwed mothers. The second occurred 10 years later when she traveled to Nigeria and met her father and unknown siblings for the first time. In Nigeria Adiele, who'd grown up hating her rural town, discovered that nature and land were everything. How does she use the landscape (first the eruption of Mount St. Helens, and then the trees in Nigeria) to convey the emotional impact of family events? Compare/contrast the use and symbolism of blood in "Porphyrin Rings" by fellow Nigerian-American author, Jennifer Oladipo.

WRITING EXERCISE: Follow the same steps Adiele did to write your own memoir. (1) First brainstorm a milestone from your personal history. (Adiele's was learning the truth of her birth.) (2) Then plot it on an actual timeline and research public events around that time. (The author discovered that nearby Mount St. Helens, a place her family routinely visited, had erupted a year later.) (3) Recall emotions and images for both events. (The author was shocked by the truth of her birth, as well as by the eruption. Though the images for learning the truth weren't dramatic, the images of the eruption were.) (4) Research the public event. (The author found out that the last time the volcano erupted was during the Dred Scott case, which was a perfect metaphor about race. She found out that the native people's explanation for the eruption was a perfect metaphor for family. She was able to use the dramatic facts and details about the eruption as a symbol.) Now write your own memoir.

MEMORY, LANGUAGE, and NATURE

TEXTS: ZEPEDA, Birth Witness; KINCAID, In History; SUZARA, Invoking the Ancestors;
ARROYO, Working in a Region of Lost Names;
DUNGY, Tales From a Black Girl on Fire; HOUSTON, Crossing Boundaries

PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION: Nearly all of the authors in this section demonstrate the relationships among Memory (personal, familial, historical); Language (as a tool of both expression and control); and Nature. Voice is equally important though used differently in Zepeda's poem and Kincaid's essay. How does each echo Suzara's piece regarding the role of

language and the costs of language loss? Compare/contrast how Kincaid and Arroyo each engage history and imagine figures from the past. Dungy and Houston break the silence on how traumatic historical experiences color our perception of nature. How do they (and Suzara) complicate the multiple truths about a setting? What is the impact of each author's deeper realization of place or shift in perception?

WRITING EXERCISE:
(A) Draw a detailed floor plan of the landscape you remember. Put an X on spots of significance. Then write a tour of the place. OR

(B) Make a list of names (e.g., streets, stores, districts, public buildings, parks, dumps, lakes, rivers, mountains, landmarks) associated with your family or home. Free-write something that includes all these names.

(C) The final step to either exercise is to research the place to find hidden histories you can layer onto your piece.

2: WITNESS

HEAD VERSUS HEART ADVOCACY

TEXTS: BULLARD, Confronting Environmental Racism in the 21st Century; VERDELLE, 70117

WRITING EXERCISE: Bullard's explanation of the environmental justice movement is an excellent example of straightforward advocacy writing. Like most traditional nonfiction, it relies on "head data"—research, statistics, logic, expert testimony. Compare and contrast his style with Verdelle's more personal approach to the Hurricane Katrina disaster in New Orleans. Hers is an example of creative or literary nonfiction, which also uses "heart data" or creative techniques like storytelling, scene, characterization, and figurative language. Reflect on the emotional and intellectual experience of reading each piece. Both authors are advocating for action from the reader; why might one author chose one style over the other? Rather than striving for so-called objectivity, literary nonfiction uses the author's subjectivity as a strength. Which style appears to convey more narrative authority? How does Verdelle's positionality inform the text? What is the effect of using the first- and second-person points of view?

THE KNOWN VERSUS THE UNKNOWN WORLD

TEXTS: KOMUNYAKAA, Dark Waters; MELENDEZ, Women, Corn & Free Trade in the Americas

PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION: Komunyakaa's essay is an example of explaining a popular environmental concept ("environmental racism") through the ethnic history of a specific place, in this case, his hometown. To capture its complexity, he incorporates historical documents, music lyrics, and his own poetry. Melendez, on the other hand, takes on the terms

"ecofeminism" and "personal eco-fulfillment" by doing field research on women, corn, and free trade in the Americas. While as a Chicana, she feels a connection to the Mexican women she studies, she discovers that she is *gringa as gringa can be*. When it comes to investigating a place, being either an insider or an outsider comes with blind spots. What are the advantages and disadvantages to each? Support your position with examples from the texts. How do these personal accounts make a case for the importance of incorporating race and gender into environmental policy considerations?

WRITING EXERCISE: Try either Komunyakaa's multi-media insider approach and investigate/ document your hometown, or Melendez's approach and research/write about a place where you're an outsider.

GENDERED NATURE

TEXTS: MELENDEZ, Women, Corn & Free Trade in the Americas; SALMÓN, Sharing Breath

PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION: In discussing how, unlike other native languages referenced in the anthology, Rarámuri is highly gendered, Salmón uses examples from nature to illustrate how his people ascribe female and male behaviors and properties to plants. In looking at the role of Mexican women in raising and preparing the staple corn, Melendez investigates nature, environment, and trade through a gendered lens. Does English gender nature? How do the texts make a case for the importance of incorporating gender into modern-day considerations of nature and environment?

WRITING EXERCISE: Come up with a research project that would look at an aspect of the environment that could be better understood through a gendered lens. What are the historical reasons for the gender segregation? Whom would you interview?

3: ENCOUNTER

WRITING IN 2 VOICES

TEXTS: KIMMERER, Learning the Grammar of Animacy; SALMÓN, Sharing Breath

PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION: Kimmerer addresses the conflict between the language of science (*a beautiful language, rich in particulars; a language of distance . . . the language of objects*) and traditional native languages like Potawatomi (in which the basic division is animate vs. inanimate, not human vs. object), while Salmón addresses the language conflict inherent in modern education versus traditional ways of knowing. How is language used throughout the pieces to perform the impact of modern, Western training on traditional worldviews? Where are the narrators located in their respective worlds? What are other examples of grammar defining understanding?

WRITING EXERCISE: After reading the two pieces, choose a place to write about in two different voices—the language of objects and the language of animacy (or if you know one, a traditional language).

WRITING & THINKING IN VERBS

TEXTS: KIMMERER, Learning the Grammar of Animacy; BLAESER, This Weight of Small Bodies

PRE-WRITING DISCUSSION: Blaeser writes that *Two-thirds of the words in the Ojibwe native language are actions—verbs.* Kimmerer writes that *English is a noun-based language, somehow appropriate to a culture so obsessed with things . . . . Only 30 percent of English words are verbs, but in Potawatomi that proportion is 70 percent.* How does the text make accessible such a foreign concept/language to Western readers? How do the authors dramatize the differences between a verb-based worldview and noun-based worldview? What does that suggest for our understanding of the relationship between humans and the natural world?

WRITING EXERCISE: Try your hand at reversing the verb:noun ratio in English. First, write a piece about your hometown or a transformative experience you had in nature. Then highlight the nouns in one color and the verbs in another. Now go back and revise until 66 to 70 percent of your words are verbs. What sort of syntactical, grammatical and ultimately, philosophical shifts are necessary?

Performance and Rhythm in *The Colors of Nature*

by Fred Arroyo

Writing Assignment:

- Eight- to twelve-page, double-spaced composition that explores the dynamic relations of performance and rhythm (storytelling and narration) *and* the natural world (nature and place).

- Through your exploration share your developing vision of culture, identity, and the natural world.

- In composing your exploration consider a creative and critical conversation between four contributions to *The Colors of Nature*, and one of our primary texts this semester.

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> Gifts—given or received—stand witness to meaning beyond the known, and gift exchange is therefore a transcendent commerce, the economy of recreation, conversion, or renaissance. It brings us to worlds we have not seen before.
>
> —Lewis Hyde, *The Gift*

A fundamental ideal we've brought to our reading of *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World* is to encounter the essays, poems, and stories within this book as "gifts." Through the exchange of our reading, conversation, and reflection this semester, we've challenged ourselves to discover "worlds we have not seen before." In our primary readings—*Just Breathe Normally, Annie John*, *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*, *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors*—we've read each text not as simply a literary object; we read to note the woven relations and disconnections of identity, culture, and language. The gifts received from these readings become potent in the ways the natural world, nature, and place become rich sources of identity, culture, and language so we can begin to articulate more wisely the hopes we have for inhabiting the natural world.

We've also started to discern how the land is storied, and how stories arise from the land. Of course, our readings of *The Colors of Nature* alongside these texts were crucial in shaping the new worlds we are beginning to read, see, and write. In recently reading Antonio Benítez-Rojo's "Introduction: The Repeating Island" (*The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*), we focused in particular on the following moment:

> The peoples of the sea, or better, the Peoples of the Sea, proliferate incessantly while differentiating themselves from one another, traveling together toward the infinite. Certain dynamics of their culture also repeat and sail through the seas of time without reaching anywhere. If I were to put this in two words, they would be: performance and rhythm. And nonetheless, I would have to add something more: the notion that we have called "in a certain kind of way," something remote that reproduces itself and carries the desire to sublimate apocalypse and violence; something obscure that comes from the performance and that one makes [her] own in a very special way; concretely, it takes away the space that separates the onlooker from the participant.
>
> [. . .] the cultural discourse of the Peoples of the Sea attempts, through real or symbolic sacrifice, to neutralize violence [. . .] the culture of the Peoples of the Sea expresses the desire to sublimate social violence through referring itself to a space that can only be intuited through the poetic, since it always puts forth an area of chaos. In this paradoxical space, in which one has the illusion of experiencing a totality [say in a creative work], there appear to be no repressions or contradictions; there is no desire other than that of maintaining oneself within the limits of this zone for the longest possible time, in free orbit, beyond imprisonment or liberty. (16-17).

Our focus led us to consider why imagination, the poetic, and storytelling have essential roles in the ecology of culture, and how Benítez-Rojo offers us a way to express why narrative art sublimates social violence, repressions, imprisonment, and the degradation of a particular place, a natural world. In the Caribbean, in the Peoples of the Sea, Benítez-Rojo identifies certain forms of repetition—performance and rhythm, storyteller and audience—that continue to appear over time and place, even though specific communities have distinct languages, ways of life, and stories. Regardless of what seems to be the "official" history or mapping of Antigua or Minnesota, for example, Jamaica Kincaid and Gerald Vizenor create narratives that represent essential values of performance and rhythm, of storytelling for an audience and a place.

Reflect back over *The Colors of Nature* and consider how various contributions help to create a richer context for these values of performance of rhythm for the natural world.

In this paper I'd like to hear how you are becoming more mindful of the natural world. You have an opportunity to share how you are now reading, seeing, writing the natural world. You have an occasion to share the gifts you received from *The Colors of Nature*, and how your senses of identity, culture, language, and natural world are becoming more substantial. As you compose your paper, try to explore the relations of performance and rhythm (storytelling and narration) and the natural world (nature and place); develop your particular vision of culture, identity, and the natural world; and make sure to bring into the creative and critical conversation of your paper four contributions from *The Color of Nature* and at least one other primary text from the semester.

Here, near the end of the semester, personal narratives like "In History," "Hazardous

Cargo," "Listening for the Ancient Tones, Watching for Sign, Tasting for the Mountain Thyme," and "Belonging to the Land" return as contributions to *The Colors of Nature* that are formed by a sense of performance and rhythm, and they rely on storytelling, memory, and the power of witnessing and praising for becoming more mindful of the natural world. What works do you remember in this regard? Reread them. In that reading you might just discover the gifts of the natural world you want to share in the performance and rhythm of your words.

Works Shaping the Writing Assignment

Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1992.

Cantú, Norma Elia. *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1997.

Hyde, Lewis. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997.

Shumaker, Peggy. *Just Breathe Normally.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2007.

Vizenor, Gerald. *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990.

Considering “earthbound: on solid ground” by bell hooks

by Cynthia Belmont, Northland College

Context:

In “earthbound: on solid ground,” bell hooks encourages the reader to combat oppressive social structures and alienation from the Earth by moving toward an alternative ethos of collective commitment to standing “on solid ground.” This argument is presented in a very strong voice—a voice that seems to speak for the people, on behalf of the people: it emerges from deep within a historical community and is as much a “we” as an “I.”

Questions for Composition or Creative Writing Courses:

1. Considering hooks’s claims for the value of standing “on solid ground,” write an essay exploring what it would mean for you to stand “on solid ground.” What and where would this ground be? With whom would you be standing? What larger philosophical or political aims would be supported by this ground and why?

2. What writing strategies does hooks use to build the essay’s voice of strength and conviction? Identify some of the ways in which this unique and powerful voice is shaped, considering the essay’s structure, diction and phrasing, uses of examples and quotation, and other techniques that you notice.

3. Write an essay in the most powerful voice you’re capable of. Imagine yourself speaking for a group with whom you feel strong affiliation: Fellow students? Fellow youth? People from your hometown or neighborhood? Members of a team or organization? Adherents to a belief system? Give it your all—don’t be afraid to use powerful words. Take it over the top and then, as you revise, think about pulling back in order to maintain control over the material.

Seeing with a Native Naturalist's Eye

by Nokidahozid/Joseph Bruchac

This morning, a warm October day, I walked a five-mile loop through the Adirondack foothill woods around the cabin in Porter Corners where I do most of my writing. My walk took me along the abandoned section of Ridge Road, down the trail lined with hemlocks, then across the boardwalk we built from salvaged pressure-treated planks a decade ago across the swamp at the base of Bucket Pond, sinking locust posts that will last long past my lifetime into the pond to hold up the walkway. I bushwhacked up the steep hill on the other side of the pond past the giant garage-sized boulder, a glacial erratic with a ring of firestones at its base. Then I took the old logging road that leads to the second pond on this part of the old Kaydeross Range, Little Bucket Pond, also named for the family that once held title to these acres. As I went along, I used my folding handsaw to clear away the small trees that had fallen across the road during the recent hurricane, stacked brush by the roadside and then followed the trail down to join Plank Road and complete the loop back to the cabin where I am typing these words into my computer right now.

This may, perhaps, seem like a detailed account of how I spent the last four hours. But it is not. At most it is an outline, with much space to be filled in about what I saw and experienced during the passage of that time. It was time that, had I only done the barest minimum of what I described, would have taken perhaps half as long. And I'm afraid that for most people—including those who (unlike most modern Americans) enjoy hiking—it would probably have been even briefer.

What took so long? Listening, seeing, smelling, waiting my way through a world deepened by the memories of those things given me equally by my training as a naturalist and by the ancient indigenous knowledge of this land and all of its life. The first type of knowing has come to me from years of reading and field work—both as a wildlife conservation major at Cornell University and as a devoted amateur. The second knowing has been passed on to me through story and tradition and the patient teaching of elders who recognized that I was someone ready to listen.

Rather that write the fifty-page essay needed to describe all that I experienced in those few hours, let me just pick out a few moments and then go on to suggest how you, too, might begin, in your own way, seeing through eyes informed both by western science and a native relationship.

As I cross the boardwalk, I go one slow step at a time, knowing that at every season, the swamp I was crossing is vibrant with life. Every second has the potential to bring me to one of our old stories. Sure enough, after only five steps I see a small muskrat. It slips into the water and speeds like a small brown torpedo beneath my feet to be lost in the

hummocks of grass. The tale of how muskrat dove to bring up the earth comes to me at the same time as the thought of how my father trapped muskrats during the Depression when his family needed the money from their pelts to survive those hard times.

"Moskwasis," I breathe, "Oleohneh." Little Muskrat, thank you.

A dozen steps farther and there's a motion in the water next to the boardwalk. I kneel down, reach into the water and easily pick up the female Eastern painted turtle who was floating there and pulls in her head, legs, and tail as I lift her. *Chrysemys picta picta*. The Latin name I learned 48 years ago in my herpetology class at Cornell. I know she's female. Males have longer claws and a longer tail than she does. Unlike most other turtles, the large scutes across her back are in straight rows. Along with the bright yellow spots on her head and the light bands across her carapace, it's an easy fieldmark for identification. She's a mature adult. My hand just spans her back as I hold her and she extends her head out timidly. Perhaps she's one of the dozen or more painted turtles who make their trek every summer up the steep hill from the pond to dig holes with their back legs in my sandy lawn and lay their eggs. They—and the female snapping turtles like the one I found one June wallowing among my beans—are one reason why I grow my vegetables up here in raised beds.

There are 13 scutes on her back—as there are on every turtle. One plate for each of the thirteen moons in the Abenaki traditional calendar. Where I am now is in the midst of Penibagos Kisos, the moon of leaves falling. That lunar calendar with its poetically meaningful and quite accurate names is a lesson given to me decades ago, and it has stayed with me just as have the Latin names for other beings with which we share this land placed on the back of Ktsi Tolba, Great Turtle. I can't help but smile as I think of Maurice Dennis, whose Abenaki name Mdawelasis means "Little Loon" who taught me our Abenaki moons as he carved the shape of Turtle into a cedar pole.

I turn her slightly. Did I see something hanging down? Sure enough, something is fastened to her plastron, on the scute closest to her neck is a leech. It hasn't reached her flesh yet to get the blood meal it needs. Its triangular segmented body expands and contracts like a tiny rubber accordion as I slip a fingernail underneath to break its hold. It drops back into the water, squirms down into the mud as both the turtle and I watch it vanish.

I imagine the turtle thinking "Goodbye and good riddance." Not exactly a scientific thought, but one that I enjoy.

"You're welcome," I say to the turtle as I place her on the boardwalk and watch her scuttle forward to land with a small splash before she, too, scoots down to the bottom and disappears.

All that before I was halfway across the boardwalk. And I haven't even gotten to the small wooden bench where I saw and watched for ten minutes—my patience rewarded by half a dozen more natural events—in the water, in the air, and in the foliage—that a fast walker would never have enjoyed.

So here are a few simple suggestions for an amateur naturalist of any age who wants to see with an eye informed by both science and Native American tradition.

1. Walk, walk slow.

2. Stop often, stay still.

3. Be patient, look and listen. Remember we have two ears, two eyes, and only one mouth. Use them accordingly.

4. Learn the names and their meanings of as many animals, birds, flowers and animals as you can. But don't limit it to what you find in field guides. Find out what the names are among the tribal nations in whose homelands you are walking. Our names for the living creatures come from long experience and observation. Some of those names have even entered the English language, such as skunk, from the Abenaki word *segunk*, meaning "the sprayer." (There's an experience for you!)

5. Make stories part of your experience of the natural world. They can be the old traditional tales told by indigenous people, stories of others' encounters with whatever part of nature you are experiencing, or stories from your own memory or those of other family members. Stories are powerful tools to help us to understand and remember.

6. Keep a journal. Take it with you as you walk—as I often do—or write in it as soon as you've returned. Memory is a good thing, but I find that writing something down makes it an even clearer memory. And I am often surprised to find that reading a journal brings back even more in the way of memory than what I've written down.

7. Walk the same paths often. I find that a familiarity with the land helps you see the things that are changing and new that much more clearly. No two walks are ever the same, even when we follow the same trail as before.

Crossing Boundaries, Making Connections: Teaching the Works of Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and Kimiko Hahn through an Environmental Justice Lens

by Chiyo Crawford

I. Writing Assignment – Spirit-Rocks and Obelisks: Stones and consciousness as represented in Houston's "Crossing Boundaries"

In "Crossing Boundaries," Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston describes in detail the famous obelisk that marks the graves of those who died at Manzanar Internment Camp during World War II. Later, she depicts sharing with docent Richard Stewart her literary "vision of a granite obelisk transforming into an Indian warrior" (39). He corroborates her vision by explaining that there is in fact a Paiute Indian legend of a warrior who turns into stone. For Houston, this crossing over of stories and cultures is deeply meaningful; she feels a connection to the Paiute Indians with whom she shares a history of displacement and incarceration in Owens Valley and she experiences a renewed connection to the land, feeling the "protective power" of the mountains she once felt as a child at the camp (39).

For this assignment, students will read George "Tink" Tinker's "The Stones Shall Cry Out: Consciousness, Rocks, and Indians" in order to gain a fuller understanding of Native American beliefs about stones and consciousness. Tinker's article introduces important cultural forms of knowledge that may add to or be at odds with Western scientific beliefs and research. Students will then write an analytical essay that explores how this concept of "stones and consciousness" is represented in Houston's narrative, considering especially that Houston's perspective is uniquely shaped by white, Western cultural forces along with the beliefs of her Japanese ancestors.

Sample Writing Prompts/Discussion Questions:

What is significant about the way Cori responds to the obelisk? Does she respond the same way to the mountains? What is the difference between the obelisk and other spirit-rocks, such as the "The Big One?"

What other rock forms appear in Houston's story? Do you think that these would be considered "spirit-rocks" by Houston and/or Richard Stewart? Explain.

There are several references to grandparents throughout Houston's essay (including on p. 36 when she writes "*ojichan* and *obachan*" which translates from Japanese, "grandfather and grandmother.") How do these various references relate to one another and to Tinker's discussion of stones?

How do Houston's essay and Tinker's article inform or inspire your own view of stones and the environment? Explain, citing specific examples from the texts and from your own life.

In what ways is Houston's meeting with Richard Stewart one that results in a "crossing [of] boundaries?" What boundaries, specifically, are crossed?

Read Houston's "Rock Garden" (first aired on NPR's *Sound of Writing* series in 1990). What are the similarities and differences between the rock gardens of Houston's Japanese ancestors and the "spirit-rocks" of the Paiute Indians?

Resources

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. "Rock Garden." *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women's Nature Writing*. eds., Lorraine Anderson and Thomas S. Edwards. UP of New England, 2002.

Tinker, George. "The Stones Shall Cry Out: Consciousness, Rocks, and Indians." *Wicazo Sa Review*. 19.2. *Colonization/Decolonization, I*. (Fall 2004): 105-125.

II. Food Justice in the Camps: *Densho Archives* Research Project

On pages 36 and 37 of "Crossing Boundaries," Houston describes her father's pear orchard at Manzanar. Those pear trees, which her father had "nurture[ed] . . . back to life," provided spiritual and physical sustenance for his family and the larger community incarcerated at the camp. Many years later, the trees still hold significance when his granddaughter, Cori, encounters them on her first visit to the internment camp.

Assign students to

1. view Scott Hamilton Kennedy's 2008 film on the U.S.'s largest community garden, *The Garden*;
2. research the legacy of gardens in the camps by conducting a multi-media search at the *Densho* online archives (densho.org) that includes a survey of photographs, articles from the *Manzanar Free Press*, and video interviews; and
3. write a research essay on food justice at Manzanar Internment Camp using Houston's "Crossing Boundaries" and archival findings from the *Densho Archives*.

Sample Writing Prompts/Discussion Questions:

How does the pear orchard at Manzanar that Houston describes participate in the struggle for food justice in the camp?

What is the cultural and spiritual sustenance provided by the gardens at the camps? Why is this kind of sustenance important in the fight to save our planet?

Resources

Chiang, Connie. "Imprisoned Nature: Toward an Environmental History of the World War II Japanese American Incarceration," *Environmental History*. 15. 2 (April 2010): 236-67.

Gottlieb, Robert and Anupama Joshi. *Food Justice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 2010.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. "Rock Garden." *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women's Nature Writing*. eds., Lorraine Anderson and Thomas S. Edwards. UP of New England, 2002.

III. Class Activity – Ways of Reading/Seeing Identity and Environment in/through Kimiko Hahn's "Touching On Skin"

Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the images below to analyze through the lens of Kimiko Hahn's "Touching On Skin." Give students 15 to 20 minutes to prepare critical analyses of their images to present to the class. Are there multiple ways of interpreting the image, and if so, how does Hahn's poem shape those interpretations? What specific images, concepts, issues, metaphors, and stylistic aspects in Hahn's poem are also represented in the image? After each group has presented, invite the audience to raise questions, respond, and add their own critical interpretations. Finally, engage the class in a discussion on how all the images relate to one another through Hahn's poem. Encourage students to draw connections across social, political, economic, and environmental issues.

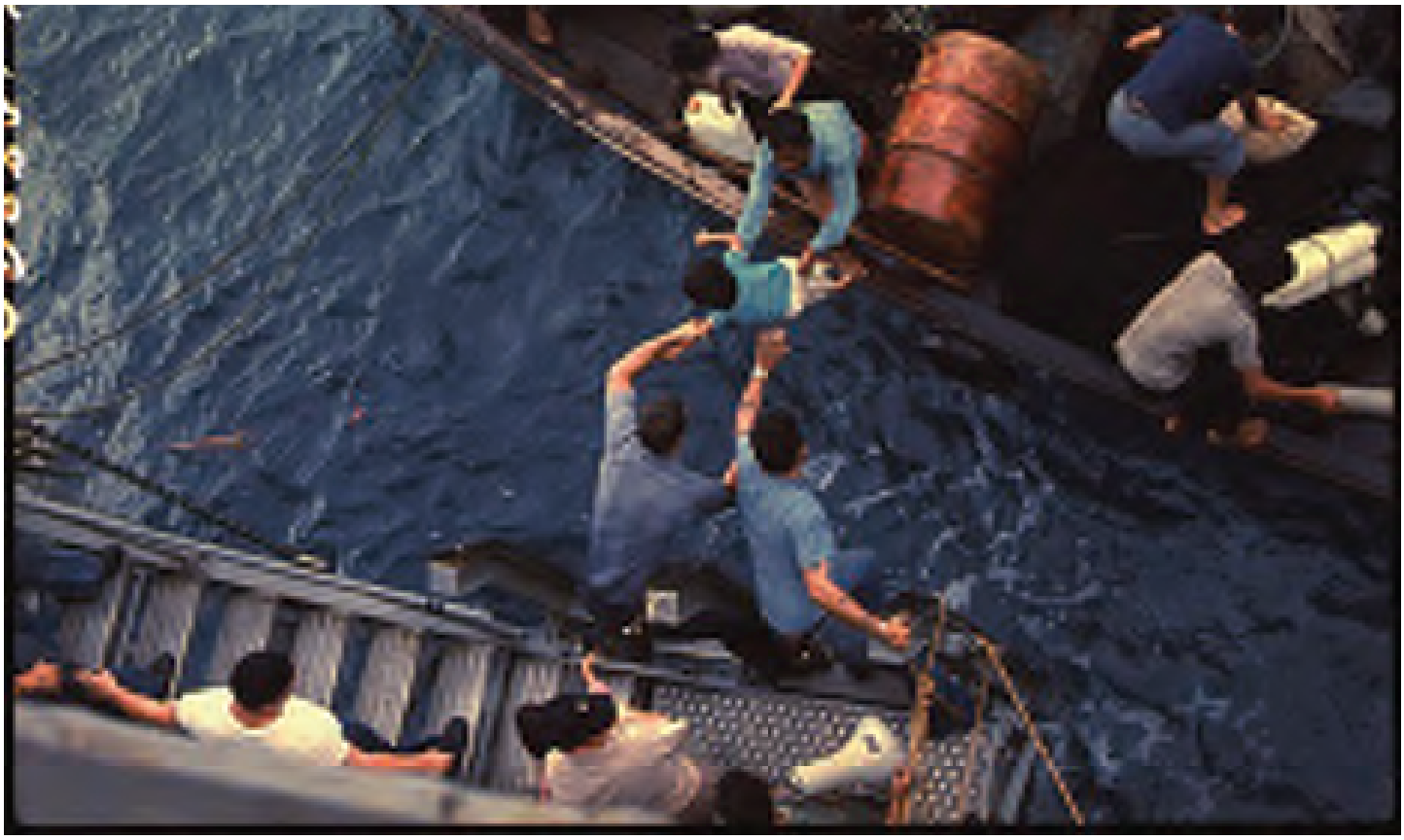
Title: Americanized Chinese gals on Mott St. / World Telegram & Sun photo by Ed Ford.
Date Created/Published: 1965 Apr 27.
Medium: 1 photographic print.
Summary: Four Chinese American girls carrying ice skates in Chinatown.
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-113493 (b&w film copy neg.)
Rights Advisory: No copyright restriction known. Staff photographer reproduction rights transferred to Library of Congress through Instrument of Gift.

Title: New York, New York. Chinese-American playing Chinese checkers with a Jewish friend in his Flatbush home
Creator(s): Collins, Marjory, 1912-1985, photographer
Date Created/Published: 1942 Aug.?
Medium: 1 negative : nitrate ; 2 1/4 x 2 1/4 inches or smaller.
Reproduction Number: LC-USW3-007311-E (b&w film nitrate neg.)
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions. For information, see U.S. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black & White Photographs(http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/res/071_fsab.html)

Title: People leaving Buddhist church, winter, Manzanar Relocation Center, California / photograph by Ansel Adams.
Creator(s): Adams, Ansel, 1902-1984, photographer
Date Created/Published: [1943]
Medium: 1 photographic print : gelatin silver. 1 negative : nitrate.
Summary: People walking through relocation center in snow past hand made wood fence.
Reproduction Number: LC-DIG-ppprs-00358 (b&w digital file from original print) LC-DIG-ppprs-00178 (b&w digital file from original neg.) LC-A35-T01-6-M-33 (b&w film dup. neg.)
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
Call Number: LOT 10479-5, no. 21 [P&P]
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Title: Filipino boy of a labor gang cutting cauliflower near Santa Maria, California
Creator(s): Lange, Dorothea, photographer
Date Created/Published: 1937 Mar.
Medium: 1 negative : nitrate ; 2 1/4 x 2 1/4 inches or smaller.
Reproduction Number: LC-USF34-016200-E (b&w film nitrate neg.)
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions. For information, see U.S. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black & White Photographs(http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/res/071_fsab.html)
Call Number: LC-USF34- 016200-E [P&P] LOT 345 (corresponding photographic print)
Other Number: J 329159
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC 20540 USA http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print

Title: Across the continent, the snow sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad, in the Sierra Nevada Mountains / From Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection of Early Californian and Western American Pictorial Material.
Creator(s): Joseph Becker
Date Created/Published: [19th Century]
Medium:
Summary: Winter scene with train and cars (C.P.R.R.) emerging from snow sheds as Chinese workers come down to greet train; snow-covered hills and mountains in distance.
Reproduction Number:
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
Call Number: digital id: cubcic brk7627
Repository: Library of Congress



Title: *South China Sea....Crewmen of the amphibious cargo ship USS Durham (LKA-114) take Vietnamese refugees aboard a small craft. The refugees will be transferred later by mechanized landing craft (LCM) to the freighter Transcolorado.*
Creator(s): Unknown or not provided
Date Created/Published: 3 April 1975
Medium: photograph
Summary: Winter scene with train and cars (C.P.R.R.) emerging from snow sheds as Chinese workers come down to greet train; snow-covered hills and mountains in distance.
Reproduction Number:
Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.
Call Number: ARC Identifier (National Archives Identifier): 558518
Repository: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Sample Discussion Questions:

Although Hahn does not explicitly discuss nature and the environment in the poem, her focus on race (and gender) identity politics is relevant to issues of environmental racism (see Robert Bullard's essay in *The Colors of Nature*). How does her text supply context for these images?

Skin not only participates in a constructed social boundary (skin color), but it is also an organ of the body that simultaneously absorbs and protects. How does Hahn's depiction of skin offer new ways of thinking about how our body interacts physically with the environment? Are these ways represented in any of the images?

A recurring theme in "Touching on Skin" is boundaries/borders—physical, emotional, spiritual, epistemological, cultural, geographical, and social. Which images are also about boundaries/borders and how does Hahn's text help to parse the meanings behind them?

Hahn also writes about the limits of language. How does her writing stylistically and formally represent and grapple with language boundaries? Do any of the images raise similar questions about language boundaries, either through content or composition?

How does Hahn challenge the border between meaning and knowing? What does she mean when she writes "The real is real?" In what ways do these questions help us think about the various ways in which we can interpret the images and their subjects?

Resources

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts*. Chapters 1 ("Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique" and 3 ("Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity"). Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Updated and Revised Edition. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998.

Learning from the Pine: Exploring Word, World, & Self through the Twelve-Tone Renku[1]

by Debra Kang Dean

A Very Brief Introduction to Renku

Renku, a contemporary form of collaborative poetry, is comprised of two major types of stanzas—seasonal and non-seasonal—and can be traced back to *renga*, or classical linked verse, which flourished in Japan between the thirteenth and sixteenth century. Initially practiced by aristocrats as a relaxation of the demands of writing *waka*, the topics used to compile *waka* anthologies were eventually carried over into *renga* writing. With the demise of imperial rule during the sixteenth century, a variant of *renga* writing emerged called *haikai no renga*, or popular linked verse. *Haikai*, as it was also called, retained the same form but employed diction—both with respect to language and subject—that transgressed the boundaries of the highly allusive and stylized classical diction of *renga*. We might understand this as a split between high culture and popular culture, between serious and comic—"*hai*," in fact, means "comic" or "unorthodox." Bashō, who was born in the middle of the seventeenth century, bridged the gap between them, containing the "low culture" aspects of the diction of *haikai* while also retaining its vitality and expanding the classical diction of the *renga*; thus, it became possible for *haikai* to reflect a fuller range of human experience while also maintaining a measure of decorum and artistic unity. Of *haikai*, Bashō said:

> There are three elements in *haikai*. Its feeling can be called loneliness (*sabi*). This plays with refined dishes, but contents itself with humble fare. Its total effect can be called elegance. This lives in figured silks and embroidered brocades, but does not forget a person clad in woven straw. Its language can be called aesthetic madness. Language resides in untruth and ought to comport with truth. It is difficult to reside in truth and sport with untruth. These three elements do not exalt a humble person to heights. They put an exalted person in a low place.[2]

These ideals are demonstrated by what we would now call a haiku that Bashō wrote about crossing the Shirakawa Barrier, which was the entrance to the northern provinces: "The beginning of art— / a rice-planting song / in the backcountry," which is Robert Hass's translation.[3] Here is my more literal translation of it based on the word-for-word translation provided by Makoto Ueda in *Bashō and His Interpreters*: *fūryū* / its beginning—[in] the depths /of a rice-planting song.[4] *Fūryū*, the word Robert Hass translates as "art" and I have, following

[1] In this essay, italics are used to distinguish classical terms and forms from contemporary ones.
[2] Robert Hass, ed. and trans., *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Buson, and Issa* (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco, 1994), 235.
[3] Hass, 38.
[4] Makoto Ueda, comp. and trans., *Bashō and His Interpreters: Selected Hokku with Commentary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1992), 238.

Ueda, left untranslated carries with it qualities such as taste, refinement, elegance, beauty, dignity, and grace; and there is a pun on "*oku*," which can mean "far north," which Hass translates as "backcountry," but also means "depth."

Many of Bashō's well-known haiku were *hokku*, the first stanza of a *haikai*, and the word "haiku" is a contraction of *haikai no ku*, meaning a verse of *haikai*. One of Bashō's very well-known *hokku* provides a glimpse into his art: "The old pond— / a frog jumps in, / water's sound."[5] In *waka*—and thus also in *renga*—frogs were noted for their croaking, but here the frog uses its body to make the water sound instead. In Bashō's *hokku*, one first encounters the image of stagnant water, and this is carried even further when the poem ends with the frog breaking the pond's surface and disappearing into it. On at least two levels—in the way the image breaks with received poetic associations for the frog and in a possible allusion to Chuang Tzu, a figure from the Daoist tradition—Bashō too makes a little splash in an old pond of tradition.

According to Tadashi Kondō and William J. Higginson, renku, a name used to identify linked verse written after Bashō, is like a mandala—that is, it seeks to present a comprehensive view of human existence.[6] *Renga*'s highly specialized seasonal vocabulary, which Haruo Shirane also refers to as a kind of "secondary nature," served to provide participants with a common vocabulary that facilitated composition.[7] This shared vocabulary enabled them to compose quickly and ensured that the *renga* moved forward through contiguous seasonal stanzas, thus avoiding what is referred to as "throwback"—which barely hints at the very complex set of rules that still operate in renku writing. However, as implied above, while such abstracting from the actual world might provide a satisfying aesthetic experience, it did so at the expense of life by surrendering the connection between language and the actual experience; it is therefore not surprising that as *renga* writing moved outside the closed world of the imperial court and its highly literate inhabitants, new diction—and with it larger areas of experience—would enter *haikai*. These disjunctions perhaps go part way in answering the question that brought *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World* into being: Why, in the genre of nature writing, were there so few writers of color?

Introduction to the Twelve-tone Renku

A twelve-tone renku is made up of alternating two- and three-line stanzas; it begins with a three-line stanza and ends with a two-line stanza. In composing individual stanzas in English, it is not necessary to count syllables; what is important is rendering the image and having each stanza function as an independent unit.

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[5] Ueda, *Bashō and His Interpreters*, 140.
[6] Kondō, Tadashi Shōkan and William J. Higginson. *Renku,* "Shorter Renku," <http://www.2hweb.net/haikai/ *renku*/shorter_ *renku*.html#Twenty-stanza%20Seasonal%20Arrangement>.
[7] Shirane, Haruo. Introduction. *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*. New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2012.

In “Shorter Renku,” Tadashi Kondō and William J. Higginson translated the following description of the twelve-tone renku that was formulated by Seijo Okamoto, who devised this version of renku:

1. A renku must have literary value and a sense of stylishness. This is what Bashō called “timeless and fashionable” (*fueki ryūkō*).
2. A twelve-tone renku consists of twelve stanzas. There is no front or back. One blossom stanza, which may be any flower in any season—it need not be cherry blossoms. One moon stanza, which may be any sort of moon in any season. About two love stanzas, in any position. About half the verses will be seasonal (a pair each for spring and autumn, one each summer and winter), and half non-seasonal, in a flexible order. About half with human focus, the rest on places, animals, plants, and the like.
3. Progression and diversity are the essence of renku. Accordingly, a wide variety of things in nature and the world of humans should appear.[8]

The statement about “front or back” refers to the front and back of a folded sheet of paper; this format is the tangible representation of the internal structuring principles of longer renku, where the length might require that several sheets be used, one tucked inside the other as with the pages of a booklet. Kondō and Higginson state that the twenty-stanza form is probably the shortest form that still allows for this classical structure. I have already touched on the meaning of progression in commenting on throwback in relation to the forward movement through the seasons, and another case of throwback is when the content of the third of three stanzas is linked to the first of them; this might preclude introducing new subject matter, thus missing opportunities for further diversity in both seasonal and non-seasonal stanzas. The many rules of renku writing evolved to ensure that a renku would be characterized by both progression and diversity, and diversity included not only subject matter, but also syntax, time of day, states of consciousness, and what we might anachronistically think of as camera angle.

Components of the Twelve-Tone Renku

Seasonal elements, which point to nature, can be reflected not only by the presence of plants, animals, and insects, but also by the weather, atmospheric conditions, and seasonal observances. These observances may include not only Easter, but also Día de los Muertos, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, Obon, Holi, May Day, and the Lunar New Year, among others. As implied by the earlier discussion about the *satoyama*, as “secondary nature,” seasonal observances remind us of the ways humans were connected to the land. These and many other such seasonal observances remind us of the ways humans were connected to the land.

Senryu are to the non-seasonal stanzas what haiku are to the seasonal ones—and reflect a seventeenth-century response that preserves the “comic” dimension of *haikai* as this

[8] Kondō, and Higginson, “Shorter Renku.”

latter form becomes more "serious"; haiku, according to Earl Miner, reflects a swing back toward seriousness in response to senryu.[9] Like senryu, the non-seasonal elements focus on the human world and use images to suggest both larger, social concerns, such as war and unemployment, and the flux of daily life, which might include tending to a sick child and listening to music. As with trying to avoid metaphor, one sometimes discovers in writing these stanzas how hard it can be to avoid images that imply the seasons. For example, while it is now possible to enjoy blueberries all year, the fluctuating cost reminds us that they are, in fact, seasonal. Also, modern history has led to secular observances whose dates locate them in particular seasons, but whose significance is more firmly grounded in the human sphere; among the many are 9/11, Juneteenth, Sa-I-Gu, and Cinco de Mayo.

Because of renku's origins in the imperial court and the way poems were often used in that context, "love" refers specifically to romantic and erotic love, and the lover, whether present or longed for, provides a very specific focus for the emotion. Also within this tradition, the word "blossom" became synonymous with the "cherry blossom"; for contemporary renku, however, the blossom of any flower will serve, and, in fact, when I composed renku under Tadashi Kondō's guidance, I was given to understand that one need only use the word "blossom." It is said that the actual blossoms represent the transience of life, and the moon enlightenment, both of which have a place in every renku.

The Exercise

This exercise consists of two parts that are designed to make it possible to complete a twelve-tone renku in two fifty-minute class periods. Much of the information provided here, based on my general knowledge of renku practice, is for the facilitator, not for the participants, and it is suggested that the seasonal vocabulary be assigned as homework after a brief introduction that provides several examples that will serve to encourage participants to draw from all areas of their experience. Alternatives include devoting the first class period to compiling one seasonal vocabulary list with all members of the class contributing to it instead, or, when only one class period is available, to providing the class with seasonal-vocabulary lists.

For the first part of the exercise, participants will have filled out the two seasonal-vocabulary sheets based on their knowledge of and experience in a particular geographical place, and during part of one class period they would work in groups of four and compile from their separate lists a seasonal vocabulary that is centered on the place in which they are physically located—with the exception of the seasonal observances, all of which would be included in the composite seasonal vocabulary. The rest of the class period would be devoted to discussing discoveries participants made in working with others to compile their seasonal-vocabulary lists. The goal for this part of the exercise is to put together a list that includes various parts of the seasons and accurately reflects the locale, along with a list of seasonal observances, some of which are held in common and others that are not. Renku employs a

[9] Earl Miner, *Japanese Linked Poetry: An Account with Translations of Haikai Sequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1979), pp. 99-107.

specific calendar, with each season divided into three parts, but for the purpose of this exercise, it is sufficient to delineate the seasons using the summer and winter solstices and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes.

It may sometimes be difficult to determine whether a stanza is seasonal or non-seasonal, and the following questions may be useful. "Is a plant, animal, or meteorological phenomenon associated with a specific season?" Robins and crocuses, for example, may signal the arrival of spring, but sparrows and pine trees of themselves are not associated with any one season. "Is the principal focus of the stanza the natural world or the human world?" Sometimes a stanza may contain a word associated with a season while the overall intent of the stanza is more clearly focused on the human world. The inclusion of the following verse in *Light Verse from the Floating World: An Anthology of Premodern Japanese Senryu* reflects the writer's focus on the human drama and the image conveys humor: "the toddler / struggling to get a handle / on a melon."[10] This makes sense when the verse is taken independently, but in the context of renku the stanza might occupy a summer position because of the melon—which suggests that the division between what is seasonal and what is non-seasonal is not as clean as the language might suggest. Of observances, one might ask, "Is it marking an historical event or figure rather than being rooted in the season during which it is celebrated?"

The value of this part of the exercise resides not so much in having the right answers, but in the way it can prompt these sort of questions as participants work to compile the group list, and, particularly in the case of observances, what is determined not to be seasonal can be used in non-seasonal stanzas. These questions are best used while compiling the seasonal vocabulary, but as I hope the senryu above indicates, the division between what is seasonal and what is not can be slightly ambiguous in the context of renku writing, and so if a stanza resembling the senryu with a melon were written as a summer link, rather than eating up time analyzing it while the renku is being composed and also possibly discouraging its author, it would be best for the sake of this exercise to move on. It is assumed that working from the seasonal vocabulary list will help to avoid seasonal stanzas that do not include seasonal words.

For the second class period, participants would compose their twelve-tone renku in pairs and, time permitting, share their finished renku with the class. A template for a renku written in the spring is included as an aid to composition and can be modified for renku written in other seasons. A follow-up essay reflecting on the experience of building a seasonal vocabulary list, writing renku, and/or assessing how well the draft embodies the rules of renku can also be assigned if desired. "Mimosa," a twelve-tone renku included at the end of this essay, and my comments on it, are an example.

As indicated by the attribution of stanzas in "Mimosa," the person who writes the second stanza will write both the sixth and the seventh stanzas; this is to allow each person to write two-line stanzas and three-line stanzas. (If there is an odd number of participants in the

[10] Makoto Ueda, comp. and trans. *Light Verse from the Floating World: An Anthology of Premodern Senryu* (New York, NY: Columbia UP, 1999), 27.

class, say, fifteen, one group of three can be formed, in which case it would not be necessary to make this switch mid-renku—the odd number of participants would result in three switches in the course of composition.

Most people are familiar with haiku, and, as noted above, the *hokku* of a renku is basically a haiku: it is set in the actual season the renku is being written, and it includes within it a change of direction or shift, either after the first line or after the second line, that result in a surprising or unexpected connection between the two parts. The earlier examples of Bashō's *hokku* demonstrate the surprises sprung when to the image of an old pond, which might evoke a feeling of melancholy is added a frog—and then not croaking, but a splash; or when art is borne, not in response to high art, but to a rice-planting song. The reason for the shift in the *hokku* in the context of renku writing is that nothing precedes it to which it can be linked. After this first stanza, all subsequent stanzas need not contain shifts internally because they will link with the preceding stanza to complete an image *and* shift to provide the next participant with an opportunity to use that stanza to create a new image when linked with the stanza he or she composes.

To illustrate linking and shifting, I have selected stanzas from "Mimosa," which a friend and I composed. (The entire renku appears below.) I have chosen to use examples from this renku because as the author of two of the links, I can speak about process and intention:

it is raining rice! as the bride washes dishes grains down the gutter	ACdR
shaking his head the poor man, between sighs, saying, *No more*	DKD
he'd seen the barrel glint under a harvest moon when the sling went slack	DKD

The first of these stanzas creates a scene with a woman washing dishes, and Antonio's use of the word "gutter" rather than "drain" shifted the scene for me backwards in time. Antonio indicated that he'd written his stanza the same day that he'd actually washed dishes after a meal with his in-laws, but the allusion to throwing rice at a wedding and the word "raining" suggested to someone whose chores included washing uncooked rice that the inexperienced bride of the second and third lines of the stanza is a little wasteful. So in the second stanza, I introduced a destitute man in the vicinity of the house as the grains stopped flowing out. I wanted to compose a stanza that would link to Antonio's stanza in a way that was open enough to shift into a new scene—although here the shifting is probably more successful than the linking is.

Because we were nearing the halfway mark for the renku, I looked at our "Elements" table and saw that four of our stanzas had been non-seasonal, so, a little concerned about this fact, I introduced an autumn stanza and also followed convention by introducing the autumn moon. In the third stanza, the old man is reimagined at a checkpoint in a moment when a guard has leveled his rifle. The scene has shifted not only in time and location, but also from late afternoon to evening; the vantage has shifted from mid-range to a wide-angle and then to a close-up angle. This is a very simplified description of the link-and-shift techniques used in renku, one that results in a progression of stanzas that is non-linear—"plotless," some might say—and it is the structure that unifies the renku. In "Link and Shift," Kondō and Higginson discuss the various types of linking, a subject that is beyond the scope of this essay.

Concluding Thoughts

In a class with a diverse population, the first part of this exercise may foster discussion about secular and seasonal observances and their significance to those who celebrate them. For courses in environmental studies, the second part of the exercise provides an occasion for a more personal engagement with factual knowledge of the flora and fauna of a region and variations in precipitation and atmospheric conditions as seasonal markers. Perhaps, most importantly, however, this exercise affords an occasion for participants, regardless of their disciplines of study, to attend to the particular world in which they find themselves and to allow into the classroom individual experiences that can foster cross-cultural exchanges.

As a complement to the essays in *The Colors of Nature*, renku offers a structure that may be more hospitable to experiential knowledge and lead to a broader conception of nature by asking participants to think about the many ways nature is part of their lives. It's my assumption that in compiling their lists, participants will expand them beyond the examples included here; it is conceivable, for example, that someone might add particular sports to the seasonal list and bring to consciousness the role weather has played in the current calendar of sports, and it is possible that some participants will find it easier to list weather and observances than plants and animals; nonetheless, the process may become an entry point into the larger natural world. Moreover, while I propose this two-part exercise in renku writing not for the sake of mastering a very complex poetic form but as a way of restoring the connection between word and world, I hope that this introduction will also lead to a greater appreciation of the form itself and encourage others to learn more about it—by reading and research as well as by writing.

Whether the Yoshino cherry trees sent by the people of Japan to the United States in 1912 and planted primarily on the Tidal Basin in Washington, DC, or the apocryphal story about George Washington cutting down his father's cherry tree, the things of this world are imbued with story and history. "*Kyō nite mo Kyō natsukashi ya hototogisu*"—"Even in Kyoto / I long for Kyoto— / cuckoo's cry."[11] My near literal translation of another of Bashō's *hokku* that preserves

[11] Ueda. *Bashō and His Interpreters*, 294. Much of the information in the paragraph is drawn from the commentary Ueda includes on the *hokku.*

the syntactical structure of the original is very close to my heart. In it, Bashō alludes to a *waka* by Sosei, a monk who died in 910, and in his presentation of the *hokku*, Ueda also includes Sosei's *waka*. In the *waka,* the cuckoo's cry evokes a feeling of nostalgia for the past, and that feeling is part of this *hokku*; however, through the syntax, Bashō also captures a moment where and when he lives for an instant in two worlds: one, though absent and longed for, held in language and memory, and one present and calling the other into being through the cuckoo's cry. When I visited Kyoto many years ago now, I heard no cuckoo cry, but because both Bashō and Sosei before him had left behind their poems, through the residue of their feelings, I was with them there.

"Don't follow in the footsteps of the old poets, seek what they sought," said Bashō, for whom *haikai* writing was a spiritual practice. He also said, "Learn about pines from the pine, and about bamboo from the bamboo."[12] Although I know Bashō took his pen name from a banana tree given to him by a student and planted outside his hut north of the city we now call Tokyo, when I work to better understand renku, he is the pine.

An Example of a Twelve-tone Renku

Mimosa

half sober half drunk	
today I've seen the future—	(spring/blossom)
mimosa tree in bloom	ACdR
Sunday morning's leisurely	(winter)
brunch in flannel pajamas	DKD
with white puffs of smoke	
and the first open windows	(no season)
a full day of work	ACdR
departing, the groom-to-be	(no season/love)
drenched by the sound of kisses	DKD
it is raining rice!	
as the bride washes dishes	(no season)
grains down the gutter	ACdR
shaking his head the poor man,	(no season)
between sighs, saying, No more	DKD
he'd seen the barrel	
glint under a harvest moon	(autumn/moon)
when the sling went slack	DKD

[12] Hass, 233.

an early bird missed the bus (summer)
so we sit—the sun and us ACdR

Merry Pranksters we
too know how it feels—*this sweet* (no season)
sensation of joy DKD

running by dusk—the first bare legs (spring)
in the incense scented air ACdR

neither here nor there
a contemplative dream space (autumn / love)
a lover's embrace DKD

"You have arrived, you are home," (no season)
halfway the half marathon ACdR

Antonio Casado da Rocha, who lives in Spain and teaches at the University of the Basque Country, and I wrote this renku via e-mail to celebrate the 2012 vernal equinox—although, eager to start, Antonio actually sent his *hokku* on March 11th, and we completed the renku on March 24th. Because Antonio and I had written several twenty-stanza renku in the late nineties together under the guidance of Tadashi Kondō while all of us were in Massachusetts, I created the following chart to keep track of the various elements as we composed the renku rather than using the template I created for the exercise. We checked off the elements our stanzas fulfilled, crossing out the season and filling in the seasonal word, where applicable. Experienced writers may wish to use a table like this one instead of the spring template provided below. The use of two seasonal stanzas each for spring and autumn, which reflects the traditional emphasis on these seasons, and only one each for summer and winter follows Okamoto's recommendation and, to my mind, is appropriate for a renku written during the spring. As with the template, one might wish to revise the following "Elements" table if the renku were being written in a season other than spring; filling in the seasons as they are written is an alternative that would allow for greater flexibility.

Elements						
Blossom						
Moon						
Love						
Seasonal	spring	spring	autumn	autumn	summer	winter
(seasonal word)						
Non-seasonal						

Reflections on "Mimosa"

The very first stanza of "Mimosa" reflects some of the difficulties that exist when participants aren't in the same location and/or when there isn't a shared seasonal vocabulary. Here in Indiana, I associate the mimosa with early summer, but when I asked Antonio about it, he wrote that he had, in fact, seen a mimosa in bloom. (As an aside, the mimosa in my yard bloomed in late spring this year, which might raise questions about climate change.) This stanza also reflects the way a word for a natural object can point to one season while the way it is used can point to another. In his *hokku*—"half sober half drunk / today I've seen the future / mimosa tree in bloom"—Antonio alludes to the equinox in the first line, and because of the word "future" in the second line, I could take it as meaning that the mimosa is, at this point in time, imagined rather than actual—which, for me, could locate it in summer—and this is a little different from what Antonio intended. About this stanza, he wrote: "I saw an actual mimosa and thought: this is a prophecy of what's to come (because the mimosa was by far the first tree to bloom, I took it as an anticipation of the other trees' future blooming). So I could say that I indeed saw 'the (blooming) future'."[13] One could ask similar questions about the second stanza—"Sunday morning's leisurely / brunch in flannel pajamas"—which uses "flannel" as a seasonal word for winter. Because of the way I read Antonio's first stanza, the implication was that it is very late winter or early spring and the air is still chilled, so our figures might still be

[13] Antonio Casado da Rocha. E-mail to the author. 16 June 2012. Antonio sent these comments in response to an earlier draft of this section of the essay. The other comments accompanied the exchange of stanzas from 11 March 2012 to 25 March 2012.

wearing winter clothing. As noted on the renku itself, we used the word “mimosa,” following Antonio’s classification of it, as a seasonal word for spring.[14]

When we completed the renku, we were aware that we seemed, on the surface at least, to have a renku that was very overbalanced on the human side: “bare legs” for spring, “contemplative,” a state of being associated with the season for autumn, the implied longer days of “early bird” and “bus” for summer; and “flannel” for winter, with “mimosa” and “harvest moon” the only overt seasonal references. This was not only the first renku we had written together without Tadashi’s guidance, but also the first twelve-tone renku we had attempted together.

As poets—Antonio has published several volumes of poetry in Spanish—we considered revising the renku so that the seasonal stanzas employed more direct references to nature, but decided to let it stand as a record of where we were in our development as writers of renku—and as a testament to the challenges of writing a twelve-tone renku. While there are weaknesses in relation to the rules governing renku, we nevertheless agree that we wrote our way toward revealing what we didn’t know we knew or perhaps what is so easily forgotten in a world where one country occupies another, where there are extremes of wealth and poverty: there is another world as well—one that is born again in spring, and in which nature, like love, is in the quality of light and in the very air around us, wherever we are. Writing in another season might prompt a change of heart, and that, too, might be part of the experience of writing renku, but within it, there would still be the renewal of spring, however brief, to sustain us. And so if not yet the letter of the twelve-tone renku, in the time we took to write one, we have at least gotten a little closer to its spirit.

[14] This sort of identification is not usually done on a finished renku, but I include it for the convenience of readers of this essay.

	Seasonal List for Twelve-tone Renku	
	Fauna (fish, birds, mammals, insects, etc.)	Flora (grasses, shrubs, trees, etc.)
Spring		
Summer		
Winter		
Fall		

	Seasonal List for Twelve-tone Renku	
	Weather (precipitation, etc.) & Atmospheric Conditions (wind, condensation)	Seasonal Observances
Spring		
Summer		
Winter		

Fall		

Template for Twelve-tone Spring Renku	
Spring Blossom	
No season	
No season	
Winter Love	
No season Love	
Summer	

No season	
Autumn	
Autumn Moon	
No season	
No season	
Spring	

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Teaching Resources for "Encounter": Discussion/Essay Questions

by Renée Dowbnia, University of Florida

"The Thinking Men" by Nikky Finney

- Just as Nikki Finney brings the intelligence and lasting impact of the enslaved men who built Old Main into focus in this poem, many of the writers in this section highlight the existence of alternative, oppositional knowledge to the dominant American narrative. Examples include bell hooks's discussion of the knowledge she gained from "backwoods folks" when she was growing up and Robin Wall Kimmerer's critique of the limits of scientific knowledge, but it is easy to imagine connections with other essays in this section as well. Choose one of the essays in this section to read alongside Finney's poem. What values or lessons does this alternative knowledge impart? How does it critique the status quo? How does the existence of this oppositional or alternative knowledge enable us to "more fully imagine and comprehend who and what we are with respect to each other, to the land, and to our shared responsibility?" (9)

"Learning the Grammar of Animacy" by Robin Wall Kimmerer

- How does Kimmerer "learn the grammar of animacy?" What strategies does she use to accomplish this goal? Do you find her attempts successful? Why or why not?

- In her essay, Kimmerer shares the following insight from one of her field ecology students:

  > "Doesn't this mean that speaking English, thinking in English, somehow gives us permission to disrespect nature? By denying everyone else the right to be persons? Wouldn't things be different if nothing was an 'it'?" (175)

  Do you agree or disagree with this student's assessment and why? Is it possible to "learn the grammar of animacy" as a native English speaker? Why or why not? Give examples to support your answer.

- Kimmerer writes that she wanted to give her student Marilou Awiakta's poem "When the Earth Becomes an 'It'" in response to his question (see the quote in the question above). Read Awiakta's poem (you can find it easily online). How does the poem's depiction of earth as a "Mother" embody Kimmerer's argument about animacy? Do you

find this form of anthropomorphism to be a "loss of objectivity" that projects human perceptions onto nonhuman objects, as some of her students argued? Or do you think that envisioning earth as a Mother helps us recognize the earth as an animate being? In pondering this question, you may want to reread her students' debate on page 176.

"Listening for the Ancient Tones, Watching for Sign, Tasting for the Mountain Thyme" by Gary Paul Nabhan

- Reflecting on his past, Nabhan writes: "If I had not learned from my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins how to look at, walk across, and taste the world, I would not have an inkling how to do that among other cultures, and my own meager life would be far poorer" (183). Clearly, Nabhan views his upbringing as a crucial foundation that nurtured his respect for nature and worldview. Consider your own cultural history and subject position. How has your upbringing (cultural and religious beliefs, values, family teachings, past experiences, etc.) influenced your perception of the world and valuation of nature? Do you agree with Nabhan that a respect and understanding of nature has to be taught? How could such a worldview be learned by someone who has lacked such teachers?

"Earthbound: On Solid Ground" by bell hooks

- On page 186, bell hooks refers to "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy," a term she uses repeatedly in her other various works. What does this term mean? How does hooks define it? How does "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" impact the natural world, and what examples does she give of this impact? What examples could you add to the list?

- bell hooks repeatedly refers to "living simply" as "an alternative to the capitalist system that destroyed nature's abundance" (186).What does it mean to live simply? How could you implement this philosophy in your daily life? What are the benefits and challenges of such an implementation?

"This Weight of Small Bodies" by Kimberly M. Blaeser

- Blaeser begins her essay with a quote from William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence." Carefully read Blake's poem (you can find it easily online). What connections do you see between the poem and Blaeser's essay? To what extent do they share the same perspective, and where (or how) do they differ? Give specific examples from both texts to support your answer.

- In this essay, Blaeser treats both a banana leaf and, later, her memories of ice fishing as gateways to understanding the complex, interconnected relationships between people, processes, and lands. Like Blaeser, choose an object to consider as such a symbol—it can be a person, place or thing; animate or inanimate; rare or commonplace; tangible or intangible—and do some research. Where did it come from? How was it made? How did it make its way to you, and where will it likely end up? How are people, animals, and places affected by the life cycle of this object? What "land knowledge" does it impart?

"Sharing Breath: Some Links Between Land, Plants, and People" by Enrique Salmón

- Enrique Salmón discusses the importance of language in preserving cultural history when he writes: "When the language disappears, the sum of cultural cognition of the land is lost" (209). Likewise, Robin Wall Kimmerer depicts the preservation of language as crucial to both understandings of the natural world and Native American cultural traditions. After reading both essays, consider the relationship between language, culture, nature, and power. How are they connected? Use examples from both essays, as well as your own experiences and/or outside research, to support your answer.

"Burning the Shelter" by Louis Owens

- At the end of his essay, Louis Owens makes the following argument:

  > "Unless Americans, and all human beings, can learn to imagine themselves as intimately and inextricably related to every other aspect of the world they inhabit, with the extraordinary responsibilities such relationship entails—unless they can learn what the indigenous peoples of the Americas knew and often still know—the earth simply will not survive" (214).

  Do you agree with this argument? Why or why not? How could we begin to imagine ourselves as "intimately and inextricably related to every other aspect of the world?" In other words, what would such a world look like, and what steps could we take to get there?

"At the End of Ridge Road" by Joseph Bruchac

- As a nature journal, Joseph Bruchac's work is arguably the most traditional form of nature writing in this section of *The Colors of Nature*. In the introduction to *The Colors of Nature*, Savoy and Deming argue that "if what is called 'nature writing'

aims to understand how we comprehend and then live responsibly in the world, then it must recognize the legacies of the Americas 'past in ways that are mindful of the complex historical and cultural dynamics that have shaped us all" (6). How does Bruchac's nature journal reach beyond the limitations of traditional nature writing to meet this goal?

- This essay is actually made up of three entries of Bruchac's nature journal, which are both dated and labeled by animals: "Two Owls," "Turkeys," and "Turtles." Imagine these animals as the main idea for each section. How do animals function in Bruchac's writing? What do they represent? What connections do you see between each section? What arguments are made in each section, and how do they relate to the animals depicted? To Bruchac's main purpose for writing?

The Nature of Home

by Linda Lizut Helstern, North Dakota State University

Assigned Readings:

Two assigned readings serve as the basis for a lesson that asks students to think about how considering all beings as persons might affect human behavior:

- "Burning the Shelter" by Louis Owens; and
- "At the End of the Ridge Road: From a Nature Journal" by Joseph Bruchac

Context:

This lesson from *The Colors of Nature* was designed for a 75-minute session in an upper-division general education course in Literature and the Environment. At my land grant university, along with its share of English majors, the course attracts students from disciplines as varied as equine science and civil engineering, and for these students, it is likely to be the only literature course in their bachelor's degree programs. They are not otherwise a diverse group. Students often enroll because of their enthusiasm for hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing, and many have spent time in the Minnesota Boundary Waters Canoe Area. The class they think they have signed up for would be called Adventures in Outdoor Recreation, even though they understand that the class will fulfill both the Global Perspectives and Humanities requirements in the general education curriculum. Opening the door to non-Western thinking stands as a major goal of this course.

I recognize each of my students as an environmental advocate in training, and their success is likely to depend upon the ability to tell a good story, one that brings both reason and feeling to bear. Literature and the Environment may be the only time in these students' educational careers when the apparent dichotomy between pristine nature and human technology is challenged.

Homework Preparation:

Two short written exercises help to raise students' awareness of non-human nature in their daily lives and frame this literary discussion in terms of their own experiences. First, I ask the students to list all the plants and animals who have shared their home spaces, both indoors and outdoors, including even the viewshed. (This can be especially important for students who grew up in apartments.) In some cases, this is an exercise in naming based on a remembered

characteristic because identification is not their forte. As Luther Standing Bear suggests in *My Indian Boyhood,* however, making up a good name validates the powers of observation, and it is a traditional Native way of learning about the natural world (65).

Second, I ask my students to write their most interesting personal observation of an animal or animals. I collect their homework at the beginning of the class period to be read and returned the next class period when we will share a telling (not a reading) of their stories. During this lesson, I want to focus on just one fact: how many of them wrote about an animal from their home space and how many wrote about an animal elsewhere. I post the count for HOME and AWAY and ask the students to speculate about reasons for the similarity or difference. However brief the discussion, they begin to grapple with their own position relative to the modern dichotomy between nature and culture and their own attentiveness to their surroundings.

Backgrounder: The Wilderness Act of 1964 and Subsequent Legislation:

Owens's profound realization in "Burning the Shelter" will be enhanced by a basic understanding of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and its scope, notably its famous definition: "A wilderness, in contrast to those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." In my classroom, this is one of the several subjects assigned for 10- to 12-minute researched, small-group, Power Point presentations; it is always one of the most popular assignments. Students themselves tell the story behind federal wilderness legislation and consider its impact over forty-plus years, including the designation of the Minnesota Boundary Waters as a wilderness area in 1978.

Biographical Background:

Louis Owens and Joseph Bruchac both bring professional environmental experience to their writing. Owens, of Choctaw, Cherokee, and Irish descent, wrote most often about the mountain West—Washington, California (where he grew up), Arizona, and New Mexico. In the 1970s, shortly after passage of the Wilderness Act, he served on trail crews, hot-shot crews, and as a wilderness ranger, and seriously considered a career in the Forest Service. Bruchac, of Abenaki and Slovak descent, studied wildlife conservation and makes his home in the Adirondacks of New York, literally in the home where he grew up. Among their many writing awards, both Owens and Bruchac have been honored by their Native peers with the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers.

Claiming Responsibility: A Discussion of "Burning the Shelter":

To paraphrase a quotation from Maria Chona that Louis Owens himself borrowed in writing about Native literature, Native stories can be very short because the audience knows so much. This is critical in gauging the import of the very brief stories told by the two Native women Owens encounters on the trail. To emphasize the importance of the Native storytelling act and the long period of reflection afterward that is the norm for listeners, I like to open the class discussion of "Burning the Shelter" with a deceptively simple question: why, at the climactic moment in this essay, does the young ranger feel so guilty that he wants to run from the elder women he meets on the White Pass trail?

The question goes to the heart of the essay's central conflict between two conceptions of nature, the Native conception that includes human beings as a part of the creation and the dominant U.S. conception that segregates "real nature," notably wilderness, from culture. The easy answer, of course, has to do with family: the ranger has destroyed a tangible family connection. A more complex answer, however, is coded in the stories the sisters tell, which are both family and tribal. They are connected to this land, not by using it exactly as generations of their ancestors did, but through the memories and stories they keep fresh through their annual visits. The Adirondack shelter built by their father as an employee of the Forest Service was meant for human use, just as the old-time shelters in the tribal berrying camps had been.

In his fierce love of the natural world, young Ranger Owens, despite his own Choctaw-Cherokee heritage, has overlooked the Native connection to this spectacularly beautiful region of Washington State. He is guilty of seeing the land unpeopled. The elders cure Owens of his cultural amnesia, reminding him of the long history of Native presence in this landscape, erased not by development but by a series of federal mandates, including the wilderness mandate. The Native sisters, however, are still at home here, with or without the shelter. White Pass for them is a cultural space, the storied space of a living, changing culture. Life goes on.

Living Responsibly: Small Group Discussion/Presentation of "At the End of the Ridge Road: From a Nature Journal":

The conclusion of "Burning the Shelter" offers a perfect segue for reflecting on the stories told by Joseph Bruchac in "At the End of the Ridge Road." Bruchac writes from his "camp," a second home with long family and tribal ties where the balance between human enterprise and nonhuman nature is again clearly changing. Dividing the class into six small groups, with two groups responsible for each of the three journal entries, I ask students to consider whether Bruchac imagines himself "intimately and inextricably related to every aspect of the world [he] inhabit[s], with the extraordinary responsibility such relationship entails." Bruchac is writing about his everyday life in upstate New York, I remind them. Is he living the commitment that Owens calls for? Is this an example for us to emulate? Can we?

To guide the discussion, I ask students to focus on the following questions:

1. How are “animals” acknowledged as persons?

2. Are any animals not acknowledged as persons? Is there a difference in Bruchac’s attitude toward them?

3. What about plants? Landforms? Bodies of water? Are they acknowledged as persons?

4. Do humans help nonhumans? What responsibilities do humans take for nonhuman persons?

5. Do nonhumans help humans? What responsibilities do nonhuman persons take on?

6. Are there conflicts between humans and nonhumans? Resolutions?

7. How do humans utilize the world and its beings? Are there appropriate and inappropriate ways to do this?

8. How does Bruchac use traditional story?

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The Names of Nature:
Exercises in Naming the Natural World

by Christopher Justice, University of Baltimore

Introduction

Among the many provocative stories in *The Colors of Nature,* one consistent theme stands out: the importance of names and their relationship to identity. In stories such as Fred Arroyo's "Working in a Region of Lost Names," J. Drew Lanham's "Hope and Feathers: A Crisis in Birder Identification," and Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Learning the Grammar of Animacy," among others, the names of people, places, and things perform complex discursive functions. In some instances, as Arroyo reminds us, names stir memories, helping us recall how intimate, yet distant our relationships with loved ones were or have become. In other contexts, as Lanham suggests, the process of naming animals such as birds can provide a refuge for understanding relationships between nature and humanity, and more specifically, depending on the place such a process unfolds, between race and identity. And in other instances, as Kimmerer explains, names, especially scientific names, serve as the building blocks of academic disciplines that simultaneously help us to examine and understand the natural world, while also compelling us to distance and frame natural entities as "the other." Names bring us closer to nature, but paradoxically, names remove us from nature. Through the power of discourse, the names we use to label the environment reveal much about our identity and values.

Questions for Class Discussion

Fred Arroyo's "Working in a Region of Lost Names"

- What is the relationship between work, place, and identity in this story? How does each complement or complicate the other?
- Why does the narrator want to bring his father to work with him?
- The word "lost" can assume different meanings. What does the word "lost" mean specifically in this story? Why are these names "lost"? Are they, in fact, lost, or is something else happening to the narrator's memories?
- What is the relationship between a person's name and his or her identity? In this story particularly, what role do the names play in shaping, or re-shaping, the forgotten men's' identities?

J. Drew Lanham's "Hope and Feathers: A Crisis in Birder Identification"

- How does the narrator use ecology to "game the system" (77)?

- In several contexts, the narrator seems uniquely interested in the concept of the "exotic." Why? What does the "exotic" mean to the narrator? What does that word mean to you? What does that word connote?
- While in South Africa, the narrator identifies with local ornithologists. Why? Besides their love of birds, what do they specifically have in common?
- How is the narrator's process of identification similar to or different from the process of identifying birds?
- What role does South Africa as a unique place play in these processes of identification?
- What do the birds of South Africa ultimately teach this narrator?

Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Learning the Grammar of Animacy"

- In this essay, the narrator is critical of language and how it shapes our understanding of the natural world. The narrator is particularly critical of scientific language. What is it about science and its use of language that troubles this narrator?
- The narrator notes that "English is a noun-based language, somehow appropriate to a culture so obsessed with things" (172). What does the narrator mean here? What are some other characteristics of the English language that reveal American values?
- How does the English language celebrate and value humanness?
- The narrator suggests there's a whole world of life and activity that the English language seems incapable of expressing. What are some examples of natural phenomena that have no linguistic equivalents in English?
- The narrator laments the limitations of the English language. What's problematic about these limitations? What does the narrator suggest we do about these limitations? How can we overcome them?

Class Activities

For *Fred Arroyo's "Working in a Region of Lost Names"*

Interview a few family members not from your generation. In other words, interview your parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents, and ask them questions about their names. Possible questions could include the following: Who named them? What were some alternative names, if any? Why was that name chosen? What were the significant meanings associated with that name when the person was born? Were there any concerns about that name? Over time, what other meanings have those names assumed? Report your findings to your classmates, and start your report with a sentence like this: In my family, it appears names have a (What kind?) history…

For *J. Drew Lanham's "Hope and Feathers: A Crisis in Birder Identification"*

Reflect upon your relationships with animals. Specifically, focus on a relationship you had with an individual animal or type or species of animal. The animal could be a pet you once owned; an animal you carefully observed in a zoo, aquarium, backyard, or park; or an animal you first experienced through the media (film, literature, television, cartoons, video games, etc.). Certainly other possibilities exist. Next, consider the unique dynamics of that relationship. Why

did you become so connected with this animal? What characteristics did you share? What characteristics were noticeably different between you and that animal? What did the animal teach you? How did the animal teach you those lessons? How did those lessons affect your relationships with other animals? With the natural world in general? With people? Would you have learned those lessons elsewhere without this animal's assistance? Did the animal have a name? If so, who named it? Why was that name chosen? If the animal is no longer alive, how do you preserve its memory? With these questions in mind, write an essay that, essentially, narrates your relationship with this animal.

For *Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Learning the Grammar of Animacy"*

Examine and study the names of places, animals, and plants or trees in your community. How have the names of these places or species been "anthropomorphized"? Or, in other words, humans created these names, but how are these names problematic or even inaccurate? How do they reflect humans' needs, desires, biases, or ignorance? What are the implications of these misnamed places or species? Create a chart that outlines this phenomenon of misnaming (similar to the one below), and next, write an essay that explores in more depth three of these misnamed species. Specifically, focus on the history of their names and the complications their names raise.

Species name	Reason/s it's misnamed	Possible implications
Brook trout	-Brook trout are not technically trout; they're char. -Brook trout live in various bodies of water, not just brooks. For example, they are often found in lakes and large rivers too.	-Trout are more common in America than char, so using the name char might sound somehow un-American. -By labeling them "brook" trout, they may be perceived as easier to find because brooks are relatively small. -Also, by suggesting they primarily live in brooks, brook trout are portrayed as more fragile since brooks are more susceptible to environmental degradation.
Black widow spider	-Calling this species of spider a widow suggests it was once married. -The word widow might suggest a female who's often left alone by men. -Calling this spider a widow immediately feminizes it, and adding the adjective black to it connotes a sense of evil or maliciousness.	-Spiders don't marry. Here humans are imposing a valued, human activity upon an insect. - Black widows are often actively engaged with males. -This name suggests black widows cannot get along with men. Dangerous, venomous spiders are feminized and a threat to males. In that sense, a black widow spider is the ultimate femme fatale.

Environmental Histories, Knowledges, Literacies, and Actions: Investigating the Intersections of Language, Place, Race, Poetics, and Practice

by Adela C. Licona, University of Arizona

> *In my teaching, I find that when I talk about issues of racism – which are the most difficult to address – it is easier to talk about capitalism first. When everyone begins to see that they are not part of the five percent, it gives them the investment to start addressing the other privileges. They realize that addressing issues of class entails their own liberation too. This realization enables everyone to see that the reason they need to deal with racism is not so that they can be nice to people of colour, but so that they can dismantle a larger system that oppresses them too.*
>
> — Andrea Smith

Study Guide / Critical Application of Selected Essays from *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*

This study guide has been prepared to support educators in their use of *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World* in advanced undergraduate classrooms. While I offer this study guide as a complement to courses in contemporary rhetorics, I can see it also complementing courses addressing social movements, eco-feminism, race, class, and gender as well as in disciplines ranging from English to Gender and Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, Law, Sociology, Environmental Studies, Journalism, Photography, Oral History, Research Methods, Geography, and Documentary Film (theory and production).

The Colors of Nature is a book that lends itself well to courses that are designed as interdisciplinary in nature and that are informed by a breadth of literatures. Importantly, it carefully attends to the role of language in understanding place, identity, and practice. For these reasons, I find it particularly useful in my efforts to teach a contemporary rhetorics course with an emphasis on the productive force and function of the rhetorics of race and racialized rhetorics.

Students in such a course are provided with the opportunity to explore rhetorics that have grown out of the politics of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in contemporary contexts. Students study the relationship between discourses, the production of knowledge, and practices of representation from diverse locations and across social relations. In its careful consideration of the relationship between discourse, culture, identity, and place, *The Colors of Nature* is particularly attuned to the force and function of language in the production of scientific knowledge, and of scientific expertise, vis-à-vis the environment and the natural

world. Such productions have privileged certain knowledge systems and de-privileged others, which has limited our imaginations and understandings of the diverse contributions from non-dominant locations and people to informed and informative practices of sustainability across cultural contexts, geographic divides, and time.

In considering the production of knowledge as a raced, gendered, and contested process, students in a course using *The Colors of Nature* should be asked to re/consider who the holders and creators of knowledge are across multiple contexts and how their knowledges are relevant and meaningful to conversations about "global climate change, fresh-water shortages, food insecurity, persistent fossil-fuel dependence, and the inequity behind poverty's spread..." (11). The essays collected in this text can easily connect to larger questions of justice and equity and the discourses that produce and / or inhibit their production. It is for these reasons that Deming and Savoy's edited collection is particularly useful in classrooms where students are inquiring into the discourses of our day. The assembled essays in their text ask readers to reconsider who the creators of knowledge are and have been over time and how their knowledges have been applied or not. Importantly, it animates for readers those whose work on behalf of the natural world has been overlooked, devalued, and even invisibilized.

As the co-editors note in their introduction, the writings in this collection "creatively present how identity and place, human history and 'natural' history, power and silence, and social injustice and environmental degradation are fundamentally linked" (10). *The Colors of Nature* can accompany a course textbook on rhetorical criticism, online essays, films, music, and photographs in order to most fully explore the practices and historical implications of mis/representations over time. Readings reveal the marginalizing as well as the transformative and emancipatory potentials of contrasting rhetorical practices and performances across contexts. Assignments can be designed to engage students in the theories, practices, and implications of alternative and comparative rhetorics.

The learning objectives of a rhetorical criticism course can include:

- critical thinking;
- critical analysis;
- critical writing;
- identification of the taken-for-granted assumptions of arguments; and
- identification of the rhetorical purpose/s and perspectives of an argument.

These learning objectives can also inform courses in which students study rhetorical criticism as it relates to the rhetorics of domination and resistance across land, race, class, gender, sexuality, and concepts of literacy. Objectives could be expanded to include:

- exploration of the rhetorical forces and functions of dominations and resistances across and between gender, sexuality, race, immigration, and the natural world;
- exploration of the relationship between ethnic studies, civil rights, indigenous rights, and land rights;

- consideration of the politics and practices of articulation as these might inform the building of strategic coalitions from differently situated subjects in the political economy;
- identifying and defining neoliberal policies regarding agribusiness, free trade of goods, restricted human mobility, especially as these can be related to environmental degradation and exploitation;
- identifying and imagining possibilities for the transformation of relationships among and between people and the nonhuman world; and
- considering relationships to the land and how these have and might serve the goal of pursuing and producing a healthier planet.

The Colors of Nature offers a creative and critical intervention into limiting ideas about people of color particularly as these serve generalizations and stereotypes that suggest that people of color have or have not been and/or are or are not inclined to be active, informed, and informing environmentalists, ecologists, and conservationists by virtue of their identities and social locations. This text will aid instructors in ways that challenge deficit-driven assumptions and racialized stereotypes about non-dominant others. It will circulate well in courses informed by place-based pedagogy and the concepts of critical localism.

My teaching, and therefore this study guide, is informed by critical feminist pedagogical principles, insights, and practices as well as by concepts such as critical localism that attend to place-based curricular inclusions. According to Stephen R. Goldzwig, in advancing projects inspired by critical localism "we must privilege important texts that gird and influence [and I would add emanate] from local cultures..." (276). It is for this reason that I have find Deming and Savoy's edited collection so vital to conversations in the classroom that approach local knowledges as not only valid but valuable. Finally, this text moves students to revisit their own assumptions about the spaces and places from which knowledge is made and from which histories emerge.

The goals of critical and feminist pedagogy - to bring awareness to and ultimately shift power dynamics; for knowledge to be understood as relevant and meaningful to social action; to raise consciousness and to address social responsibility; to be broadly informed, together with the goals of critical localism including the need to engage localized knowledges, histories, and practices - are congruent and align so perfectly with Deming and Savoy's edited collection.

This text can be used in courses that attend to the current historic moment while drawing broadly from lived knowledges, creative, critical, scientific, and poetic insights to ask readers to think more broadly about what it means to be a nature writer and an environmental advocate and what such identities calls us to in terms of thinking and coalitional action.

What follows is a sample unit articulating racial, social, and environmental justice through a number of texts and video productions. It includes: 3 Weeks of Sample Readings; Weekly Discussion Questions; Suggested Unit Assignment Schedule; and Suggested Research Topics.

UNIT: Racial, Social, and Environmental Justice: Re/Considering the Structures of Domination and Strategies of Resistance Over Time and Place

Week One
Re-considering How Words Have Worked in the World: Race as Myth *or* Reality? / Race as Myth *and* Reality?

Tuesday

The American Anthropological Association 1998 Statement on "Race"
(take reading notes and keep)

In-class film: EPISODE 2 "RACE THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION"
(take viewing notes and keep)

Thursday

Discussion (Practice description and rhetorical analysis**)**
Michael Omi & Howard Winant on Racial Formations
Beverly Daniel Tatum on Defining Racism
Robert Bullard's "Confronting Environmental Racism in the Twenty-First Century in Deming and Savoy's *The Colors of Nature*

Week One Suggested Discussion Questions:

- How do the texts for this week treat the relationship between racism and risk in terms of health and the environment? What arguments are being made about the relationship between inequality and individual, community, and environmental health? What assumptions inform these arguments?
- Identify the role of language, and scientific language in particular, in producing mis/conceptions about race, racial formations, and racism.
- Explore the concepts of displacement and exploitation especially as these are related to people and place.
- Use the readings from this week to explore how Bullard's concept of "radioactive colonialism" intervenes in dominant practices and narratives regarding racialized communities.

Week Two
E/Raced Realities: Re/Considering Historical Practices, Records, Trades, and Mobilities

Tuesday

US Commission on Human Rights / "Indian Tribes" Yolanda Chávez Leyva on Reclaiming Histories

Francisco X. Alarcón's "Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America," in Deming and Savoy's *The Colors of Nature*

In-class viewing of "Place Matters," segment 5 of "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick."

Thursday

Maria Melendez' "Mujeres de Maíz: Women, Corn, and Free Trade in the Americas" in Deming and Savoy's *The Colors of Nature*

"Introduction," and "Growing People for Export," in Jeffrey Kaye's *Moving Millions, How Coyote Capitalism Fuels Global Immigration*

Week Two Suggested Discussion Questions:

- Explore the role and purpose of ecopoetics in reclaiming a sense of group identity and history. How do current practices of displacement as described by Kaye function to disallow such a reclamation? To what consequences?
- What does Melendez mean by a neocolonial tourist gesture and how might such gestures reproduce misunderstandings about Others and what it means to be "less-developed?" How do such language practices produce the divisions that maintain misunderstandings about people and place?
- Consider the rhetorical construction of people as "less-developed" and how such a rhetorical framing disallows us from seeing such people as holders and creators of valuable knowledges and practices that have and can inform sound environmental practices.
- Consider Kaye's work regarding the relationship between free trade, displacement, and immigration. What is the role of neoliberal policies in the exploitation of land and people and also in the production of hazardous work conditions?

Week Three

Re/Considering the Relationship Between Languages, Literacies, and Worldviews

Tuesday

In-class viewing of "Bad Sugar," segment 4 of "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick."

Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Learning the Grammar of Animacy" in Deming and Savoy's *The Colors of Nature*

Thursday

Critical Commentary Due

Ofelia Zepeda's "Birth Witness" in Deming and Savoy's *The Colors of Nature*

Week Three Suggested Discussion Questions:

- Explore the literacy claims in this week's readings. How are dominant assumptions about literacy disrupted by these claims?
- What does Zepeda mean for a language to be "much too civil for writing?"
- Explore the relationship between dominations across linguistic borders, land, class, and race.
- What does Wall Kimmerer mean by "the grammar of animacy?" What is the function of such a grammar?
- Explore the consequences of Kimmerer's claim that "English doesn't give us many tools for incorporating respect for animacy. In English, you're either a human or a thing." Relate this to the concept of biocentrism.

Week Four

Critical Commentary Due

Week Five

Writing Workshop: Rhetorical Criticism Full Draft Due for Peer Review

Week Six

Rhetorical Criticism Due

Two Sample Assignments:

1) 3 Practicing Rhetorical Criticism / Critical Commentaries [PRC]

Descriptions and Analyses
10 Units of Credit Each (Total 30 Units of Credit)
Due: End of Weeks Two, Three, and Four

Practicing Rhetorical Criticism / Critical Commentaries [PRC]

Each PRC will be a 3-page reflection / response paper due for each course unit. These response papers are descriptive and analytical in nature. Consider writing them as practice for the rhetorical criticism you will be asked to write at the end of each unit. Your writing in these Critical Commentaries should demonstrate meaningful connections between the text, course content, class discussions, and also your own lives.

2) Rhetorical Criticism: From Description and Analysis to Interpretation and Evaluation

50 Units of Credit
Due: Draft due beginning of Week 5
Final Paper Due Beginning of Week 6

This 8- to 10-page paper moves beyond careful description and analysis to also include interpretation and evaluation. You can either select an historic event that has been interpreted and otherwise engaged as environmentally unjust or you track an event that emerges early in the semester in the news. This event can be one that occurs where you are now, elsewhere in the US, or in the world. It should be an event that addresses the environment (broadly defined) as a justice issue and that includes efforts from and/or assumptions about non-dominant communities. In your paper you should by particularly attentive to the languages and representations surrounding the event. The goal of your paper will be to engage in a close reading of the event and ultimately to offer an in-depth analysis of the event. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that you have developed the necessary skills and understanding to critically engage rhetorical messages/artifacts/events in order to offer a cogent interpretation and critique as well as to construct and deliver your own analysis. You will choose one of the sociopolitical approaches from our course text to assist you in your rhetorical analysis. **A draft of this analysis is due for peer review on _____. The final rhetorical analysis is due on _____.**

You must identify the event you will be analyzing by Week Five of the semester.

Suggested Research Topics:

- Labor practices as these relate and respond to related exploitations of the land, gender, race, immigration status
- Dominations and Resistances as these are expressed in social movements to include environmental activism
- Rhetorical analysis of the power of discourses that are based on a dehumanized/izing assumption: alien, deviant, under-developed, illiterate, uncivil
- Neocolonization
- Environmental Racism
- Immigration and Free Trade
- Coalitional potentials across rights movements
- Asset-driven approaches to identifying innovative environmental/ecological practices
- Relationships to the land that promote (have promoted) healthy ecologies and economies
- Power and potential of ecopoetics to promote coalitional practices

The victims of environmental degradation tend to belong to more vulnerable sectors of society—racial and ethnic minorities and the poor—who regularly carry a disproportionate burden of such abuse. Increasingly, many basic human rights are being placed at risk, as the right to health affected by contamination of resources, or the right to property and culture compromised by commercial intrusion into indigenous lands.

—Press review of *Linking Human Rights and the Environment* by Romina Picolotti

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Three Japanese-American Stories of Captivity and Freedom

by Kyhl Lyndgaard, Marlboro College

What is a captivity narrative, and what can this genre offer readers of The Colors of Nature*?*

The editors of *The Colors of Nature* ask this question in their introduction "Widening the Frame": "What if one's primary experience of land and place is not a place apart but rather indigenous?" (6). A primary goal of *The Colors of Nature* is to expand the category of "nature writing." This lesson considers the idea that captivity narratives include some of the earliest examples of indigenous expressions of nature writing in America, and have much in common with many of the selections in the anthology.

The captivity narrative has been called the first American literary genre. Mary Rowlandson's account of captivity is commonly considered to have started the genre. The colonial formulation generally depicts the trials and tribulations of white captives who are later ransomed or escaped and then redeemed upon a providential return to civilization. Yet the genre has been shown to be highly flexible, as captivity narratives were used in support of Native American rights in later years. With more than two thousand nonfiction accounts available, it is not surprising that many examples feature sympathetic captors or an inversion in agency. For example, Indian boarding school narratives are now read as counter captivity narratives. Mary Jemison's 1824 account of her life—the second best-selling book of the 1820s, behind only James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*—features repeated refusals to return to her biological family as she remains with her Seneca community instead. *Life of Black Hawk* includes Black Hawk's tour of the east while a prisoner of war, and lends itself to reading as a captivity narrative. In short, this genre has much to offer a student of nature writing who wishes to find more indigenous writers and study beyond the Romantic tradition of nature writing.

How does the Japanese American experience enter into the discussion on captivity, freedom, and nature writing?

The Colors of Nature features many essays that may have some connection to the captivity narrative, but one of the most recent and painful examples of captivity in American history is the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Both Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and David Mas Masumoto write directly about the internment

process. Kimiko Hahn's poem is less narrative and more experimental, but some of the themes she explores may be seen as heavily influenced by the captivity narrative. These three writers, anthologized at the beginning, middle, and end of *The Colors of Nature*, can be read together and through a lens of captivity. From different generations and working in different traditions, the thread of captivity can be traced in each—and the freedom associated with nature. Work to find some common themes between these writers and between them and the genre of the captivity narrative. Look for the ways that each writer reaches out to members of other ethnic groups as they explore their own American experience. Each piece has more specific discussion questions below.

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's "Crossing Boundaries" details multiple captivities. Chronologically, the first captivity was that of the hundreds of Paiutes who were forcibly moved from what is now known as the Owens Valley in eastern California in 1863. An even larger captivity occurred in the Owens Valley at Manzanar during World War II when ten thousand Japanese Americans—Wakatsuki Houston among them—were imprisoned in one of many such internment camps. How does nature, particularly the Sierra Nevada mountains and fruit trees, function in "Crossing Boundaries"? Why does Wakatsuki Houston "feel a sense of liberation" in the final paragraph of her essay? How does her daughter's experience at Manzanar compare to her own?

"Touching on Skin," by Kimiko Hahn, considers a wall that can never be taken down or taken away—our own skin. Her poem on her own aesthetics and her own color is not obviously a captivity narrative, yet some of the hallmarks of the genre surface. As Hahn asks about the literary forms she writes in, "what are forms but boundaries for the subjective?" Couldn't this question apply to issues of captivity and nature? Compare Hahn's approach to borders and writing to Wakatsuki Houston's statement that her experience behind barbed wire as a child has resulted in a "reluctance to take risks, to test certain boundaries, to press limits—in myself and in my writing."

David Mas Masumoto deals with borders throughout the essay "Belonging to the Land." As the final essay in *The Colors of Nature*, this piece has a special placement in the collection. Do the final words of the essay speak to the anthology's project as a whole? As an active farmer, Masumoto details the historical ways that Japanese immigrants were excluded from full land ownership through the passage of Alien Land Laws as early as 1913. How is his experience different from Wakatsuki Houston's or from other Japanese Americans of earlier generations?

I. Coloring a Mountain II. Globalization & Place

by Andrew Mahlstedt

I. Assignment Title: Coloring a Mountain

Useful chapters: Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Faith Adiele, Gary Paul Nabhan, bell hooks, Enrique Salmón, Louis Owens, Joseph Bruchac, Deborah Kang Dean

Drawing on one or more of the readings from *The Colors of Nature* set in a mountain landscape, tell the story of a mountain or a mountain region.

First, read carefully the selection from *The Colors of Nature*, and consider the ways in which this writer describes the mountain landscape. How does cultural identity inflect how he or she sees and experiences these mountains? How might members of various cultures see and experience these mountains differently? And what is particular about this landscape of mountains: how do elevation and perspective, hidden valleys, difficult living, mountain weather, geographically segmented societies, particular flora and fauna, limited agriculture, and other distinctive features of mountain landscapes figure and shape this writer's experience? Why is this particular narrative set in the mountains, and how do the formal qualities of the essay reflect the writer's coloring of life in the mountains?

Second, critically evaluate this cultural and environmental landscape through secondary sources (other literature, artwork, film, critical literature, etc.). You are encouraged to draw from interdisciplinary perspectives, and to integrate the critical lenses that History, Geography, Art, Geology, Anthropology, Religion, etc., can usefully contribute to your project. You may evaluate how the narrative of this mountain has evolved over time, or focus on a particular historical moment. While the essay from *The Colors of Nature* is your frame and jumping off point, the secondary sources will allow you to shape your own critical reading of the mountain or mountain region.

You may want to take a particularly social, political, scientific, environmental, philosophical, and/or personal tone, and will probably integrate several of these critical perspectives towards a coherent argument. The best essays will explore questions of representation and cultural narrative, shaping your critical perspective on coloring a mountain.

Critical literature on mountains/additional resources

Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant's writings on the sublime

Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory (Marjorie Hope Nicholson)

Mountains of the Mind (Robert MacFarlane)

Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism (Susan Schrepfer)

Peak Experiences: Walking Meditations on Literature, Nature, and Need (Ian Marshall)

The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya (Ramachandra Guha)

"Rock," from *Landscape and Memory* (Simon Schama)

The Mountain World: A Literary Journey (Gregory McNamee, ed.)

"'On the Raggedy Edge of Risk': Articulations on Race and Nature After Biology" (Bruce Braun), in *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference* (Donald Moore, et al., eds.)

Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape of the American West (Rebecca Solnit)

Reading the Mountains of Home (John Elder)

Pilgrims of the Vertical: Yosemite Rock Climbers and Nature at Risk (Joseph Taylor) (2010)

Although this assignment is quite different, skimming through William Cronon's "Place Paper Assignment" may provide some useful thoughts:
http://www.williamcronon.net/courses/460_place_paper_assignment.htm

II. Discussion topic: Globalization & Place in *The Colors of Nature*

Chapters useful for: Maria Melendez, Ray Gonzales, Elmaz Abinader, Jennifer Oladipo

What does "place" mean in the recent era of globalization? How do the writers in *The Colors of Nature* interested in globalization articulate a sense a place (*if* they do)? How do the writers in *The Colors of Nature* who engage the currents of globalization – especially Maria Melendez and Ray Gonzales – create or resist place? Is place necessary for an environmental ethic? What happens when one's place is uprooted, when one's freedom to move is "stilled and immobile," when place is an enclosure, as in the case of Elmaz Abinader's Palestine? Given this context, how does Abinader discuss seemingly discrete categories like "natural" and "artificial"? How does Jennifer Oladipo complicate what is indigenous and what is immigrant, native flower and invasive weed? How do writers in *The Colors of Nature* who consider the ambivalent impact of globalization on marginalized places and peoples re-work language to articulate new forms for environmental thinking and feeling?

Environmental Community Perspectives

by Akilah Martin

Course Description

This course will offer students the opportunity to examine the environment surrounding their individual community as well as others. It is designed to offer students an in depth assessment of how they live, work, and interact with the environment. Creating environmental awareness is key to changing society's impact. With such educational resources as courses, field trips, lab experiences, and volunteer in, students will be able to delve deeper into the realm of environmental quality. Students will be exposed to soil and water quality assessments, recycling, composting, and sustainable living

Competence Criteria

Students will have the opportunity to visit six Chicago communities and provide letters/communication to the community leaders of their findings. Students will be required to address five major areas in this course. Included in these areas are: observations, reflection research, lab skills, and providing a public seminar. Your journal should be a personal creation that showcases your reflections, learning, and reactions to visiting the various communities. It should reveal how you "learned" to observe a community's environmental (soil, water, etc). As a class, you will coordinate a public environmental awareness learning seminar (i.e. town hall meeting) to discuss your experiences, findings, reflections, reactions and learning.

Expected Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to observe and draw plausible conclusions about a community's environmental issues, develop soil and water quality testing skills, learn the main environmental issues facing Chicago, become familiar with community activism, comprehend environmental concepts, become more aware of the environment and your impact, and become familiar with individual learning styles. During your externship, you may read many other sources for information on Chicago's environmental issues and ways to improve. Specifically, you will read assigned sections of *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World* by Alison Hawthorne Deming and Lauret E. Savoy. You may visit other cities (through virtual or physical trips, websites, books, magazines, etc) to gain a better insight into environmental issues (i.e. soil and water quality).

Evaluation

Students will be assessed through discussions with instructor, observation data sheets, environmental awareness seminar participation, journal, annotated bibliography relating to environmental issues impacting society, and a reaction paper/project/oral presentation at the close of the course.

Journal and Oral Seminar Assessment Criteria

Use the Data Sheet Criteria to guide your journal entry.

Completeness-did you cover all relevant materials/questions? Did you follow directions?
Connections-did you make connections between issues?
Clarity-was the paper readable, grammatically appropriate, and well organized?
Course Material-did you use appropriate reading and other course materials in your work?

Course Outline

Your evidence of learning should be a completed journal of your community visits and readings. During the 4 class meetings, we will go over concepts from the readings, insure that the correct format for visiting a community is properly carried out and we will also visit a community as a class. Suggested activities to immerse yourself in the environment include but are not limited to: attend festivals geared toward the environment (food, gardening, etc.), seminars, workshops, and service-learning opportunities. Students should investigate environmental community groups, retail stores, grocery stores, etc to gather information for the journal.

Tentative Schedule

Topic	**Readings**	**Expected Assignment (Weekly Assignments)**
Course Expectations/Discussions Chicago Environmental History Introduction Reflection Exercise	Read *The Colors of Nature* section entitled: Part 2: Witness: Confronting Environmental Racism in the Twenty-First Century by Robert D. Bullard	Journal, Lab Reports, Observation Data Sheets, Participation in Class Discussions, Current Event Article, (other enrichment assignments)
Visit a Community		
Visit a Community		
Meet Class	Read *The Colors of Nature* section entitled: Encounter: Sections – listening for the Ancient Tones…, Earthbound, This Weight of Small Bodies, and Sharing Breath.	
Visit a Community		
Visit a Community		
Meet Class	Read *The Colors of Nature* section entitled: Praise: Sections – Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America, A Tapestry of Browns and Greens, In the Valley of Its Saying, Belonging to the Land.	
Visit a Community		
Visit a Community		
Meet Class (Journal and other assignments are due)	Group Reflection of community visits and overall perceptions of *The Colors of Nature* readings. Choose any section of the book that touched you deeply that we did not cover to present in class.	

Data Sheet Criteria

Instructions: Be as descriptive as you can and use resources at your disposal.

- Date
- Community Name
- Location (be sure to include photos)
- Pre-conceived notions/Assumptions
- Initial Reaction
- Initial Observations
- Why did you choose this community/neighborhood?
- Describe the topography (flat, hilly, etc.)
- Housing type (mixed, low, high, condos, houses, apartments, multifamily etc.)
- Vehicles (cars, trucks, SUV's, etc.)
- Type of community (industrial/residential/commercial/forest/wetland)
- Vegetation (grass, trees, flowers, etc.)
- Describe the populous (ethnicity, education, salary etc)
- Environmental Programs (recycling, compost, landfills etc)
- Government Officials (Community Leadership)
- Water Bodies (ponds, lakes, rivers, streams, etc.)
- Water Quality (describe color, smell etc)
- Soil Quality (Check nrcs.gov)
- Waste Collection (when, who, recycling and/or composting programs?)
- Describe Air Quality (smell, taste, smoke stacks etc)
- Markets/Grocery Stores/Local Goods
- Green space (how much and describe in detail)
- Small businesses/Large Businesses (the number of each and descriptions)
- Economy (good, poor, average)
- Landfills (if any)
- Ongoing environmental projects
- Best management practices (describe any practices put in place by the community to enhance water quality)
- Community gardens
- Pets/pet waste management
- Did you communicate with any of the residents? If so, describe the conversation.
- Community programs about environmental awareness (describe)
- Post Reaction
- Post Observations
- Write a letter to community leaders of the 5 communities that you visited about your observations (include positives, concerns, questions, comments, and recommendations).

In-Class Discussions: At each class meeting we will discuss the community you visited and why you chose the community and your reactions and thoughts. As you prepare to discuss the communities you visited be sure to draw connections with the readings for that class meeting.

First Meeting

Readings: Witness

Discussion Questions – What is your environmental story? Define environmental racism in your own words (can be completed in journal or verbally stated to class). Do you believe it exists in Chicago communities? What Chicago communities have you visited during your time in Chicago? What were some differences that you recollect? Did you witness environmental racism in any of the communities you visited? Have you personally experienced environmental racism? If so, how did you handle it mentally, emotionally, and physically? From the readings, what was your initial reaction to the thoughts of the Ballard? Did you connect with any of the concepts he presented? If so, how? If not, why? How would you describe the readings to an outside student?

Second Meeting

Readings: Encounter

Discussion Questions –

What was your first encounter with nature? Was it positive or negative? Why? What are your thoughts about nature presently? After reading "Learning the Grammar of Animacy, what were your initial thoughts? When you were in elementary or high school what were your thoughts about learning science? Now that you are pursuing a college education, what are your thoughts about learning science? What language(s) would you like to learn in order to communicate with nature and or any ancestral traditions? What if you were able to communicate with components of nature, would you feel differently about your daily activities that impact the environment? If not, why? Have you ever participated in destroying some component of nature? If so, what was your reason? How do you feel about that action currently? How do/will communicate your values or non-values of Earth to your family and friends?

Alternate Assignment: Take class outside to sit and/or stand and just listen to nature? Do this for about 15-20 minutes, depending on the weather. Have the class discuss their thoughts about connecting with nature. What language of nature did you want to know in order to better understand a component of nature?

Third Meeting

Readings: Praise

Discussion Questions – If you were in a position to change how our environment is treated, what would be your first action? Why? Are you feeling discouraged about what you can do to enhance environmental quality? Have you visited another country? If so, what were your thoughts concerning environmental quality and sustainability? Think about America's history, do you believe that reclaiming our land is worth the time? Do you feel comforted by nature? If so, how? Given the readings, what was your reaction to the passages and provide specific examples and any connections you may have had. Did any adults as a child discuss sustainability as it relates to not being 'wasteful?' If so, what were your thoughts then and what are your thoughts now? What are your friends and family's thoughts concerning nature?

Fourth Meeting

Readings: Read any section of the book that we did not cover in previous class meetings and present the main ideas and your reason for choosing this section. How does the section connect with your past, present, and future treatment of nature and your environmental sustainability goals? Do you feel or think differently than you did from the first day of class? Have the class write a 250 word or less assessment of their understanding of *The Colors of Nature* readings and how it has or hasn't been beneficial to understanding the environment we all reside.

Kincaid and Linnaeus Fistfight in Heaven

by Aaron Moe, Washington State University

I want to tell what the [earth
was] like

I will have to speak
in a forgotten language

W. S. Merwin
"Witness" from *The Rain in the Trees*

(For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? . . . The language of the criminal can explain and express the deed only from the criminal's point of view. It cannot contain the horror of the deed, the injustice of the deed, the agony, the humiliation inflicted on me. . . .)

Jamaica Kincaid
from *A Small Place*

I use *The Colors of Nature* as the capstone text for an upper-level undergraduate course on literature and ecocriticism. We use Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* to establish the significant tropes of pollution, pastoral, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and earth.[1] After exploring these tropes at work in Whitman, Snyder, DeLillo, McCarthy, Merwin, Le Guin, Donovan, and Hillman, we turn to *The Colors of Nature* in order to challenge, critique, and subvert a field often dominated by white, male perspectives. I assign several of the essays in *The Colors of Nature,* and then I have students select several essays that they want to read. The final for the course prompts students to explore how the tropes of nature writing—which are often underwritten by colonial perspectives—take on new forms in *The Colors of Nature*. I challenge students to discover and articulate other tropes necessary to explore other perspectives of nature.

What follows is one lesson on Kincaid's "In History." By placing "In History" in direct conversation with Linneaus's "The Oeconomy of Nature," students begin to see how much of what is called "nature writing" is underwritten by an economic, colonial mindset. But first, it is helpful to revisit the emergence of ecocritical studies.

It is intriguing, to say the least, that one of the first (if not the first) formal use of the term *ecocriticism* occurred in an essay about the dynamics of a classroom: William Rueckert's 1978 "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." This is to say, *ecocriticism*

emerged as Rueckert grappled with a way to better understand—and therefore to better craft—the multi-angulated energy transfers between the "stored energy" within text(s) and all the people in the classroom. "Kincaid and Linnaeus Fistfight in Heaven" returns to Rueckert's classroom experiment as it explores one way to place Kincaid's "In History" within the "interactive field" of the classroom so as to "generate and release the greatest amount of collective creative energy."[2]

The allusion within this lesson's title acknowledges that, like Sherman Alexie, Kincaid fights against cultural genocide in the wake of colonialism. This fistfight is something that I see *The Colors of Nature* also contributing to as the editors address "a troubling question: "Why is there so little "nature writing" by people of color?"[3] The anthology demonstrates a resistance to the fact that the mainstream understanding of "nature writing" is largely and inextricably bound up with colonial narratives that have become a kind-of hegemonic juggernaut that marginalizes other perspectives and experiences of nature.

Through "In History," Kincaid challenges the mainstream historical narrative by confronting Linnaeus.[4] Most students are aware of Linnaean taxonomy, but few have read Linneaus's "The Oeconomy of Nature."[5] I have found "Oeconomy" to be particularly useful for students to see the economic, scientific, and religious entitlement used to justify colonialism.

We begin by discussing the shared root of *oikos* (house) in *economy* and *ecology*. Ecology is the study of energy exchange within the house of the ecosphere, while economics is the study of currency exchange within the house of a market. But for Linnaeus, the point is not merely the energy exchanges within the earth but rather who is the lord over the house?—who can be the master who turns the earth into a commodity, thereby subsuming it within the house of an "oeconomy"?

In this light, students readily identify the unsettling, even disturbing, assumptions within "Oeconomy." Though Linnaeus provides some proto-ecological "laws" for energy transfer within the three kingdoms of the earth (fossil, vegetable, and animal), he places the human outside of those laws. Humans are lord over the house; indeed, the very fact that the earth becomes a resource for humans to use within an oeconomy speaks to the engrained entitlement surrounding colonialism. Soon, students understand the implications of "Oeconomy." It is not just "humans" who are lord over the house, but rather Western Europeans.

Near the end, Linnaeus uses religious rhetoric to further justify a sense of entitlement. The justification of exploitation ends in a panegyric that celebrates all the ways in which man (white European) can exploit the three kingdoms of the earth for the end goals that man (white European) may "extol [the Creator's] glory" and may "pass his life conveniently and pleasantly" (124).

At some point, the class discusses how Linnaean taxonomy—the renaming of the Earth—was necessary in order to subsume the myriad places of the earth (including Antigua)

and the people therein under western Europe's economies. "Oeconomy" becomes an historical artifact that exposes the scientific, religious, and economic justification for British imperialism.

I have students read Linneaus's three laws (40–42), scan the sections on the three kingdoms (or I briefly gloss them), and read his conclusion where he celebrates human exploitation of the three kingdoms of the earth (123–24). Then, when we turn to discuss Kincaid, students see more clearly exactly what she challenges, and moreover why language and the process of naming becomes so paramount within Kincaid's "In History."

Other possible texts useful to discuss in conjunction with "In History" are Kincaid's *A Small Place* (of course) and Ursula K. Le Guin's "She Unnames Them."[6] Le Guin also pushes back against Linnaeus and the power gained over, in this case, animals through the "Linnaean qualifiers that had trailed along behind them for two hundred years like tin cans tied to a tail" (195).

Placing "In History" within the "interactive field" outlined above has much potential to generate a synergetic exchange of "stored energy" that enables all participants to more fully witness Kincaid's argument.

End Notes

[1] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism,* 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[2] William Rueckert, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996 [1978]), 108, 111.

[3] Alison Deming and Lauret E. Savoy, eds., *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*. (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2011), 5.

[4] Jamaica Kincaid, "In History," in *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*, ed. Alison Deming and Lauret E. Savoy (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2011).

[5] Carl Von Linnaeus and Isaac Biberg, "The Oeconomy of Nature," in *Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Natural History, Husbandry, and Physick: to Which Is Added The Calendar of Flora*, trans. Benjamin Stillingfleet, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall Baker and Leigh in York-Street Covent-Garden and T. Payne at the Mews Gate, 1775 [1749]).

[6] Ursula Le Guin, *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1987), 194–96.

Teaching Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Learning the Grammar of Animacy"

by Kathleen Dean Moore, Oregon State University

Class activity.

Leaving the classroom, go outside and walk together on the same path. You might be walking through campus; you might be walking on a trail. Pay very close attention to what comes your way. Make a list of what you notice. Let each person make a different list, as follows:

1. Your list will contain only nouns. Examples of things: River. Aspen. Mosquito.

2. Your list will contain only verbs. Examples of actions: Raven-soaring. River-sinking. Strive. Sting.

3. Your list will be of relationships. Examples of relationships: Mushroom-popping-through-duff. Heat-lifting-raven. Aspen-nourishing-neighbor. Rain-jittering-river. Bear track-making-afraid.

4. Your list will be things for which the English language has no words. Examples of the unnamed: The little nest of detritus left in a tree after a flood. The square spaces between round rocks. The madrigal of a mixed flock of little birds.

5. Your list will be what you do not find on that trail. Examples of absences: The call of golden eagles. Elderly men wearing hats. Sorry rich people. Television addicts.

6. Your list will be what is too obvious and present to name. Examples of the present: Air. Sunlight. Wind. Life. Breathing. The sound of jet planes overhead, and contrails in the sky.

7. Your list will be memories. Examples of memories: In this place, we stopped to make coffee on the camp stove. In this place, I talked to my mother on her birthday. In this place, I conjugated French verbs: j'aime, tu aimes, il aime, nous aimons, vous aimez, ils aiment.

8. Your list will be names for things you notice, and all the names will be soft, like wind. Examples of soft words: Aspen, aspen, aspen, shine, silverleaf, sorrow, morning.

9. Your list will be names for things you notice, but all the names will be hard, like stone. Examples of hard words: Granite, hawk, trail.

10. Your list is the most challenging, a list of trichotomies. Examples of trichotomies: What was a generation ago/what is now/ what will be a generation hence. Forest/tree farm/fire. Meadow/university campus/corporate campus. Song/laughter/silence. Seed/spruce/roof beam.

Share your lists all around. Now. Were you all walking the same trail, or were you walking through different worlds? What could it possibly mean to say that language shapes the world? Explain. Use examples. Enjoy.

Writing Prompts.

1. Go to any standard field guide (to birds, trees, flowers, minerals, whatever you can find). (a) Copy out the description of one of the animals or plants. (b) Describe some of the characteristics of the description that create the impression of an inanimate object. (c) Rewrite the description so as to give the impression of an animate being. You might consider substituting verbs for nouns and adjectives, or using "he" and "she" instead of "it." Consider introducing the language of free will—"decide" or "try," for example. Consider substituting particular names ("Squirrel") for general terms ("squirrels"). (d) With your classmates, compile your revised descriptions into a field guide that will portray the world in new ways.

2. Buy or borrow a bar of old-fashioned soap such as Fels Naptha. Take a bite, or just lick it. Now imagine yourself nine years old, just separated from your family and homeland, forced to wash your mouth out with soap whenever you speak the words of the only language you know. How do you feel? Against whom is your anger directed? What do you think is the origin of cruelty? What will you resolve to do? Write this in the form of a forbidden, whispered conversation with a friend. Make sure that friend has tasted the soap.

3. Write a paragraph that describes a few moments in a trip you have recently taken—a trip to the grocery store, to a friend's house, to work, to a new place. Now, using the language in any of 1 - 10 in the exercise above, revise the paragraph, using a different sort of language.

> Example: I'm driving Yukon Hwy. 1 north from Burwash Landing to the Alaskan border. On the right-hand side, the land holds small black spruce and willows; on the left, the gravel bed of a river and a cow moose. A young woman in an orange vest waves a stop sign at us until we slow down and stop. We wait at least twenty minutes until she lights a cigarette, turns the sign to "slow," and lets us pass. The road is newly graveled and dusty. We keep our windows closed.
>
> Example, using #4 (unnamed things): I'm [bouncing with that rat-a-tat rhythm of driving over a seamed highway] from [one of those derelict gas stations that sit decaying on a gravel pad at the edge of every Yukon town] to [the heaped green energy of plants that are trying to grow back after land has been cleared]. On the right [that color of green that is sort of dusty, that color of green that is trying not to be yellow, that color of green on the flip side of leaves turned by wind]. On the left, [that property of moving water that makes it look like piles of sugar]. [What is the word for a person who is both a girl and a woman? Anyway, she] waves a sign with [the gesture that is both commanding and hoping]. . . .

4. Imagine you are the chair of the board of trustees of a boarding school in Pennsylvania. Seventy-five years ago, it was one of the mission schools that took Indian children from their

homes and violently stripped them of their language and culture. The time has come (actually, it's long past) for the school to issue an apology. (a) Do enough on-line research on one of those schools (you might start with the Carlisle School) to get a strong sense of its purpose and method. (b) Write the apology, being sure to make it so specific and so honest that everyone reading it will understand the enormity of the harm done. Try to find the right words to express the appropriate shame and remorse. Think carefully about all those who have been harmed.

5. Invent a word as wonderful and useful as *Puhpowee*.

A Study Guide Scenario for "Tarsenna's Defiance Garden in which I Love to Spit"

by Thylias Moss

Whose defiance was it? How do you know?

Tarsenna's or the narrator? Someone else's? What makes you think what you think? What does the story offer as proof? Should we generally be more suspicious of "proof"? (I obviously think so—why?)

Frankly, I am somewhat surprised that defiance can grow—not the usual crop (nutritional value of defiance, for instance), but based on this question, please notice what this author has assumed about "defiance." One of the first assumptions is that defiance can be planted, nurtured, and that there will be a result from this effort—why plant "defiance" at all if there is no expectation of growth? Why cultivate "defiance"? Not to be sold overseas, I don't think, even if such travel explains some of the storyteller's positioning to tell the story (some of the storyteller's ancestors had to get to America; all were not here). Not exactly like the Biblical first garden, other than a snake-prototype, but Tarsenna, the story-teller or both certainly had knowledge of good and evil —how? why? might I ask and assume this?

—I do envision lush growth. Not something scraggly. These envisioned gardens are not isolated, but are connected—as is the world; take a look at a globe and notice how this connectedness extends into space—

If this world is a system of gardens, who is or should be responsible for maintenance of this world's gardens?

Is it likely that Tarsenna would (or could) be chosen as a primary caretaker of this world's connected gardens?

How is a sense of "the forbidden" tangled with notions of "defiance"?

Think of the anthology as a globe, (or as a solar system), something that exists collectively in space, each story as a country or an object in a solar system—how do the stories work together in this system of existence? What are rules of this system of existence? What is allowed? Denied? What must this system do to maintain existence?

What is natural and unnatural in the system of the anthology? In the defiance garden? In the world in which the defiance garden exists? What do you know about the environment of the anthology in which the defiance garden exists?

What are ways of slowing down (perhaps leading to a halting of) growth?

What do defiance gardens say about mergers?

If an idea is reduction and/or removal of weeds, what does this story, in particular, and the anthology more generally, say about identifying weeds? What is your feeling about weeds in a changing world? What are ideas about weeds (other than reduction and/or removal) that this story, in particular, and the anthology more generally, offer? Maintaining lawns (as they are commonly maintained in continental—and connected, both directly and indirectly—U.S. cities) often requires not allowing these lawns to grow as they would naturally—please agree or disagree with this statement, drawing from the "defiance garden" story, in particular, and the anthology more generally.

Is the "defiance garden" natural? What definitions of natural and unnatural are you using? Why?

In which ways is the "defiance garden" dynamic?

How might this garden lead to anything or everything? How are you defining "everything"? Why? Which considerations of "everything" exclude this defiance garden? Why? How? Should these exclusions occur?

What are problems of inclusion?

Eco-Composition:
Blending Memoir and Research Paper

by Ashley Murphy, Seoul Education Training Institute

Overview

1. Definition

"Ecocomposition is the study of the relationships between environments (and by that we mean natural, constructed, and even imagined places) and discourse (speaking, writing, and thinking). Ecocomposition draws from disciplines that study discourse (primarily composition, but also including literary studies, communication, cultural studies, linguistics, and philosophy) and merges their perspectives with work in disciplines that examine environment (these include ecology, environmental studies, sociobiology, and other 'hard' sciences). As a result, ecocomposition attempts to provide a holistic, encompassing framework for studies of the relationship between discourse and environment." (Dobrin and Weisser, p. 572)

2. Unit Goal

The goal of this unit is for your students to write a 3- to 4-page essay that combines memoir and research paper. They will first write about a personal memory involving nature. Then, each student will research a few elements of her or his memory (for example, some plant species, or the way families bond in natural surroundings) and incorporate research into the memoir. They will then share their memoirs in small groups and provide feedback to the other students in the group.

This unit is designed to introduce beginning writers to composing research through reflective activities. It is based on "Connecting Memory and Research Through Eco-Composition" by Ellison (2009).

3. Organization of the Unit

This unit is designed to be taught in nine hours of instruction. I currently teach three hours at a time and so it is divided into three 3-hour lessons with three 10-minute breaks:

Lesson 1: Writing About Nature
Lesson 2: Writing Research
Lesson 3: Editing and Sharing Your Writing

The unit can easily be broken down into nine separate hours of instruction or about four 90-minute lessons.

4. Intended Student Level

I have taught slightly adapted versions of this unit to first-year students at a four-year university and adult writers interested in improving their writing. I have written it at a very basic level because, in my experience, students can be intimidated by the research process; they seem more confident in their writing when they are not threatened by the language used in instruction.

Lesson 1: Writing About Nature

Topic: Reading for gist, choosing a topic, and writing a first draft
Lesson Objective: By the end of class, students will have picked one memory about a natural place that impacted them; they will write one page about this memory in class.

Procedure

	Time
1. Course Overview	**10 mins.**
2. "Hope and Feathers" by J. Drew Lanham	**40 mins.**
3. (Field Trip) Writing about Nature *en plein air*	**50 mins.**

Reading an Example

Eco-composition, or nature writing, is new to many students. I always give the class an example essay before they begin writing their memoirs about natural places.

1. "Hope and Feathers" by J. Drew Lanham

Ask your students to read this story in class. It will take the average student 16 minutes to read. Alternatively, you can also have yourself or other students read it aloud while others follow along. Sometimes I assign reading as homework, but spending class time reading communicates to students how important the reading is. Additionally, this way I don't have to hear any excuses as to why they didn't read the assignment.

If you have ESL students, let them know that they shouldn't try to understand every word as they read. Instead, they should try to get the basic idea of every paragraph.

2. Understanding the Reading

When the majority are finished reading, ask the students to get in small groups and create an outline of the story. Each group's outline should have at least three levels. You can show them a sample outline to get them started. Creating outlines forces the students to re-read the story a

second time, searching for the structure of the piece. As they reconstruct the narrative's framework, they discover the ways the author has built his history.

Students can then discuss the story by sharing their outlines with the class.

Field Trip

This is probably the most memorable part of the unit for many students. Before I ask students to write about nature, I ask them to write *in* nature. This exercise helps them brainstorm the connections they have to the natural world.

1. Preparation

Find an outdoor area where your students can write. If it is too uncomfortable to be outside (raining, snowing, or too hot), try to find a greenhouse or another sheltered but natural area. You should inform the curators of the natural place beforehand. (By the way, this activity is a great way to bridge the gap between writing classes and the curators of natural spaces. Such activities often lead to interdisciplinary collaboration.)

You should also share this plan with your school's administration. You may want to leave a note on the door or send an email, so any late students will know where you are.

2. Writing in nature

Inform your students that they are going to go outside and write. They can use this time to write descriptions of the place. What does it remind them of? What is the connection between humans and nature?

Writing Your Memoir About Nature

Now that students have read an example of nature writing and have "warmed up" by writing in a natural place, they can turn their attention to the longer piece of writing that will be due at the end of the unit.

1. Listing Topics

Give your students these instructions:

> Lanham wrote about taking a vacation that changed him and helped him form "a clearer picture" of himself. Think about natural spaces that helped shape who you are. In the past, other students have written about hunting trips, times spent at their grandparents' farm, national parks, and even a man-made canal running through a city's business district. In the space provided, make a list of places that provided you with important memories:
>
> 1. _____
> 2. _____
> 3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

2. Writing

Ask students to pick the memory from their lists that they feel has had the most impact on shaping their identities. They should write about that memory for the rest of class.

Homework

1. Writing

Write a two-page memoir (12-point font, double-spaced) about a memorable time you had in nature. Do not worry about grammar or spelling. Just try to write 2 pages about a memorable time you spent in nature.

Lesson 2: Writing Research

Topic: Online research
Lesson Objective: Students will identify three online sources containing information related to their nature memoir. They will cite these sources, quote them, and incorporate them into their nature memoir.

Procedure

	Time
1. Finding Areas to Research in Your Memoir	**25 mins.**
2. (Computer Lab) Evaluating Sources	**25 mins.**
3. (Computer Lab) Finding Sources	**50 mins.**
4. Quoting and Summarizing	**20 mins.**
5. Citing Sources	**30 mins.**

Finding Areas to Research in Your Memoir

Students rarely read essays that combine memoir and research. It's important to provide them with example essays that do so movingly. *The Colors of Nature* provides many examples of this kind of multi-genre writing, which students can then analyze; with your help, they can then apply the lessons they learned to their own writing.

1. Reading an Example: "Porphyrin Rings" by Jennifer Oladipo

Ask your students to read "Porphyrin Rings" on their own in class. It should take the average student about ten minutes to read.

2. Identify the Research in "Porphyrin Rings"

When they are done, ask your class to identify where in the story Jennifer Oladipo's memoir ends and where her research begins. They should go through the story line-by-line to find which sentences are from her personal experience and which she learned from other sources. Students may also identify transition sentences. This can be done individually or in small groups. Compare students' answers.

3. Identify Things bell hooks Could Research

Now, ask students to read bell hooks's "earthbound: on solid ground" and to identify places in her memoir that could be researched. For example, students could possibly research the history of oil drilling in Kentucky or segregation in Appalachia. There are an infinite number of things that could be researched in each memoir.

When students are finished, ask each group what possible research areas they identified and write their answers on the board. Then, bring the class's attention to the fields of study to which each research possibility belongs: segregation in Appalachia would be a investigated by historians and sociologists, and the history of oil drilling could be investigated by geologists as well as historians. This activity helps students abstract away from hooks' piece so they can apply the exercise to their own memoir.

4. Identify Things They Could Research

The final task for this hour is to analyze their own memoir work as they did "earthbound." Ask students to take out the two-page memoir they wrote for homework. They will do the same task for their memoir that they did for bell hooks's essay: identify aspects of the narrative that could be researched.

Ask your students to list five areas of their memoir they could research:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

At least one student always tells me s/he cannot identify anything to research. Plants and animals are always good choices. Students could research the history of the place where their memoir takes place. Aspects of psychology can also illuminate the author's state of mind, like the effect of being in natural spaces on stress levels, or on maturity.

Evaluating Web Sources

Anyone can post anything on the internet. Experts can post their original research. The misinformed can post their factually-incorrect rants. How do your students know whom to trust?

1. Qualities of a Reputable Source

Checklist for a good source:

- ☐ It covers the topic in some depth; a source that is too short is probably not appropriate for a research paper.
- ☐ You can find the name of the author, or you trust the organization.
- ☐ The author cites her/his sources.
- ☐ You can find the same information given elsewhere (cross-checking).
- ☐ It was written or updated in the last five years.
- ☐ The language is objective, not emotional.

(Adapted from "Evaluating Sources of Information" from the Purdue OWL.)

2. Examples of Good and Bad Sources (in computer lab)

In a computer lab, ask your students to please visit the following two links. Give them some time to click around and explore. Using the checklist above, ask your students to decide which of the following two sources is more reputable:

www.globalclimatescam.com/

http://www.ipcc.ch/

Have a class discussion about which website appears most reputable according to the criteria listed above.

Finding Sources

1. Using Search Engines (in computer lab)

While you are in the computer lab, task your students with finding three reputable sources with information to include in their memoir/research paper. When they find their three sources, they need to save the information they find somehow (printing, saving to a USB, copying to a blog, etc.). Be sure your students save the URLs so they can find their sources again.

In addition to default search engines like Google and Bing, suggest that students try these search engines:

scholar.google.com (only searches journal articles and online books)
FreeBookSearch.net (searches the text of online books)
Go.com (Disney's family friendly search engine)
lexisnexis.com (searches public records and newspapers)

Using Sources

There are two basic ways to use a source: quote the source or summarize it. (Some like to add in paraphrasing, but attributing sources is difficult enough as it is; I don't see an advantage to distinguishing between paraphrasing and summarizing for students who are new to writing research.)

I have written the following guide for students to help them to avoid plagiarism. This section is written as a handout that they can take home and refer to while drafting their papers. Go over it with them in class.

For the References section, I encourage students to list as much information as is needed to find the original source. If you want students to use a particular citation style, you'll have to change this section.

1. Quoting Sources

When you use someone else's words or ideas, you must give them credit. **If you use their exact words, put quotation marks around it**, and use their name so people know who said it.

For example, let's say you are using this text from Wikipedia's entry on Mount Kumgang, which is a tourist destination in North Korea:

> The mountain consists almost entirely of granite and diorite, weathered over centuries into a wide variety of shapes, including over 12,000 picturesque stone formations, ravines, cliffs, stone pillars, and peaks.

If I wanted to use the information in my memoir, I would have to use quotation marks and also say where I got the information from:

> All afternoon I climbed granite stairs and clung to diorite posts that had been "weathered over centuries into a wide variety of shapes, including over 12,000 picturesque stone formations, ravines, cliffs, stone pillars, and peaks" (Wikipedia).

I didn't put quotation marks around *granite* and *diorite* because they are only one word each. If it's only one word, you don't have to use quotation marks.

2. Summarizing Sources

Sometimes you don't want to use the exact words from a source. You will need to change the words enough so that it is your own writing.

If I wanted to summarize the sentence from Wikipedia instead of quoting it, I could write something like this:

> All afternoon I climbed granite stairs and clung to diorite posts as the wind threatened to toss me into the ravines below. The thousands of unusual twisted rock formations had been formed over the years by pounding wind and driving rain (Wikipedia), eventually becoming beautiful in an unearthly way.

Observe the two sentences side by side:

Wikipedia's: … weathered over centuries into a wide variety of shapes, including over 12,000 picturesque stone formations, ravines, cliffs, stone pillars, and peaks Ashley's: The thousands of unusual twisted rock formations had been formed over the years by pounding wind and driving rain (Wikipedia), eventually becoming beautiful in an unearthly way.

Good summaries are hard to write. If you are having trouble summarizing, follow these steps:

1. **Know the source material.** Don't memorize it word-for-word, but know what's important. For the Kumgang example, I would need to know that the weather made the beautiful rock formations.
2. **Don't look at the source for 24 hours.** If you have the source open in front of you as you write, you are more likely to plagiarize on accident. Put it away and don't look at it for one day.
3. **Write it in your own words without looking at the source.**

If you follow these steps, you should have a nice summary written in your own words. If you don't follow these steps, you may be plagiarizing.

3. Citing Sources

At the end of every journal article, we academics cite our sources. References are one of the hallmarks of a trustworthy source. You need to do this too at the end of your paper. Include the name of the source, the author's name, the year, and publishing information. The most important thing is that a reader can find the source.

This is what a reference list looks like:

References

"Evaluating Sources of Information." From *The Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/553/03/

hooks, bell. "earthbound: on solid ground." In *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World* (2011), edited by Alison H. Deming and Lauret Savoy, pp. 184-187. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

Notice that the entries are alphabetized and I've included all the information needed to find the source. Note, too, that there are many different acceptable formats.

4. Plagiarism

If you use someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit, we call that plagiarism. If you are caught plagiarizing, you can be thrown out of your university or lose your job.

This is an example of plagiarism:

All afternoon I climbed granite stairs and clung to diorite posts that had been weathered over centuries into a wide variety of shapes, including over 12,000 picturesque stone formations, ravines, cliffs, stone pillars, and peaks.

This is plagiarism because I used Wikipedia's words without giving them credit.

Summaries can also be plagiarized. In the paragraph below, my paragraph uses too many of Wikipedia's words.

Wikipedia's:
… weathered over centuries into a wide variety of shapes, including over 12,000 picturesque stone formations, ravines, cliffs, stone pillars, and peaks.

Plagiarized summary:
Over 12,000 picturesque rock formations had been formed over the centuries by pounding wind and driving rain (Wikipedia), eventually becoming beautiful in an unearthly way.

5. Consequences of Plagiarism

There are serious repercussions for plagiarism. Students caught plagiarizing have been kicked out of their universities. Four German politicians who plagiarized on their theses had their PhDs revoked ("Government Party," 2012) and in April, 2012 the President of Hungary resigned his post because he plagiarized a translation (Karasz, 2012). When you plagiarize, you destroy your reader's trust. Please don't plagiarize. You can do this!

Homework

1. Writing Research

Incorporate three different sources into your memoir. If you quote, use quotation marks. Whether you summarize or quote, identify your sources. Add a reference list.

2. Writing Memoir

Write three different endings to your memoir. Try to make these three different endings very different from each other. Next class, we will help you improve the end of your memoir/essay.

Lesson 3: Final Stages of the Writing Process

Topic: Editing, Giving Feedback, and Sharing

Procedure

	Time
1. Ending Your Memoir	**50 mins.**
2. Peer Review	**50 mins.**
3. Sharing Your Work	**50 mins.**

Writing Closure

Students often have quite a bit of trouble ending their memoirs effectively. The following exercise is used to demonstrate how many different ways students can end their memoir and help them choose the ending that conveys what they hope to convey.

1. Writing Endings

Read the following three endings out loud as a class:

> 1. Those were the best times of my life. Now, as I look back, I am sad that those days are gone forever, but content in knowing that they were my times. I lived them. They are gone, but they belonged to me.

2. Even though that summer I thought Hazel was the ultimate beauty, as I got older I saw her as she really was. She was shallow and petty. As I matured, I realized I really didn't want to be like her at all. You learn these lessons as you grow older. Now I look for honor in a role model. I learned a valuable lesson from Hazel, so it wasn't wasted time at all.

3. As I stepped off the swaying suspension bridge, I turned around once more. The sun had traveled another inch across the sky, and the colors and shadows of the canyon had changed subtly, causing the entire view to become new to me. I drank it in before turning to go back to the cramped minivan. I held onto that sight as long as I could, until the colors faded in my memory.

Lead a class discussion about which ending students like the best. Students should pick out specific things they like about the endings. If students say that one ending was descriptive, ask them what description stood out to them. Press students to pick out the very words that influenced their choices. This exercise helps students think about the vocabulary authors choose.

2. Picking the Best Ending

For homework, you asked students to write three different ending paragraphs for their memoir/essay. Ask them to take out those three different endings and, in groups of three, take turns reading the three endings to their group. The group will help them pick the best one. Encourage students to discuss each student's endings in depth, as they did with the example endings.

Peer Review

1. Writing Comments in the Margins

Exchange papers with another person in the class. Read your partner's memoir/research paper slowly and carefully. Write in the margins of every paragraph.

Examples of things to write in the margins:

- How interesting!
- This is confusing.
- I don't understand
- Oh, I've been there!
- That would be scary.

2. Peer Review Worksheet

After reading your partner's paper and writing in the margins, answer the following questions (please be honest):

<u>Memoir</u> What place did the author write about? _____ Why did the author pick this place?

Mark with a star (*) the part of the memoir that is, in your opinion, the most evocative and memorable.
Mark with a pound sign (#) the part of the memoir that, in your opinion, needs some work.

What should the author work on?

Which description in the memoir is the most unique?

Can you find one clichéd description in the memoir? What is it?

Research
Find the three sources. Does the author quote them or summarize?

Are the sources relevant to the story being told?

Does the author name the sources in the text to give credit to others?

Does the author have a references list at the end?

Would you be able to find the source from the information given in the references list?

If not, which reference needs more information?

3. Editing Based on Peer Review

When you are finished, discuss your comments with your partner. You can then decide if you want to make changes to your memoir based on the peer review. You'll have a few minutes to make changes before we share our work.

Sharing Your Work

1. Reading Aloud

Each student will read from her/his paper for about three minutes. Students won't have time to read the entire paper, so they should choose their favorite parts to read to the class. The number of students in the class determines the time each student has to read.

After someone reads, every listener should say something encouraging about the reading. Students should pay attention and take notes so they can offer feedback.

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A Different American History

by Danyelle O'Hara

Description of the Module

This module is adapted from a presentation on the impact of American land and housing policies on African American relationship to land and place. The module begins with an invitation for participants to think about their own relationship to land and place in the context of institutions and policies presented. The questions at the end of each section provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their own personal experience of belonging to place, on perspectives represented in *The Colors of Nature* relative to African Americans and belonging, and, finally, on the broader "American story" about land and place.

The module is grounded in two questions about belonging: What does it mean to be a person of African descent in relationship to land in the United States? How does this relationship to land get formed? These same questions surface, in different ways, in the topics explored by Yusef Komunyakaa in his essay "Dark Waters," by Nikki Finney in her poem "The Thinking Men," and by bell hooks in her essay "Earthbound."

In "Dark Waters," Yusef Komunyakaa examines his experience of growing up in Bogalusa, Louisiana. In particular, he explores the perpetuation of what he refers to as the imperatives of an unjust history by dumping harmful chemicals and toxins in African-American neighborhoods. In "Thinking Men," Nikki Finney underscores the intelligence of those enslaved and the long-lived impact of their work and ways of being, unseen to "masters." This challenges the view that, as Finney puts it, "some men are born to read and turn pages, while other men are born to walk on nails and turn the earth." Finally, in "Earthbound," bell hooks equates relationship with land and nature, particularly for African Americans, with a deepened understanding of who we are as humans, our power relative to nature, and the fallacy of white supremacy that infuses American culture.

The timeline in the module provides an historical context to each author's explorations, and questions at the end of certain sections may serve to deepen the reading of each piece.

The module ends with an exercise intended to help participants locate themselves in the landscape of American policies related to land and property ownership, many of which have legacies that continue into the present. The exercise provides an opportunity to process the presentation and readings through personal reflection, small group sharing, and plenary discussion.

Introduction

This module is entitled "A Different American History" because it's not part of the lore that we Americans tell about ourselves. For example, it's not in the children's storybooks at the public library. The module goes through a timeline of illustrative land and housing policies that provide, in a few snapshots, an historical perspective and context for Black relationships to land, as well as a rural/urban and north/south context and the continuum between each.

This module is not developed from an "expert" historian or policy perspective. It is developed from a practitioner perspective—I have worked for over twenty years (in Africa and the southern United States) with nonprofits and grassroots groups providing support to Black people on the land. The module is also developed from a personal perspective, motivated by my own interest in the question of relationship to land and place, and more specifically, my own personal relationship it. My questions are simple:

- What does it mean to be a person of African descent in relationship to land in the United States?
- How does this relationship to land get formed?

I thought my exploration of these questions would conclude with an understanding that my relationship to land is rooted in something profoundly personal—a connection to a particular place, activity, or person. However, the more I've pondered, the more I've realized that to understand my relationship to land in the United States, I must understand history and policy. Hence, this module provides an overview of history and policies as they relate to African Americans and land.

What I present is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is an invitation for readers or students to formulate their own questions about what relationship to land and place in the United States means for them, given their own identities. What creates a sense of belonging or not belonging to this land for *you*? This module explores how certain American institutions and policies have significantly shaped African Americans' relationship to land, and readers and students are invited to think about their own peoples' histories relative to these institutions and policies.

Land for Some ...

When I wrote this module, I lived in Oklahoma and my younger child, a girl, was in the first grade. We read a lot of stories about homesteading, pioneers, westward expansion, and the land rush. I struggled with these stories, particularly how to put them into a broader, frankly more racialized, context for my daughter. Oklahoma has a long and complicated story relative to native people and land, which wasn't very present in the storybooks, and I never came across anything relating the African-American experience. Most of the books told the story of

white settlers and their bleak, dusty, windy, and hard-luck lives overcome with hard work. My heart went out to these people, and it was difficult not to think of them as courageous, perseverant, resilient, and resourceful.

What I never got in reading the homesteading and pioneering storybooks was that the protagonists were privileged and that their experiences unfolded through the exclusion of others. But westward expansion, the land rush, and pioneering were all largely made possible by the 1862 Homestead Act, which provided up 160 acres to Americans moving West. In total, 246 million acres were distributed. Forty-six million adults today are descendants of the families that benefited, thus one in six Americans benefits from the Homestead Act. Blacks and other people of color were largely banned from participating in the Homestead Act by language that required participants to be citizens. Even once the 14th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified to recognize individuals born in the United States, including those born into slavery, as citizens, participation in the Homestead Act by Blacks was minimal, relative to that of whites.

Reflection

Think back to storybooks you read or adults read to you when you were a child. In what ways have the images and texts from those stories shaped your own internal story about land, pioneers, and homesteading in America? How, if at all, does the information presented in this section affect this portrayal?

... but Not for Others.

Towards the end of the Civil War, Union General William Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, which established that abandoned and confiscated lands from Georgia to South Carolina and the Sea Islands would be subdivided, typically into forty-acre tracts, and redistributed to former slaves.

Library of Congress
Prints and Photographs Division

On March 3, 1865, after General Sherman issued his Field Order, Congress created the Freedman's Bureau, which oversaw the management, subdivision, and distribution of the abandoned lands; it also helped freed slaves with food and housing, oversight, education, health care, and employment contracts with private landowners. The sketch above, done by A.R. Waud in 1868, illustrates the difficulties faced by the Freedmen's Bureau by putting a white bureaucrat (the Freedman's Bureau) between a group of angry white landowners and angry

emancipated slaves. In reality, it was the freed slaves who were caught between the Freedman's Bureau mandate to promote Black self-sufficiency and the political objective of preventing increased tensions between the North and South following the Civil War.

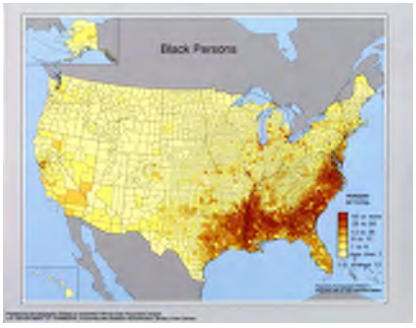
In the end, Black landownership proved not to be a priority in the Freedmen's Bureau's balancing act. On May 29, 1865, fewer than three months after the bureau was established, President Andrew Johnson granted pardons to "rebel" white landowners, allowing them to restore their property rights. The result was significantly reduced abandoned lands and too few properties to divide among the four million freedmen and their families.

The Southern Homestead Act was signed into law in July 1866 to address the inequity of land distribution in former Confederate states. However, opposition to Black landownership in the South was so high that obstacles were placed in the path of Black farmers at the state level. By June 1876, Congress repealed the Southern Homestead Act.

Reflection

Consider current social and political tensions and how they influence land and property-access policy decisions made today. Do you discern similar "political" tensions in how they're being resolved?

The Rise and Decline of Black-Owned Land



US Department of Commerce,
Economics and Statistics Administration, Census Bureau

Despite the government's failure to provide large-scale land redistribution, there was a progressive increase in Black-owned land in the South over the next thirty to forty years. This land was concentrated in what is now referred to as the "Black Belt," which stretches from Mississippi through parts of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

A couple of factors contributed to Blacks' ability to acquire land. The first was the emergence of agricultural and mechanical colleges for Blacks resulting from the second Morrill Act in 1890, which established land-grant institutions specifically for Blacks because they were not admitted to the land-grant schools established in the first Morrill Act in 1862. The second factor was the increased profitability of farming cotton. In fact, the term "Black Belt" refers

both to the race of people in the region as well as the quality of the soil. Rich, dark, and loamy, it facilitated cotton production.

Another factor contributing to Black land acquisition was more philosophical. The Emergency Land Fund (an organization that existed in the 1970s to support Blacks in acquiring and retaining land in the South) described the development of a strong land base among Blacks at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries as an ideological imperative of Black thought. In other words, landownership was becoming an important part of defining what it meant to be Black.

Whatever the factors and motivations, by 1910 African Americans had acquired between fifteen and sixteen million acres, most of which were in five- to ten-acre tracts. This they did with no equivalent of the Homestead Act.

"Great Migration," by Jacob Lawrence

The year 1910 was the peak of African-American land acquisition, which proved to be tenuous. The Black land decline began in the late teens with World War I, deepened in the 1920s with the boll weevil infestation that devastated the cotton industry, and was capped by the Great Depression. Adding to the harsh economic conditions were the severe social and political conditions under which Blacks suffered in the Jim Crow South. This all resulted in The Great Migration, the largest relocation in American history of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North.

My own grandparents in their young adulthood were part of this great wave—in the 1930s both my maternal and paternal grandparents went north to Detroit from Florida, South Carolina, and Arkansas.

Between 1920 and 1930, 2.7 million acres of Black owned land were lost. In addition, the populations of young employable Black people were depleted.

Reflection

In what ways, if at all, does your family's land owning status (owners or not) influence or shape the way you think about yourself and your family as individuals or citizens?

*How do the concepts of the **"imperatives of an unjust history,"** raised by Yusef Komunyakaa, in his essay "Dark Waters" and the **"ideological imperative of black thought,"** as described by the Emergency Land Fund as a reason for the rise in Black land ownership at the turn of the twentieth century, challenge one another?*

In what ways might the intelligence and knowledge that Nikki Finney refers to in "The Thinking Men" explain Blacks' ability to acquire land?

The New Deal: Inclusion and Exclusion

Library of Congress

During this time, Franklin Roosevelt introduced the Resettlement Program as part of his New Deal. The program, initiated in 1934, subdivided large southern plantations into smaller farm operations, resettled farmers in loan default onto these subdivided lands, and sold the land to these farmers or farm tenants on long-term, low-interest interest loans. There were one-hundred-and forty-one agricultural resettlement projects between 1934 and 1943, nineteen of which involved substantial numbers of Blacks, thirteen of which were reserved exclusively for Blacks. The resettlement program was important for African-American landownership and its legacy continues into the present—research out of Tuskegee University documents that much of the land still in Black ownership today is in former resettlement communities. Retention is attributed partially to the fact that the plots were forty acres, substantially more than people were able to acquire on their own.

Despite the resettlement program, Black migration continued into the 1970s, by which time Black landownership had slipped to around five to six million acres.

Other New Deal programs and policies explicitly intended to help Americans build wealth, including social security and unemployment insurance. In addition, labor unions emerged to build power and momentum during this time. It's important to note that both social security and unemployment insurance excluded agricultural workers and domestic servants, two occupations in which Blacks in the South predominated. Labor unions excluded non-whites from membership until 1955, and a lot of the craft unions remained all white into the 1970s.

Other wealth-building policies and programs that did not explicitly exclude Blacks effectively did. For example, the GI Bill, which provided war veterans with subsidized college educations (as well as support to secure housing and employment), was de facto more available to whites because African Americans were disproportionately more likely than whites to be dishonorably discharged from the military.

Reflection

What contemporary policies do you know of that exclude (intentionally or unintentionally) whole groups of people? What factors account for the exclusion (i.e., the way eligibility is defined, lack of access to information, lack of access to previous programs, etc.)?

Exclusive Housing and Lending Policies and Practices

The lack of access to these programs had serious effects on the asset building and earning potential of non-whites, but housing policies established in the mid-twentieth century possibly had the most lasting impacts on wealth and the race wealth gap.

In the 1930s and 40s, the ***Federal Housing Administration*** created programs that subsidized low-cost loans, opening up home ownership to millions of average Americans. During this time, government underwriters also introduced "redlining," a national appraisal system tying property value and loan eligibility to race. All-white communities received the highest ratings and benefited from low-cost, government-backed loans, while minority and mixed neighborhoods received the lowest ratings and were denied these loans. Of the $120 billion worth of new housing subsidized by the government between 1934 and 1962, less than two percent went to nonwhite families.

Government urban redevelopment programs in the 1950s destroyed more housing than they built. Ninety percent of all housing destroyed by urban renewal was not replaced; two thirds of the people displaced were Black or Latino. As urban renewal projects destroyed taxable properties, the burden for maintaining social services was shifted onto fewer and fewer residents. Meanwhile, mortgage programs for home building and homeownership available through the government further encouraged migration from cities to suburbs in what is commonly referred to as "white flight."

In the same way that stories like *Little House on the Prairie* have shaped American notions about homesteading and pioneering, popular television from the 1950s and 60s *("Leave it to Beaver," "The Andy Griffith Show,"* and *"Ozzie and Harriet,"* for example) played an important role in shaping American perceptions about who owned homes.

Federal and state tax dollars subsidized the construction and development of municipal services for suburbs, which facilitated commercial investment. Freeways were often built through core areas of Black settlement to connect white suburbs to central business districts,

and many urban Black areas lost their neighborhood shopping districts and successful small businesses as a result.

Fair Housing Laws made efforts to end housing discrimination, most notably President Kennedy's 1962 executive order and the 1968 Fair Housing Act, but had little practical impact. Appraisers continued factoring race into their assessments and practices, and it was not until 1988 that fair housing laws were amended to expand their scope and include enforcement provisions.

In the 1970s, 80s, and 90s housing prices rose dramatically, and white homeowners who benefited from discriminatory federal policies were able to sell their homes at great profit. Meanwhile, people of color who had been denied federal assistance had homes worth far less or faced an even higher cost of entry into the housing market.

Reflection

Is the story that popular American culture tells about the "American Dream" and how to achieve it consistent if this with your own experience of the "American Dream"? Given the foregoing history, do you think the "American Dream" narrative serves some social and political role? If so, what is it?

Black Land in the South, continued

To continue the story about African Americans' relationship to land, we must return to the South. Between 1865 and 1910, Black landownership reached its pinnacle at fifteen to sixteen million acres; from the late teens into the 1970s, the Great Migration accounted for much of the decline of Black landownership to around five to six million acres. From 1970 to the present land loss has continued, and current figures stand at around two-and-one-third (2.3) million acres, much of which is threatened. What accounts for continued land loss?

The first major factor in Black land loss is the overall decline in small-scale farming throughout the country. While this is a general trend, it has happened and is happening at a much faster rate for Blacks than for whites. The number of U.S. farms operated by Black farmers decreased by ninety-seven percent between 1920 and 2007. During the same period, the number of farms operated by white farmers decreased by sixty-six percent.

The second critical issue is heir property, or land owned by family groups. This type of ownership most often occurs when land is passed onto family members without wills, which is frequently the case with Black-owned land in the South. As each generation of heirs property owners dies without wills, a new generation inherits the land and the ownership interests decrease as the number of interest holders increases. Fractionated land ownership is unstable if owners are not able and willing to work together to maintain the land, pay taxes, and make joint decisions about it.

The third critical factor in African-American land loss has been racial discrimination in government, both state and federal, agencies that have made it, at best, difficult and often impossible for Black landowners to access government services and programs intended to support landowners. It is not simply the after-effects of racism at the turn of the twentieth century into the mid-1900s that has resulted in chasms of distrust. Rather, it is racism and discrimination that Black landowners face today, which inhibits their ability to access information, services, technical programs, and financial assistance for managing their land.

From "Black Farmers in America," John Ficara

The most well-known discrimination case concerning Blacks, land, and the U.S. government is the class action lawsuit that was brought in 1999 and resulted in an historic civil rights case known as *Pigford v. Glickman*. This case claimed that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had systematically discriminated against Black farmers and landowners for decades. USDA admitted these claims, but it took years to settle the lawsuit. In December 2010, President Obama signed a bill authorizing $1.25 billion in appropriations for the lawsuit.

While Blacks continue to struggle to retain their land in the South, the migration out of the region slowed in the 1970s and, by the mid-late 1980s, the trend had moved in the other direction, with African-Americans moving from the North back to the South. The destinations and reasons for relocating south vary and include urban areas like Atlanta, Georgia, and Raleigh/Durham and Charlotte, North Carolina, for economic opportunity; and to rural areas throughout the region to reconnect (or connect for the first time) with family and, in some cases, the land.

Reflection

In his essay, "Dark Waters," Yusef Komunyakaa writes, "The disparity in economics is at the center of the racial and cultural divide that influences environmental politics." If you replace the word "environmental" with "land," what analysis might Komunyakaa's comment enable about the timeline?

At what points in the timeline do we see evidence of bell hooks's observations in "Earthbound" that the power of Black peoples' connection to land supersedes that of capitalism and white supremacy?

Conclusion

Over the past one-hundred-and-fifty years, the Homestead Act has taken various forms, with the same basic results. Structural and institutional factors have played a huge role in keeping African Americans from accumulating and retaining land and wealth in the U.S. Understanding land and housing policies helps to shed light on why and how whites have been able to acquire wealth at a much faster rate than people of color, and particularly Black people.

Despite this bleak picture, the recent conclusion of the *Pigford v. Glickman* case in favor of Black farmers provides some hope for changes in the way that USDA and other federal agencies do business. This could result in new or different policies that enable African-American landowners to retain and benefit from their land, through information, technical assistance, and funding. This, combined with Blacks' cross-generational "return to the south," rural and urban, might provide an impetus for a shift in redefining African-American relationships to land.

Reflection
What dates and events speak to what you know about your family's experience and trajectories as Americans? In what ways have you been affected by policies, events, and your family's trajectories? What kind of long-term impact have these events had on people different from you? Does this make you consider programs, policies, and events any differently? If so, how?

Timeline Exercise

Materials: Timeline printout (key dates taken from module).

Set Up: Tape each individual date of the timeline on the wall around a room, creating a "gallery" for participants to walk through.

Overview: Participants will be asked to situate themselves vis-à-vis the various dates and events discussed in the presentation and posted in the "gallery." Participants may react to this exercise by saying that the timeline has little to do with them, given they were born long after most of the dates on the timeline or that they would need to consult with elders in their families to be accurate about their familial contexts vis-à-vis the dates. It is important to emphasize is that *this is not an intellectual exercise*.

Participant instructions:

1. Walk slowly around the room as you would an art exhibit. Look at the dates and events and recall the presentation, and then go somewhere that *resonates for you.* (10 minutes)

2. Once you are where you need to be, take a moment to jot down on a piece of paper what resonated for you about the particular date and event you chose. (10 minutes)

Some things to help jog thoughts:

What surprised you most about the timeline?

What issues do you think we've made the most progress on?

Which issues do you see operative in your life today?

What reminds you of something [different] that's going on today?

3. Have a conversation among participants at your chosen date. If someone is alone at a date, facilitators will help form small groups and each participant shares about the date they chose and what resonated for them. (15-20 minutes, depending on group size)

4. Full group debrief.

"A Different American History" Timeline

1862 Homestead Act provides up 160 acres to (white) Americans moving West. About 246 million acres distributed.

Early 1865 Special Field Order No. 15 abandoned and confiscated lands from Georgia to South Carolina would be subdivided and redistributed to former slaves.

March 3, 1865 Freedman's Bureau created to oversee the management, subdivision and distribution of the abandoned lands, as well as provide support to freed slaves.

May 29, 1865 President Andrew Johnson grants pardons to "rebel" white landowners, allowing them to restore their property rights.

1862 First Morrill Act establishes Land Grant schools.

1890 Second Morrill Act establishes Black Land Grant schools.

Post-Civil War – 1910 Blacks acquire 15-16 million acres, mostly in 5-10 acre plots.

1910s Black land decline begins with World War I.

1920s Boll weevil infestation of cotton crops devastates the cotton industry.

1876-1965 Jim Crow laws in the South that pushed African Americans north.

1920–1970s Great Migration

1920-30 2.7 million acres of Black-owned land lost.

1934 FDR New Deal Resettlement Program resettles farmers on large southern plantations in loan default, subdivided into smaller farm operations, and sold on long-term low-interest loans.

1930s Social Security and Unemployment Insurance. Labor unions emerge. (Blacks largely excluded.)

1930s and 40s Federal Housing Administration subsidizes low-cost loans. (Blacks largely excluded.)

1950s Government urban redevelopment programs destroy more housing than they built.

1962 President Kennedy's executive order

1968 Fair Housing Act

1988 Fair housing laws amended to include enforcement provisions.

1970s to 1990s Housing prices rise dramatically and sold at great profit.

1970s Black landownership at 5 to 6 million acres.

1999-2010 Pigford vs. Glickman class action lawsuit alleging that the USDA had systematically discriminated against Black farmers and landowners for decades.

Dec. 2010 President Obama signs bill authorizing $1.25 billion for Pigford vs. Glickman.

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Race, the Power of an Illusion, PBS: http://newsreel.org/guides/race/whiteadv.htm.

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Says Who? Writings about Agency in the Human and Natural World

by Jennifer Oladipo

The issue of **agency** in human relations with each other and with the natural world is an important theme in Al Young's "Silent Parrot Blues" and Jamaica Kincaid's "In History." Agency, the ability of a character to exert power throughout the narrative, conveys a great deal of information about the various relationships that comprise the novel. In both essays, humans, plants, and animals are all characters whose relationships can be examined in terms of their relative agency. The short essay questions below are intended to help readers further consider agency in the narrative and in the act of writing.

In "Silent Parrot Blues," Young as narrator wrestles with his own sense of agency. He expresses a sense of helplessness to act on behalf of the parrot that is badly mistreated by his building's superintendent. Even after Briscoe explains to him the exact nature of his power as a writer, Young is reluctant to act on his influence.

1. How does the power dynamic evolve among Young, Briscoe, and the silent parrot? In what ways does Young relinquish his agency to other human and non-human characters in the narrative? How does he relinquish agency beyond the narrative, in the act of writing?

2. Which characters appear to have the greatest agency in Young's narrative? How is that made evident? Explain how it shifts or remains constant.

3. How would you characterize Briscoe's view of human agency in the natural world? How does that compare or contrast with the narrator's?

In "In History," agency is most overtly exerted in the act of naming. Kincaid asserts that in order to have knowledge of things, one must give them a name; this refrain is echoed by various characters. Thus, the act of naming empowers and disempowers, and re-naming again shuffles the balance of power. In Kincaid's essay, naming is one character's way of framing another, and circumscribing the boundaries within which that other can act. The narrator struggles with how to refer to the plants in her own back yard, because she understands the scientific naming of the plants as a part of a history that has often denied agency to people of color.

Both essays also illuminate how matters of agency can resonate through time and across large geographical spaces. Kincaid expresses reluctance to relinquish her power in the

present to another character, Linnaeus. As the person who has effectively named the natural world, Linnaeus defies time and space to challenge Kincaid's agency in the present, in her own back yard and even in her mouth, centuries after he has died.

1. Linnaeus is powerful character, yet Kincaid indicates by looking at his personal history that his path may have been predetermined, and beyond his control. In what ways is his own agency circumscribed?

2. Which characters appear to have the greatest agency in Kincaid's narrative? How is that made evident? Explain how it shifts or remains constant.

3. In each of the essays, which characters act, and which are acted upon? What do these dynamics say about the author's view of the world?

4. In each of the essays, the narrator acknowledges the act of writing. Young writes, "I knew I would one day follow Briscoe's suggestion and get some of it down in black and white." Similarly, Kincaid brings overt attention to her effort to reclaim agency by declaring that "I, the person standing before you, close the quotation marks." What does each declaration reveal about each author's sense of his or her own agency? How do these self-conscious revelations color the narrative?

Rhetorical Theory Emphasis

by Alexis Pegram-Piper

The Significance of "Identification" to Rhetorical Theory:

"Identification" is a key concept in the study of Rhetoric and rhetorical theory. It has become an important term for rhetoricians—for those of us who are interested in the way signs, symbols, language, and all communicative undertakings act on and influence us. The process of identification is so important to the study of Rhetoric because it plays an essential role in the formation of identity, culture, and the social. The influential rhetorician Kenneth Burke has shown us that humans are unique in their capacity for symbolic thought: we can use one word or symbol to refer to something else and to incite others to think about something beyond the fixed definition of the original word or sign. For example, we can see an image of a horse and conjure a whole array of various thoughts that go beyond the outline of the animal.

Rhetorician Barry Brummett defines a sign as "something that induces you to think about something other than itself—and everything has that potential" (8). He also explains that "particularly powerful subsets of signs, called artifacts" are the "building blocks of culture," or the social (16). According to Brummett, an artifact is "1) an action, event, or object perceived as a unified whole, 2) having widely shared meanings, and 3) manifesting group identifications to us" (14). Brummett also writes, "Large or abstract groups of people . . . connect with us, and influence us through cultural artifacts . . . Artifacts represent groups to us, they show us what it is like to be part of or to identify with those groups, or they remind us of those groups and what we are committed to by our identification with them. Artifacts are charged with meaning, but many of those meanings bespeak our identifications with groups" (19). Therefore, signs and symbols combine to construct artifacts, and artifacts represent group identifications. Identifications are the connections we make in our minds with artifacts that represent specific groups or cultures—that represent other individuals. Identifications are how we move beyond the individual to become part of the social. In this way, the act of identification is the glue that binds cultures.

So, to recap: the signs, symbols, words, etc., we use to communicate with one another comprise certain artifacts that, in turn, we use to construct and represent identifications, identities, and different cultures. Signs and artifacts are the building blocks of identifications and the social. Rhetoricians such as Burke and Barbara Biesecker contend that because humankind's natural state is one of individuation and alienation, it is through our use of language and identifications that we are able—in fact, compelled to—transcend this inherently estranged state and to construct and become part of collective identities, societies, and cultures.

Discussion Questions:

1) a) So, given all of the above, why do you think it might be important and beneficial to think about and analyze specific identifications? Why do you think this concept has become so important to the study of Rhetoric? How and where do you see collective identifications and shared ideologies acting as powerful human forces today?

   b) Can you think of any identifications that you make with specific groups? How do those identifications construct your identity—how do they help you build who you are and what you represent to others? Can you think of any identifications you make that are conscious, repeated choices? Are there other identifications you make that may be less conscious, that you may be less aware of? Do you think it's even possible to be conscious of all the identifications you make or have made—or is this an impossible endeavor?

   c) Are all identifications with various groups rational? How much do emotional or affective appeals influence the identifications we make?

2) Within *The Colors of Nature* text, what identifications do you see certain authors trying to make with their audience(s)? What specific identifications do you see authors making with other specific groups?

   For example: What particular groups and/or ideologies do you see Maria Melendez identifying with in her chapter "Mujeres de Maíz"? What specific group or camp of thought does she want her audience to identify with? What do these identifications tell you about the author's self-constructed identity, the identity that they are constructing for you, the reader?

3) a) Do you see certain authors in *The Colors of Nature* anthology working to expand their audience's identifications? If so, where and how do you think the writer is going about this?

For example: How does Melendez work to broaden identifications near the conclusion of her piece? Or how does Robin Wall Kimmerer strive to forge new identifications for the readers of her chapter "Learning the Grammar of Animacy"? What (or more accurately who) specifically does she want us to work towards including in our sphere of empathy and concern? Can you point to any other places in the book that asks readers to identify with plants and animals, with "all of our relations." What about with a parrot? With a tree?

   b) What implications might these expanded identifications, the expanded circumference of Self, have for inciting and reinforcing eco-centric perspectives? For environmental ethics?

4) Putting on your rhetorician cap:

a) What role does **language** play in forging identifications? [Remember that language is a symbol system made up of various signs, and that signs are used to construct artifacts (combinations of signs imbued with specific meanings), and that artifacts are representative of identifications, which build collective identities and cultures.] Why might a profound understanding of language and these specific identifications you've just articulated be important for nature writers and the environmental movement?

b) Where is the de-colonization of language explicitly or implicitly discussed? And why might this issue be significant for forging identifications (or not)? Some possible places to start: "Invoking the Ancestors" by Aileen Suzara, "Learning the Grammar of Animacy" by Robin Wall Kimmerer, or "Sharing Breath" by Enrique Salmón.

c) How might language influence the way we think about something? How might the words and symbols we use matter? Or maybe they don't. Do you think language is an unbiased, purely descriptive and communicative medium or do you think it can influence and even create how we think? After reading Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Learning the Grammar of Animacy," do you think it matters if we call another living creature an "it" or a "who," a "something" or a "someone"? Or, if we turn to Francisco X. Alarcón's chapter, "Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America," why does it matter if we say that Columbus "discovered" America? What does this choice of language mean and why is it important? Or not?

Complicating the Concept of Identification to Include "Dis-Identifications" and "Non-Identifications":

With the rise of postmodern thought and the consequent calling into question of any and all common ground, identification becomes a little more complicated. Several prominent Postmodern thinkers have moved beyond Burke's conception of identification as necessarily including (and being limited by) consubstantial common ground. In other words, identification often involves more than just discovering and making connections according to what we have in common. For example, Krista Ratcliff complicates and re-imagines identification through postmodern, feminist, and postcolonial theories to include metonymic places of difference, **troubled** and **intersecting identifications**, **dis-identifications** and **non-identifications**. Ratcliff's complication of identification (to include dis-identifications and non-identifications) as well as the importance of identification in constructing the social can be seen in the following: "Socialization proceeds via identification *and* dis-identification . . . As such, socializing discourses continuously provide grounds for identification *and* dis-identification that construct the evolving lenses through which people and nations see the world (or not) and act (or not)" (70).

In defining dis-identification Ratcliff draws from Diane Fuss's work with this term. Ratcliff writes, "Fuss claims that dis-identification signifies an identification that is not so much 'refused' as 'disavowed': in other words, a dis-identification is 'an identification that has already been made and denied in the unconscious'" (62). So dis-identifications are those identifications that have been forged previously, but have since been broken. And non-identifications are those identifications that we *consciously* choose not to make. Food for thought: How much agency does this allow for on the part of the subject—the individual or collectivity that is forging the identifications (or not)? How much agency do we have over any identification?

Discussion Questions:

5) Where do you see illustrations of non-identifications within *The Colors of Nature*?

For example: What identifications and non-identifications does Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston make in "Crossing Boundaries"? And what identifications has her Native friend Richard chosen to cultivate? What are the implications of the identifications and non-identifications these individuals seem to have forged?

6) Where do you see examples of dis-identifications within *The Colors of Nature*— of identifications that have been made and then disavowed? A possible place to start: Francisco X. Alarcón's "Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America." What does he almost immediately dis-identify with? Can you think of any dis-identifications you, personally may have made?

7) a) Where do we see textual evidence of conflicted, troubled, intersecting, or split identifications within *The Colors of Nature*?

For example: How is Maria Melendez's identification with a Chicana ready-made identity complicated by her encounters with native Oaxacan women? Or how is Robin Wall Kimmerer's identification with her Potawatomi language and culture troubled by her necessary engagement in "mainstream" culture? Or how and why does J. Drew Lanham show evidence of conflicting identifications between his professional identity and his "race" throughout "Hope and Feathers"? Or how does Camille T. Dungy navigate her somewhat similar conflicting identifications throughout "Tales from a Black Girl on Fire"?

b) Do any of your own identifications conflict with or complicate one another? Do you think most of us need to navigate and negotiate between conflicting identifications on a daily basis?

8) Could these sites of conflicting identifications potentially be places of volatility and even violence? Why or why not? Could your conflicting identifications be productive sites of growth? Why or why not? What evidence do you find for your responses in the text?

For example: You may turn to Aileen Suzara's piece "Invoking the Ancestors." As she describes the complicated, conflicted, and colonized history of her ancestors, Suzara also explains why she uses language as she does and why she writes: "I write in recognition of Filipino as a

mestizo culture and myself as part of it, the entanglement of histories, of borders interweaving, and name-making and name-taking. I write to syncretic Catholic faith that mixed piety with animism, to the mixed blood of language. I write to understand this psychological splitting of selves, to what has fractured and sustained our people as a culture" (66). What evidence do you find here and throughout Suzara's piece of conflicting identifications? Do you think any conflicting identifications she exhibits in this text have proven productive or destructive for her? Or both?

9) Time and Memory Bonus Round:
   a) Memory and the narration of remembered events play a key role in many chapters of *The Colors of Nature*. How might memory or the act of remembering alter or shift our identifications? Do we have more agency over identifications that we forge from recollected events? Is it ever possible to avoid the filter of memory when constructing or reinforcing an identification? Might an experience from the more distant past create different identifications than an experience that is recalled from more temporally immediate memory? Do identifications change over time? What evidence do you find for this in the text?

   b) How might a unique, expanded conception of time contribute to the forging of identifications? For example, how does a sense of deep time or time immemorial help Richard (the Native man Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston meets with in "Crossing Boundaries") establish identifications with others? And how does his expanded sense of time help J. Drew Lanham forge identifications with all of humankind (77)?

Identification's Interconnection with Place:

Judith Butler contends that "identification always invokes 'an assumption of place' with place signifying both bodily and historical/cultural locations" (49). Butler continues by explaining that, "Because people are always historically and culturally situated, so, too are their embodied identifications—hence the linkage of identifications with place" (49). We are necessarily a product of and must make identifications with the specific time and place in which we live. Identifications are not made in atomistic, individualized vacuums; rather, they are socially and context bound and created. They are dependent on place.

Discussion Questions:

10) a) Where do you see the interconnectedness of place and identifications within *The Colors of Nature*? How and where are place and identifications interdependent? How do our identifications change or shift as our physical, cultural, and historic situatedness change?

Some possible places to start: How are identity and identifications and their interdependent relationship to historic and physical place explored at the beginning of Aileen Suzara's chapter

"Invoking the Ancestors"? How does a change in physical place affect J. Drew Lanham's identifications in "Hope and Feathers"? How and why is place made a part of an individual's identity through a specific ritual in Gary Paul Nabhan's "Listening to the Ancient Tones" (12)? How and why is place depicted as essential to collective cultural identities and identifications of the Rarámuri throughout Enrique Salmón's chapter "Sharing Breath"? These are just some places to start, but there are so many more, and I'm sure you can find and explore your own!

b) How and why might a collective identification with place and collective identities constructed through these identifications be important for environmental movements and for all of us who are concerned with the health of the natural world?

Suggestions for Further Reading

On Rhetorical Theory, Language, and Identification:

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Teaching Jamaica Kincaid's "In History" as Postcolonial Natural History

by Sarah Jaquette Ray, University of Alaska Southeast

Jamaica Kincaid's short essay, "In History," can be taught in a variety of classes to address a variety of issues, depending on students' familiarity with colonialism, natural history, and the relationship between environmental justice and literary form. With preparation, lower-division literature students will benefit from a close reading of this essay as much as upper-division environmental justice literature students. I have taught the essay in a 200-level Introduction to Environmental Literature course, a 400-level Environmental Studies course, and a 400-level ecocriticism course, and have had great success in all of these classes because "In History" offers multiple levels of both content and formal analysis.

I like to teach "In History" as a counter-narrative to the more widely known examples, from Columbus to Thoreau. This counter-reading approach exposes students to the insight that representations of nature are always deeply social, and that natural history is neither natural nor objective. Rather, the genre of natural history—like all representations of nature—has everything to do with power. Natural history is typically written from the settler's perspective, but Kincaid's essay reveals the ways in which the tropes of natural history underwrite colonialism. Read against texts such as Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* or Christopher Columbus's journals, and alongside readings or lectures based on critical work such as David Spurr's *Rhetoric of Empire*, "In History" reveals the ways that "nature" rationalizes the colonization of peripheral "others."

Students rarely question the intentions of natural history writers. It is not easy for them to see the social justice implications of a formal style that banally describes or catalogues regional flora and fauna. "In History" can be taught to help students see those implications. For example, Kincaid situates Carl Linnaeus's taxonomy of species within the broader context of colonialism within which Linnaeus was working: "The botanists are from the same part of the world as the man who sailed on the three ships, that same man who started the narrative from which I trace my beginning" (22). Here, Kincaid links the seemingly innocuous project of botany with colonial expansion, and the enslavement of Africans and their transplantation to the Americas. Such a passage raises discussion about the ways in which natural history is often just as much about ordering different kinds of *people* as it is about ordering nature. Ultimately, this passage helps students reconsider "scientific" naming as a way of ordering the world to bring it under control while erasing the narratives of the indigenous and enslaved.

In addition, through a provocative revisioning of the historiography of Linneaus's life, the essay forces readers to connect the dots between the Swedish "little botanist" and Kincaid's own existence as a descendent of Antiguan "slaves" now cultivating a garden in

Vermont, and wondering about her relationship to the flora and fauna there. In eleven short but rich pages, Kincaid introduces students to the important postcolonial ecocritical insight that "natural histories are deeply embedded in the world historical process" of European colonialism (DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley, 6), and shows how "natural history" is anything but "natural."

I have found that, after analyzing "In History," students read nature texts differently, and can become sensitive to the ways that natural history *continues to* underwrite oppression. Like Kincaid, students begin to argue with themselves about the social justice implications of how they view their worlds. If there is time, I recommend tracing the erasure of indigenous people in canonical works by Muir, Twain, or Abbey, for example, as well as in popular environmental works such as Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*. Or, consider bringing these insights gained from Kincaid's essay to bear on critical readings of contemporary nature programming on television, radio "field notes," and environmental documentaries. "In History" is an accessible and powerful text with which to conduct a critical analysis of the genre of natural history—as broadly conceived as you like—in order to introduce students to environmental justice.

Such an environmental justice analysis is also aided by considering point of view. Kincaid contrasts the colonizer's perspective of the Antiguan landscape with that of the people who were there before the land was "discovered," or who were brought there as slaves, showing how ways of seeing the natural world are fundamentally related to the perceiver's position within the colonial power structure. One statement that evokes this analysis is: "Christopher Columbus met paradise. It would not have been paradise for the people living there" (18). From her enslaved ancestors' perspective, by contrast, Antigua is only green. To a painter, Kincaid imagines, there are probably multiple shades of green, each with its own name, just like flora and fauna. But "To me, it is green and green and green again," she writes, imagining herself as one of her ancestors. Where Christopher Columbus described his "discovered" lands in detail, an enslaved African arriving to Antigua sees only "green and green and green again." Not trained to taxonomize for the ends of taking control of land and resources, the slave's perception is that this new world is different from what she knew before. Rather than seeing this perspective as naively simple, such a reading rejects colonial "sophistication" for direct apprehension of a new world whose contours for her are still unknown. In teaching this essay, I find this passage to be especially evocative in illustrating the different ways that a landscape might appear to different people with different epistemologies and experiences, opening new possibilities for students to imagine as well as critique.

Another reason I like to teach this essay is precisely because it encourages attention to form. Discussion can develop around the question, "what would postcolonial environmental literary or poetic *form* be?" Environmental justice ecocritics insist that, just as oppression occurs at the level of genre, so too does resistance to that oppression. Environmental justice ecocriticism therefore expands what "counts" as an environmental text. For Example, Jana Evans Braziel argues that realist, nonfiction environmental literature "may actually, and

ironically, reproduce sterile notions of the world as passive," while "experimental literary forms evoke the dynamism of worlds in motion that resist and evade absolute domination" (112).

"In History" reflects this dynamism in that it is part natural history and part an explosion of that very form. For example, as Kincaid reports on dominant historical narratives, she repeats "In fourteen-ninety-two" to remind readers that her narrative does not fit and that trying to place herself "in history" is impossible. However, she can disrupt the colonizers' narrative by inserting meta-commentary moments, such as, "I, the person standing before you, close the quotation marks" (21) and, "But I am not too uneasy, I haven't really entered this narrative yet" (24). Students initially dislike these insertions, expressing distaste for these formal techniques on the grounds that they disrupt the flow of reading. So we work through this experience of disjointedness: "Why might Kincaid have wanted to disrupt your experience of reading this?" Students begin to recognize that natural history is deliberately *not* transparent about authorship, and that there are social justice implications to gestures of objective representations of history and nature. Discomfort turns into literary analysis, and students come to see how important poetics are to politics and power.

I follow up our reading of the essay with a "Natural History Assignment," in which students write their own natural history essay. Rather than asking students to describe or catalogue the flora and fauna of a particular landscape, I ask them to think about how each of their own "ways of seeing" the natural world are shaped by their positions within broader structures of power. I also ask students to consider not just *what* they're writing about, but *how* they're articulating their observations. This self-reflective form of reading—and *writing*—the world is fundamentally an ethical one. To me, asking students to apply what they learn by reading "In History" to their own lives through writing achieves the fundamental purpose of the literary—to expand our worlds and imagine them more just, starting with ourselves.

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The Resilience of "Sharing Breath": Moral Links between Land, Plants, and People

by Enrique Salmón

Was and is the Indian ecological? In my chapter entitled, "Sharing Breath," I don't raise this question. All I hoped to accomplish through the chapter was to open a window into how my people, the Rarámuri, cognized our relationship with our home landscape and how that relationship colors our land-management choices. Often, when non-native people approach this subject they assume a westernized ecological vantage point, which raises the question of whether or not American Indians and other indigenous people were and are some kind or natural-born ecologists. I am referring to what might be considered ecological in behavior, in psychology, in moral understanding and relationship with a landscape. I feel that the question is irrelevant. This is because the notion of ecology is a Western cultural construct based on a systemic and deterministic approach to natural interactions that most often does not include the human individual in its formulation. In other words, Western science looks at nature as a thing separate from humans. To American Indians it is the individual human, influenced by his or her cultural and social institutions, constructs of land, humans, living things, and the layers of meaning, that shapes behavior and actions for people. These layers of significance cannot be included in Western ecological formulations.

The Indian did not come to his senses 10,000 years ago and decide to start acting ecologically. Our lifestyles, sustainable land-management systems, are results of centuries of observation. Over an extended time of living with a landscape most native peoples realized that we must live with whatever mess we make and so better figure out how to live with this place so that there will always be something to eat for the next several generations to come We were not always successful, and made some mistakes, but for the most part American Indian relationships with their landscapes were sustainable.

I was thinking of writing a piece that would lay out for you my various and specific definitions and explanations that have led me towards my way of thinking as an American Indian scholar about Native morality and its connection to landscapes. However, I realized that perhaps students would better understand these complex understandings by way of a traditional American Indian educational approach—through story. I used to and still spend much of my time learning and studying with traditional American Indian elders who embody our vast understandings of traditional ecological knowledge. Afterwards I hope that you will ponder the handful of prompts and questions following the story. If you do this with other people I ask that you approach the prompts through the practice of dialogue, the time-tested practice of addressing a question with layers of additional ideas and constructive comments. In the dialogue the process outweighs any end result or conclusion.

Persistence. After a click of my computer mouse a digital Webster's dictionary suddenly zooms onto my computer's desktop. The dictionary defines "persistence" as "firm obstinate continuance in a course of actions in spite of difficulty or opposition." After a brief contextual example in italics about companies and their need to have patience, an alternative definition is suggested which states, "the continued or prolonged existence of something." Together both definitions sum up American Indian existence. To be additionally specific I would refer to this kind of persistence as resilient persistence. Native persistence was resilient. Before the arrival of the Europeans native peoples sustainably occupied the North and South American continents for thousands of years. Somehow we patiently developed land-management actions and behaviors into practical knowledge that made sense. Over time that practical knowledge led to into what is seen as sacred.

A number of years ago I was standing at the edge of Hopi elder Eric Polingyouma's cornfield looking at a small collection of various sized rocks. For most of Eric's 70-plus years he has coaxed heirloom crops from the sandy soils of the Colorado Plateau. He and his Hopi clan members and neighbors have relied on a time-tried process. It is a system that pays homage and honor to the elements of land and sky as well as the unexpressed and unrecognizable dimension of nature. One way to honor these forces is through shrines placed at the edge of agricultural fields. Eric's rock shrine sat on the sandy soil in no discernable order. During a conversation in the prefabricated house that was Eric's home with his wife Jane, he had asked if I wanted to see his shrine. We bent under the dry heat as we walked across the cornfield of several acres. On the way through the heat I harbored a romantic vision of a shrine with colorful prayer sticks, and something befitting of the sacred. The unadorned pile of stones was a bit of a disappointment.

Not more than 40 feet away was the steep edge of an Arroyo that cut through the northern Arizona plateau country on what is now the Hopi reservation. The cut began about 20 miles to the north at the edge of Black Mesa and ran south and west through Eric's land under Highway 259 and disappeared into the distance towards Leupp, Arizona. Eric said the Arroyo was relatively new. In fact what is now an empty interruption of the landscape used to be a part of Eric's cornfield where he raised 10 varieties of Hopi corn including red, blue, white, yellow, sweet, lavender, and what they call "greasy hide." Eric also grows beans and squash, and encourages semi-domesticated medicinal and edible plants to flourish. The Arroyo reflected the current and unusual aridity of the Colorado Plateau and other parts of the American Southwest. For nearly eleven years this area has been parched by an ongoing drought.

The Hopi Way, as Jane and Eric often call their approach to life, is not one of outcome or product. What is important to them is the journey and what is learned along the way about their relationship to place and community. It is a way of resilient persistence. Some cultures have been able to successfully endure shocks to their social and environmental systems. They have accomplished this whether by chance or through intentional social and communal design as a result of recognizing adaptations that have worked against changes to their ways of life. Often this happens overnight or through elongated temporal and spatial processes. For the Hopi aridity, drought, and going without have been incorporated into their worldview and into

their social, spiritual, and agricultural practices. Hopi origin tales, as well as the Hopi prophecies speak about issues that are increasingly becoming realized and that reaffirm their persistence.

Like many Rarámuri, Hopi, Tohono O'odham and other American Indian Farmers, Eric still maintains traditional cornfields on the same small fields dating back approximately three thousand years. Throughout the region, rock art and ruins retell the story of the early people who managed small fields of various kinds of crops, domesticated animals, and channeled rainwater to their fields and into small catchments. Eric can read rock art around the Colorado Plateau and into southern Mexico telling the tale of a population of resilient people and their movements through the various landscapes that now comprise much of the North American continent.

One day, sitting in their home near Kykotsmovi, Eric was talking with me about Hopi culture, spirituality, and history. He talked about the movement of the people coming from the south and settling at Hopi. Eric talks about Hopi history as if it only happened yesterday. According to Eric the Hopi did not always occupy their arid part of the Colorado Plateau. They originated in southern Mexico and in other parts of Central America. Nevertheless, during the past this group of related people began to move about, eventually heading north. As the people migrated, settled for a short while, and then migrated again, a library of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) co-evolved with their increasingly complex social system of clans and societies. The introduction of corn, which requires a minimum commitment of staying in one place for three months while it grows and matures, must have further stratified Hopi society. In other words, they were forced to find a place to call home for the long term. Hopi social cohesion is achieved through obligation to a Clan. The clans are part of the Hopi moral landscape. The landscape is a reflection of their shared kinship to each other and to their human and non-human community.

Until the relatively recent human past, people living in small-scale agricultural communities drew the majority of their resources from their immediate landscape. At Hopi the aridity of the Colorado Plateau makes life very difficult and a life that is always on the edge of failure. Like other indigenous communities around the world, the Hopi have a relationship with the landscape that has evolved over time. At some point the Hopi must have figured out which crops grew on their landscape and how to most efficiently insure their survival. Over time and after years of observation, strategies were developed that insured an annual harvest. The strategies became what might be called practical knowledge. Practical knowledge then over time becomes sacred knowledge. A writing system had not been developed. Therefore, the best way to maintain this knowledge was through story, songs, and in ritual. In this way the Hopi collective memory became something that remains alive so long as the Hopi Way of life persevered. Because the knowledge and, as a result, their culture, is affected by the landscape, the land itself is perceived as the source of the knowledge. This library of knowledge doesn't just remind people how to grow corn and beans in an arid landscape. It also reminds people how to behave. It teaches them what is right and wrong, and gives them the knowledge of what it takes in order to preserve this way of life. The land has become a source of morals and values

that are rekindled each time a story is re-told or when the corn dancers fill the plaza in one of the Hopi villages, and whenever unfolding prophecy makes itself obvious.

As a result, in order to preserve the community the land must also be preserved. This direct correlation is something that many in the fields of ecological restoration, biology, and land management have, until very recently, failed to notice. A superficial understanding of this realization, by many in the ecological and land-management communities, is that Native peoples for centuries had manipulated their local environments through various mechanical means such as pruning, burning, and gathering. As a result they sustainably impacted their ecological systems. This realization places the Hopi in context with the universe and with the land that is seen as nurturing. On the Colorado Plateau, although the land appears harsh and unforgiving, it actually cares for and protects the people. Retold and repeated stories and ceremony remind the people of this paradigm. It is a worldview where the people believe that they emerged from the land and where the land models responsible behavior with all living things. As a result, to lose the land is to lose one's flesh, to lose one's sense of well-being. Landscapes have the power to influence people's ideas about themselves because of the history that has unfolded on them. From the events moral metaphors are formulated by the community's shared understanding. Moral metaphors extend into Hopi models of their landscape, affecting their ecological actions.

When a community's survival depends on maintaining total connection with the intricacies of their environment, no detail is ever missed. And no detail is not recognized or not treated as sacred. When the Hopi say that all life is sacred they mean it. Even an action that is a natural part of emerging life is prayed to. In this case of Eric's shrine it was the notion of germination. The concept then became formulated into one that implies that all part of emergence and re-emergence is significant. Corn is not simply Mother. The continued cycles and co-dependence that humans have with growing corn is sacred. When Eric grows corn a sizable portion of his blue corn is always reserved for corn that will be used in his clan's kiva and in their rituals. This is because he has a responsibility to his kiva and clan. It is a responsibility that he meets unquestionably as a result of his worldview.

Dialogue Questions to Consider

1. Is there a way to incorporate the concept of a Moral Landscape into today's modern industrialized world?

2. I had mentioned above that the notion of ecology is a Western cultural construct based on a systemic and deterministic approach to natural interactions that does not include the human individual in its formulation. But it is the individual, influenced by his cultural and social institutions, constructs of land, humans, living things, and the layers of meaning that shape behavior and actions for American Indians. These layers of significance cannot be included in Western ecological formulations. Based on what you understand in the essay and from the various chapters in *The Colors of Nature*, elaborate more on this.

3. To many American Indians self-identity is connected to landscapes as well as to social responsibilities. What are the ecological ramifications of this?

4. Are there any advantages or disadvantages of maintaining an entire culture's ecological history and knowledge in story, song, and ritual?

5. Discuss how something that is "practical" can become "sacred."

The *Deck* from *The Black/Land Project*

by Mistinguette Smith, Executive Director, The Black/Land Project

The Black/Land Project gathers and analyzes stories about the relationships between black people, land and place. Our work emerges from a single inquiry: *What are black people's relationships to land and place in the United States today?* From this umbrella question, a cascade of queries flows: What is land? Who is black? Is "relationship" the same as "ownership"?

Black/Land seeks to answer these questions through semi-structured interviews and documentary photography. Although we use the tools of qualitative research and analysis, we are not an academic project: our primary goal is to return our findings to black communities struggling with place- and land-based issues, and to use this information as a platform for community organizing work. We also share what we are learning with community groups, students, and policy makers who are interested in the powerful traditions of resourcefulness, resilience, and regeneration that black land stories have to offer. Many people are surprised to learn that Black/Land is centered on questions rather than "problems." These questions are a rich resource, and one we wish to share.

"The Deck" is a tool that Black/Land uses in our workshops. It consists of 100 questions, most of which come from our interview or workshop participants. We print them on the deck of index cards and carry them wherever we go; we never know when we might need them. We have distributed selected questions from The Deck to breakout groups after community Black/Land presentations, when participants are so overwhelmed by what they have just heard that they do not know where to begin. In large university lecture halls we use them in "pair shares," offering pairs of participants an opportunity to think out loud about a single aspect of black relationships to land for two or three minutes. We use them as writing prompts. We have used selected cards in workshop settings, offering work groups a set of themed prompts to explore an issue in their community more deeply. The Deck presumes the person reading the card to be black, which offers non-black people an opportunity to consider these questions from a new perspective. Sometimes, we add custom questions to The Deck tailored to the audience or the community we are working with.

This version of The Deck begins with twenty questions about black people's relationship to land raised by Deming and Savoy's *The Colors of Nature*. In our reading, each essay in *The Colors of Nature* raised essential questions about black people's relationship to land and place, no matter the racial or ethnic identity of the writer. We have added the author's name to each of these cards, to help select cards that match an assigned reading.

These questions are now part of The Deck at the Black/Land Project. We hope they will also weave their way into your classroom, your workshop, your community groups, and your thinking, teaching and writing.

The Deck Questions:

What examples of nature writing by black people can you name? How many of them have you read? *(Intro: Savoy and Deming)*

How has climate change and environmental pollution changed your world since you were born? *(Intro: Savoy and Deming)*

Where are your people from? How far back can you trace your lineage? How does this affect your relationship to land and place? *(Kincaid)*

What place in nature makes you feel most connected to blackness? What joy or fear connects you there? (*Dungy*)

Farm laborers are often Jamaican and Haitian, as well as Latino. Where do their voices show up in your food systems analysis? *(Arroyo)*

Are you on "speaking terms" with nature? Has your relationship to nature ever been different? (*Adiele*)

"When traversing the landscape, I learn to choose wisely" – *Faith Adiele*
How has the experience of being black shaped your experience of travel from place to place?

Both nature and culture evolve through history. How has what it means to be black in America changed over the last 400 years? How have black relationships to land changed over that time? *(Suzara)*

To be racially identified as "black" assumes some relationship to a particular place – the African continent. Do you feel connected to Africa? Where? Why? *(Lanham)*

When you think of "environmental issues," do you think of fighting against Cancer Alley, dirty diesel buses, or garbage landfills on rich farmland? If not, why not? *(Bullard)*

Why did Hurricane Katrina become such a resonant symbol for climate change and environmental racism for blacks in America? *(Verdelle)*

If pollution of waterways and land is seen as "business as usual" in poor black communities, what motivates those communities to organize against toxic waste dumps? (*Komunyakaa*)

What experience and knowledge is unique to black *women's* relationship to land? How do politics affect that relationship? *(Melendez)*

Is your relationship to land as a place for work, or a place for recreation? How does that shape how you see environmental issues? (*Young*)

Have you experienced exile or dispossession from your homeland? What things do you know about land that may not be easily seen or understood by others? (*Abinader)*

Do the concerns and experiences of black people shape the environmental movement? Where? How? (*Nabhan)*

Writer bell hooks calls on African-Americans to "renew our relationship to the earth, to our agrarian roots" as a form of resistance to domination. Do you agree with her position? Why or why not?

What did you learn about the plants and animals around you at school? What did you learn about that those same plants and animals from your family? (*Salmón*)

"Prisons epitomize perhaps the most severe endpoint of humans inhabiting built environments without nature." -*Nalini Nadkarni*
How has the mass incarceration of black men affected black relationships to land and nature?

"We have the gift of ancestral memory, and we must choose how to use it."- *Pualani Kanahele*
Do you have access to ancestral memory of land or place? How do you use it?

What piece of land do you call home? Why?

Regenerative agriculture, CSA farm shares, and U-Pick farms are models developed by black agronomists, to aid black family farmers in holding onto their land. Did you know this fact? Does it surprise you?

Given the historical disinvestment in black-owned farms, what would it take to make farming an economically sustainable for today's black farmers?

Should laws and public policy recognize or encourage heir's property-in-common? What are the social implications of doing so? What are the implications of <u>not</u> doing so?

How many black growers participate in your local farmers' market? Why?

In the community where you grew up, how were African-Americans still connected to land?

What are the stories black people tell about land in your hometown? How do those stories affect your town's strategic environmental assessments? Zoning?

Are black people represented proportionately on the board your local land bank? Your local food policy council?

_____% of the residents of this county are white. More than 74% of the people in the U.S. are white. What decisions about land, and definition of who is included in this community, account for this difference?

Many urban planners advocate for land banks as a "smart growth" solution to blight from abandoned homes in shrinking cities like St Louis, Detroit, and Cleveland. What questions should policy makers ask black communities about these recommendations?

What ways are you used to framing "black relationship to land" in your work, scholarship, or social activism? Who and what is left outside of your frame of reference?

In what ways have black Americans' relationship to land contributed to ecological resilience?

Transportation planning – placement of freeways, sidewalks, and public transportation routes – have had a strong impact on black neighborhoods and relationship to place. Where have you seen that in your work?

How are people in the northern U.S. responding to population loss and "shrinking cities"? Where do you hear voices from black communities in those conversations?

The historical trauma of land loss is well documented among Jews and Native Americans. What experiences might those groups have in common with African-Americans? Haitian-Americans? Somali immigrants?

What would a holistic response to black land loss look like?

What connections happen when we re-frame an issue about land and justice in the context of race—for example, how do we see the BP Deepwater Horizon oil drilling disaster affecting black relationship to land?

Have you ever worked with a community garden or urban agriculture program in a black community? What is the goal of that program? Who set those goals?

Have you ever worked with a community organizing program in a black community? Was the use of private or public land an organizing issue?

Are you interested in food security and food justice? Who are the black voices in that movement?

Are you interested in land conservation? What do you know about the history of land conservation efforts initiated by black communities?

What community places, outdoor activities, and ways of using water and land represent the heart of the black community where you live?

What past grief related to land are black communities still fixated on today?

What current issues around place, land and land use arouse fear of re-victimization within black communities where you live?

Elders in black residential communities often say that younger neighbors no longer take care of their property because they do not feel a sense of ownership for the neighborhood. What physical features of a neighborhood help people to feel like they own it?

Much land in Midwestern urban areas that was used for heavy industry is near residential areas where people of color live. How has that pattern affected the place where you live today?

African-Americans moved from the Deep South to northern industrial cities in the 1920's-60s. What southern rural traditions about land and place are important to maintain in northern cities? What parts of that culture no longer serve black people in the urban north?

What people and places get left out of the conversation when people talk about "shrinking cities"?

Which blocks in your neighborhood are the safest? What makes those blocks safe?

Do you live in a city with a Master Land Use Plan? Have black communities in your town been strongly included in creating it? If you don't know, why don't you?

Many cities in the post-industrial North have "depopulated": they have more housing than families who need a place to live. This has hit black communities particularly hard. What is the best way to use land that is currently occupied by vacant housing?

Has your neighborhood been shaped by racial segregation in the past? How did that happen? By law? Through violence? Through restrictive covenants?

Where is there agricultural land in your community? Who owns that land? Who works on it?

Segregation gave rise to black-owned commercial districts. Where was the black commercial district in your town in 1950? Where is it today?

Churches are a significant form of land use and collective land ownership in black communities. What ways have black people used to raise capital to purchase land for a church?

Ownership is one kind of relationship to land. What are some others?

Much black-owned land in the South was lost due to heir's property: an African tradition of passing down property to all descendants in common, without a will. Is it more important to preserve the cultural tradition of heir's property, or to preserve black land ownership?

Segregation required separate recreational communities for blacks. Did members of your family vacation in Idlewild (Michigan), Oak Bluffs, (Martha's Vineyard, MA), American Beach (Amelia Island, FL), or similar resorts?

What are you afraid to bring up in this conversation?

Where are you mostly likely to encounter other black people engaged in outdoor recreation in your neighborhood? If not, why not?

Was there a historically black neighborhood in your community that was displaced during urban renewal in the 1950s or urban riots in the 1960s? How is that land used today?

Do African-Americans have a different relationship to land and place that do other Americans? Why or why not?

In Black/Land interviews, Afro-Caribbean people often report feeling a strong relationship to nature and agriculture; African-Americans often describe their relationship to nature and agriculture as ambivalent or alienated. What accounts for these differences?

Many African-Americans speak with longing or nostalgia for land in the rural south. Do you have such longings? Do you have connections to the rural south?

African-Americans are less likely to own land as property than Latinos, Native Americans, or Asian-Americans. Why is this so?

Did you grow up in a neighborhood or community that was mostly black? Where? Did your family live there by choice? Economic circumstance? History? What things did you love about that place?

How does the fear of violence shape black women's relationship to the outdoors?

There are public places that are traditional gathering spots for black community life, like Congo Square in New Orleans. Are there public spaces in your community that are traditionally black?

Black people are overwhelmingly urban. Are city blocks land? Why or why not?

How has the history of your ancestors' arrival in the U.S. affected your relationship to land?

Do you know how your African ancestors first arrived in America? Were they indentured servants? Enslaved? Immigrants? Refugees? How does this shape your relationship to place?

Did you or your ancestors move during the Great Migration of the 1920s-1970s? From where to where? How does migration affect where you think of as your "home land" or "home place"?

Do you consider land ownership a source of wealth? How does real estate value that is depressed because of housing segregation affect your thoughts about land and wealth? How does the experience of persistent poverty among black landowners in the deep South affect your thoughts about land and wealth?

During urban renewal, many black neighborhoods were bulldozed to create freeways. How has that affected your current community's sense of place?

The 1960s were a time of violent unrest that continues to shape many cities. How has it shaped the place where you live?

Are you, or your family, part of the reverse migration from the urban North to the South? How does migration affect where you think of as your "home land" or "home place"?

How has the mortgage crisis affected black middle class communities where you live? How has the experience of black middle-class people affected your assumptions about who owns, and who loses, land?

Conversations about “land” are often about urban or rural agriculture. However, most black folks are neither farmers nor gardeners. What other relationships do black people have to land?

There is a stereotype that “black people don’t do wilderness.” Do you have a relationship with uncultivated land—woods, desert, prairie, mountains?

How does the history of black land loss in the U.S. South shape your relationship to land today?

What do you know about the Pigford v. Glickman Black Farmers lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture? How does our government support or undermine black people’s ability to profit from owning land?

Is there a spiritual aspect to your relationship to land?

Some black people see a strong connection to land as a source of cultural wealth. Some see strong connections to land as related to economic poverty. How do your connections to land create wealth for you? How do they create poverty?

In many black cultures, ownership is not the most important relationship to land. Where have you experienced tenancy, or generational history, as a relationship to land?

Who makes decisions about how land is used in your community? Answer this question as specifically as you can.

During the foreclosure crisis of 2007, black families lost the land upon which their homes were built at twice the rate of white homeowners. Why?

Housing segregation during the early 20th century led to the devastation of black neighborhoods during the foreclosure crisis of the early 21st century. How else does 20th century segregation still shape black relationships to place today?

The mortgage crisis destroyed both individual household wealth and historical geographic communities for black people. Where do you see people displaced by the mortgage crisis rebuilding their communities?

Do you know what “redlining” is? How does it shape where black people live in cities today? How is redlining similar to blacks being offered subprime mortgages even when they qualified for regular mortgages? How is it different?

Many cities use land banks to take possession of abandoned or foreclosed properties. This land may be redeveloped, or used for community gardens, playgrounds or other public purposes. Does your community have a land bank?

Land banks are public entities where black people are rarely decision-makers. However, many land bank properties were once owned by black households in black communities. If you ran a land bank, how would you deal with this tense issue?

Max Rameau started the "Take Back The Land" movement, which organizes homeless families to squat in tax foreclosed properties in their old neighborhoods. Is homelessness a land-use issue?

Black communities are shaped both by segregation and histories of cultural connection. Where do West Indian/Caribbean people live in your community? How have they brought their traditions about land and place to their new homes?

"Black" as a racial category in the U.S. includes African-Americans, immigrant Nigerians, Somali refugees, Haitian-Americans, Afro-Borinquens, etc. What other "black" ethnic groups exist can you name? Where might they consider their home land?

When African-Americans talk to each other about owning land, they often describe it as a way to address historical and economic issues. How is this similar to other American experiences of land ownership? How is it different?

Where are black people visible participants in the local agriculture movement in your community? As farm owners? Small gardeners? Seasonal laborers? Post harvest processing and marketing staff? Market owners?

"Black relationship to land" is frequently narrowly framed as "introducing black youth to urban gardening." What other black relationships to land are unique and valuable?

Urban gardening programs often employ white leaders from outside the community to teach black youth the same agricultural skills that their parents and grandparents have. Why is this true? Who makes these decisions?

Gentrification is when affluent people move in and rebuild an upscale neighborhood that displaces poor communities. It often affects historically black communities. Where have you seen gentrification happening? Is it a good thing? Why or why not? Where have black people gentrified a neighborhood? Is it different from when whites gentrify historically black places?

Bicycling is a way that many people experience relationship to land and place; yet the biking "movement" is segregated by race and class. How do black biking groups like Red, Bike and Green give black people support and safety to bike?

Black people come from cultures that cultivate and maintain relationships with land that does not require individually owning it. How can this knowledge help us to re-think the environmental challenges of today?

Historical Trauma is "*a cumulative and psychological wounding and across generations, including one's own lifetime, that comes from massive group trauma."* What forms of historical trauma related to land are experienced by black people?

Many African-Americans are upset by the idea of farming or gardening because it reminds them of slavery and sharecropping. How can the historical trauma of enslavement be healed?

Much research on loss of land as historical trauma focuses on the experience of Jewish and Native American people, and war refugees. Why do you think the black experience of land loss has not been studied as historical trauma?

One marker of historical trauma is loyalty to ancestral suffering as a source of cultural bonding: "*Our people aren't allowed to do that*" becomes "*Our people don't do that.*" What kinds of things do we say "black people don't do"? Are these symptoms of trauma?

One marker of historical trauma is hyper-vigilance, or fear of being taken advantage of again. This fear can look like apathy. How might your view point change if you assumed people were experiencing historical trauma instead of just not caring? Where have you seen an example of healing or transcending historical trauma?

Many African-Americans enjoy hiking or walking in the woods, often because they played in the woods as children. Others carry a fear of the woods related to memories about lynching. What makes the difference between these two relationships to woodlands?

Many African-Americans carry a fear of hiking or walking in the woods related to memories about lynching. How does this historical trauma get passed down to generations who were not yet born during the era when lynching was common?

Historical trauma often results in "frozen grief" – feelings of loss or sadness that go on and on, unresolved. What past grief is your black community still fixated on today?

What current issues about land and land use in your community arouse fear of re-victimization?

How does your approach to your work specifically address the history that black people have related to land?

Whether they are migrants, immigrants or refugees, black people often reproduce the front yards, street corners and traditions of their home place when they move to a new place. Where have you seen this kind of cultural regeneration?

From Lucy Terry's "The Bars Fight" (1746) to the works of Toni Morrison, black women have written about black settlers and pioneers. What black women's writing about the settler experience has affected you most?

Some black parents intentionally teach their children land-based survival skills. Others refuse to do so, instead directing their children toward educational and professional success. What are the benefits and drawbacks of each of these choices?

Many black people share a sense of obligation to a place, even if they do not own the land. Have you ever seen or experienced this? What kind of community does this sense of shared obligation create?

African-Americans seeking freedom from slavery and Jim Crow were often unwitting agents in seizing land from Native Americans. What conversations do Native- and African-American people need to have about this shared history?

From the Cradle to the Grave: A Project Idea Based on "This Weight of Small Bodies" by Kimberly Blaeser

by Joni Tevis, Furman University

From the Cradle to the Grave: A Project Idea

> As I ate, I watched the waste pile up and remembered the view from the back of my Jakarta hotel.
>
> The front of the luxury hotel was landscaped, had elaborate lights, fences, and guards. A look out the back window, however, showed three-sided corrugated-metal structures, shanties, behind which lay piles of garbage—all the way down to the river that was presumably the water source. The water that flowed out of the pipes in my twelfth-floor room was not pleasant to smell or to bathe in. No one had to remind me not to drink it.
>
> Several times on my journey, I recalled a smartly-worded critique I once heard from my fellow tribeswoman Winona LaDuke. Speaking of garbage, packaging, and recycling, she asked, "Where is 'away?'" as in, "I'm going to throw it *away*." I had now seen the "away" that Americans for a large part will never view up close (189).

After reading and discussing Kim Blaeser's essay, it is time to grapple with our own trash—where it comes from, what we think about it, and how our disposal of it affects other people and places. What's the lineage of our trash? Where does it go from here?

Your Challenge: This project contains three components: creative, research, and rhetorical.

Creative. First, keep all of your trash for one week. Soft drink bottles, banana peels, cereal boxes, whatever. Document these castoffs in a method of your choice. Digital photography is one possibility, but there are many others: collage, assemblage, filmmaking, or others. (For inspiration, see the visual artists cited below, or research others.)

Research. Now determine where one of your objects came from. For example, a plastic soft drink bottle was manufactured somewhere—find out where, as well as what materials went into its creation. Even a "natural" castoff, such as a peach pit, has a history; track down where the fruit was grown and what kinds of methods led to its development. Cite sources as you lead your reader through the lineage of your trash. And take it a step further: determine what the destination of your trash is likely to be, after you throw it "away."

Rhetorical. Last, draft an Artist's Statement that explains and justifies the creative choices that you made in your art work. Explain why you chose the artistic medium that you did, use "close reading" and specific details to describe your own work on the page, and place your work into the larger context of other artistic work. Finally, connect your own work to the issues Blaeser makes in her essay, thereby continuing the dialogue that her work begins.

Your finished product will include your own original art, derived from a week's worth of your trash; a lively description of the history and probable future of a selected object from that midden pile; and a well-written artist's statement, explaining the artistic choices that you made and placing your work into a larger artistic context.

&&

Many artists use trash or found objects in their work. One of these is Richard Misrach (1949-), whose photography grapples with human intervention and destruction on landscapes, particularly those of the western United States. His work in the Salton Sea (examples include "Stranded Rowboat, Salton Sea, 1983" and "Flooded House (chair) Salton Sea, 1985") resonates with me, as does his work in and about the Nevada Test Site, included in the ongoing project *Desert Cantos*.

Another possibility is Edward Burtynsky (1955-), who photographs mining waste such as nickel tailings ("Nickel Tailings No. 34," Sudbury, Ontario, 1996), showing the images' terrible beauty. His work also deals with recycling, both metal and rubber. See *Oil* (2010) for more.

Joseph Cornell (1903-1972), a sculptor, worked in a related vein, scouring New York City for found objects that he placed in careful relationship to each other in small-scale shadowboxes. "Homage to the Romantic Ballet" (1942), "Soap Bubble Set" (1948), and "Untitled (Crystal Cage)" (1953) are just a few possibilities for exploration.

For an example of collaborative work, see "Urban Tumbleweeds," by German artists Jan van der Asdonk, Guus Baggermans, Brian Schuur (2008), reproduced in *Orion,* Jan/Feb 2009. See also Tim Noble and Sue Webster.

See also folk artists like Howard Finster, Dr. Evermor, Sam Rodia, and others. This is by no means an exhaustive list. As you find other artists, add them to this page.

Teaching Diversity with an Inclusive Ecocriticism

by Sarah D. Wald, Drew University

Each fall I offer a class entitled *Race, Gender, and Nature*. This course is cross-listed as a lower-level seminar with English and Environmental Studies and Sustainability without prerequisites. This introduction to ecocriticism meets the institution's U.S. Diversity general education requirement. The course uses *The Colors of Nature* as one of its core texts.

One of my aims in the class is for students to understand the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, I want students to understand how representations of nature naturalize categories of identity. Nature, that is, can be used to suggest that particular constructions of race, gender, and sexuality are "natural" and thus outside of history. In the first week of class we examine the assumptions about nature that give power to phrases like "unnatural act" and "natural beauty." This helps students understand how representing the existing social system or particular stereotypes as natural can justify social inequality. Students, moreover, examine the possibilities and limitations of phrases like "Mother Earth" as they grapple with the relationship between gender and nature. They come to understand representations of nature as inherently political as they come to view nature and nature's relation to identity as socially-constructed and historically dynamic. Through in-class reflective essays, presentations, and small group exercises, students learn to put their own encounters with the natural world into a social, political, and historical context.

It is important that students understand not only the dominant constructions of race, gender, and sexuality but also how writers navigate and contest those depictions. In "'Nature' and Environmental Justice," Mei Mei Evans argues that certain constructions of nature as wilderness affirm Euro-American masculinity and render wilderness as ideologically unsafe terrain for women and people of color. In discussing Evans's article, students begin to understand why race and gender may shape an author's experience of wilderness. *The Colors of Nature* provides an opportunity for students to further work through Evans's ideas. Students see the ways in which a diversity of authors navigate the dominant construction of wilderness and express a range of relationships to the natural world. Reading bell hooks's "Earthbound: On Solid Ground" alongside Camille T. Dungy's "Tales from a Black Girl on Fire or Why I Hate to Walk Outside and See Things Burning," suggests to students that not all African-American writers respond to nature or wilderness in the same way. Students complicate their initial response to Evans's article as they recognize that each author brings personal experience to bear on the historical construction of wilderness. Moreover, they see that authors do not simply acquiesce to hegemonic constructions of wilderness but may intervene and reconfigure representations of the environment.

The students engage the essays from *The Colors of Nature* alongside chapters from Noel Sturgeon's *Environmentalism in Popular Culture* and essays from William Cronon's edited

collection *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. *The Colors of Nature* provides stories that bring the core concepts in the course to life. I teach William Cronon's "The Trouble with Wilderness" alongside Louis Owens's "Burning the Shelter." In Owens's first-person narrative, he is sent to burn a collapsed shelter to restore the wilderness quality to Glacier Peak Wilderness while working as a seasonal ranger for the Forest Service. As he heads home, after accomplishing his goal, he meets two elderly native women who tell him their father built the shelter. The narrator interprets the women's measured response to his news that the shelter is gone as forgiveness for his part in "the long pattern of loss that they knew so well" (213). The loss of the shelter echoes the loss of indigenous land. It leads the narrator to realize that "what I called 'wilderness' was an absurdity, a figment of the European imagination" (213). The narrator's epiphany helps students understand how the contemporary construction of wilderness separates people from nature and erases the United States' indigenous past. His tale conveys "the trouble" that Cronon elucidates. Indeed, students consistently turn to "Burning the Shelter" when asked to explain what Cronon means when he calls wilderness an escape from history.

Similarly, Maria Melendez's "Mujeres de Maíz: Women, Corn, and Free Trade in the Americas" and Ray Gonzalez's "Hazardous Cargo" illustrate the relationship between the local and the global. I work with students to understand globalization as a historical process with economic, political, and cultural implications. I introduce globalization as an uneven process. Melendez and Gonzalez's pieces, both of which explicitly discuss NAFTA, provide students with concrete examples of the consequences of globalization and the complexities that prevent us from interpreting globalization as a monolithic process. These essays allow students to connect globalization to earlier discussions about environmental justice. Students grapple with the way neoliberal economic policies ignore the input of communities. They see the way resources and risks are distributed unevenly not only within the United States but also among countries. Melendez and Gonzalez, that is, help students understand why globalization is an environmental justice concern.

Yet, environmental justice ecocriticism goes beyond using literature to expose environmental inequities. While I use the essays in *The Colors of Nature* to provide examples of environmental harms and to illustrate the concepts discussed in scholarly articles, the course also emphasizes close reading skills. When teaching about environmental justice, I use Ray Gonzalez's "Hazardous Cargo," Al Young's "Silent Parrot Blues," *and Louis Owens's "Burning the Shelter," to develop students' abilities to analyze word choice, syntax, and structure. In small groups, students discuss the opening and closing lines of the essays in the context of the opening and closing paragraphs. They must then explain the significance of the essay's title in relation to the interpretation they have developed. Following this exercise, students* bring new attention to questions of voice, agency, and visibility. For example, students examine how Gonzalez renders the transportation of toxic waste visible by rendering the signs "HC" legible, pointing out their ubiquity once the meaning of "Hazardous Cargo" is made clear.

While students have previously grappled with Owens's deconstruction of wilderness, this exercise leads students to an awareness of how Owens's critique emerges at the level of

the sentence and the paragraph. Students point out the essay's first line introduces a broad majestic view of the wilderness similar to the sublime view we have discussed in class: "a magnificent, fully glaciated white volcano rises over a stunningly beautiful region of the North Cascades" (211). They point out that stating, "On maps, the mountain is called Glacier Peak," reminds the reader of a history of conquest by calling into question the authority of the maps and echoing the falsity of claims of discovery (211). The paragraph complicates this more nationally-oriented reading of the wilderness area by introducing the native history and an indigenous name for the mountain, Dakobed. Students generally conclude the opening paragraph echoes the broader narrative strategy of the essay in which the narrator's view of wilderness areas is transformed as he reckons with his own complicity in the process that erases the land's indigenous legacy.

While I have discussed above pedagogical approaches to individual essays, the course itself is organized around three ways of relating to the environment: wilderness, environmental justice, and the global city. I have included the syllabus following sample lesson plans below to show the essay pairings I have found most useful.

Works Cited

Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness" in Cronon, William ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: Norton, 1996, 69-90.

Di Chiro, Giovanna. "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice" in Cronon 298-320.

Dungy, Camille T. "Tales from a Black Girl on Fire or Why I Hate to Walk Outside and See Things Burning," in Deming, Alison H. and Savoy, Lauret E., eds. *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity and the Natural World.* Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2011, 28-32.

Evans, Mei Mei. "'Nature' and Environmental Justice" in Joni Adamson, Joni, Evan, Mei Mei, and Stein, Rachel, eds. *The Environmental Justice Reader*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002. 181-193.

Gonzalez, Ray. "Hazardous Cargo" in Deming and Savoy 134-140.

hooks, bell. "Earthbound: On Solid Ground" in Deming and Savoy 184-187.

Owens, Louis. "Burning the Shelter" in Deming and Savoy 211-214.

Melendez, Maria. "Mujeres de Maíz: Women, Corn, and Free Trade in the Americas" in Deming and Savoy 127-133.

Sturgeon, Noel. *Environmentalism in Popular Culture.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009.

Young, Al. "Silent Parrot Blues" in Deming and Savoy 141-150.

African American Nature Writing

Reading: Camille T. Dungy's "Tales from a Black Girl on Fire or Why I Hate to Walk Outside and See Things Burning" and bell hooks's "Earthbound: On Solid Ground" from *The Colors of Nature*.

Small Group Exercise: Underline each use of the word "fear" in Dungy's essay. What does she fear? Does her use of the word fear change over the course of the essay? What is the relationship between freedom and fear in this essay? Now, turn to bell hooks's "Earthbound: On Solid Ground." What is the relationship between freedom and wilderness that hooks describes? What is the role of fear in her essay? Now look at the roles knowledge and memory play in the essays. How does each narrator's knowledge of history and personal experience shape her understanding of nature?

Group Discussion Questions:

1) What is the relationship between freedom and fear that hooks describes? What is the relationship between freedom and fear Dungy describes? How would you compare and contrast the relationship Dungy's and hooks's narrators have with wilderness or nature?

2) How does knowledge of history, family memory, and personal experiences shape each author's relationship to nature in the present?

3) How does place matter in these essays? What are the different environments that both Dungy and hooks describe? Is every "wilderness" or "nature" the same or does region matter? Why does the place of nature matter in these essays?

Exit Ticket/Free Write: How does knowledge of the past shape your own personal relationship to the outdoors or to nature? How does your sense of history or cultural beliefs shape your relationship to the environment?

Environmental Justice Narratives

Reading: Al Young's "Silent Parrot Blues" and Ray Gonzalez's "Hazardous Cargo" from *The Colors of Nature*; Giovanna Di Chiro's "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice" from *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*.

Review: Louis Owens's "Burning the Shelter," in *The Colors of Nature*.

Introduction: We start by discussing the major themes of Di Chiro's essay. A typical student-generated list of environmental justice concerns raised by Di Chiro includes defining the environment as "where we live, work, and play," placing humans at the center of environmental discourse, recognizing a relationship to the civil rights movement and links between social and environmental concerns, the importance of self-representation, the legitimacy of experiential knowledge, and the demographics of the constituent organizations.

Small Group Exercise: Before starting this exercise, I ask students to recall the steps of a close reading. Each group will be assigned Louis Owens's "Burning the Shelter," Al Young's "Silent Parrot Blues," or Ray Gonzalez's "Hazardous Cargo." I project the following instructions on the board.

1. What is the significance of the opening sentence?

2. Place your analysis of the opening sentence into context of an analysis of the opening paragraph.

3. What is the significance of the closing sentence?

4. Place your analysis of the closing sentence into the context of an analysis of the closing paragraph (paragraphs for Young).

5. What is the significance of the title?

6. Analyze the parrot as a symbol in Young's story; the sign "HC" as a symbol in Gonzalez's essay; the shelter as symbol in Owens's essay.

7. Analyze the importance of silence/speaking in Young's piece, visibility/invisibility in Gonzalez's piece, and memory/history in Owens's essay.

Each group should generate a close reading of the opening and closing paragraphs of their assigned essay. They should then use their interpretation to develop a reading of the title. How are the themes of the essay introduced in the opening paragraph? Does the closing paragraph suggest a transformation from the opening paragraph or perhaps a sense that the author has come full circle?

Tips: I ask students why Gonzalez chooses to situate his essay on a road. Why are roads and highways a particularly significant place for the essay's major motifs? I also find it fruitful to ask why Gonzalez might have titled his essay "Hazardous Cargo" rather than "HC" after the ubiquitous signs he discusses. Students usually conclude that Gonzalez's title labels that which is unseen precisely because the acronym is not widely known.

I often ask the students working on Young's essay what they know about the blues and whether they can apply that to deepen their interrogation of the essay.

Group Discussion:
We now return to the list of environmental justice themes or frames the students developed at the start of class. We go through the list and I ask students to draw connections between each theme on their list and the essays we have just discussed. Students feel a particular expertise to speak for the essay they have focused on in the small groups. Yet, through this process, students develop connections between the essays. For example, they discuss the relationship between expert and experiential knowledge in "Burning the Shelter," "Silent Parrot Blues," and

"Hazardous Cargo." If they do not arise organically, I ask students to connect the themes of visibility/invisibility, agency/voice, and history/memory to the list they generated from the Di Chiro article.

Farm Labor

Reading: David Mas Masumoto's "Belonging to the Land," Martín Espada's "Federico's Ghost" (http://www.martinespada.net/Federico_s_Ghost.html)

Review: Richard White's "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?"

Small Group Exercise: Thinking through the readings for today, create a chart that tracks the differences and similarities between farmers and farm workers. Compare and contrast their relationship to the land, to labor, to wealth, to risk, and to the broader community. Think about the knowledge they gain in working with the land. How do they both know nature through labor?

Group Discussion Questions:

David Mas Masumoto's "Belonging to the Land."

1) In "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?," Richard White calls for an examination of the ways in which we gain knowledge of nature through labor. How does Masumoto gain knowledge of nature through labor?

2) How does Masumoto's family history shape his relationship to farming?

3) How does Masumoto understand his relationship to farm workers? How is his relationship to Jessie presented in the opening section? How does his family's history as farm workers who could not own land shape the way you interpret the opening section?

4) The last line of Masumoto's essay reads: "Wait a while," Francis advised. "It'll start tasting better, sort of bittersweet." What do you think is the significance of this line?

Martín Espada's "Federico's Ghost."

1) What is the relationship between the workers and the airplane?

2) What is the significance of the imagery Espada uses in this poem?

3) How are the power relationships (or are the power relationships) transformed from the beginning of the poem to the end?

4) What is the relationship between workers and the land that Espada paints?

Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

I screen one of the short videos available on the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' website (http://www.ciw-online.org/). The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is organization of largely immigrant farm workers based in Florida and best known for their Fair Food campaign to increase the pay farm workers receive for tomatoes by one penny per pound. I ask students to describe the issues that the video depicts. Do the issues echo those described by Masumoto or Espada? How does the video fit into a framework of environmental justice? How are issues of self-determination represented? How are questions of agency addressed? Does the video address visibility and invisibility? What is the relationship between labor and landscape captured in The Coalition of Immokalee Workers' publicity materials?

Free Write/Exit Ticket: Respond to the following epigraph from "Belonging to the Land": "The land belongs to those who own it, work it, or use it. Or no one?"

Globalization

Reading: Maria Melendez's "Mujeres de Maíz: Women, Corn, and Free Trade in the Americas " from *The Colors of Nature*.

The class opens with a short lecture on the concept of globalization. It recognizes the complexity of the term and situates globalization as a historical process with economic, political, and cultural implications. We specifically discuss the unevenness of globalization.

Group Discussion Questions:

1) What is the relationship between women and corn in Oaxaca?

2) What is the relationship between trade liberalization and women?

3) How do ideas about visibility and invisibility circulate in Melendez's essay? To what extent are the consequences of trade liberalization made visible?

4) How does Melendez define ecofeminism? How does she advocate a parallel relationship between women and land to reinforce her critique? How does she link "free trade" to a particular form of masculinity?

5) How is Melendez's essay fit in the framework of environmental justice narratives we discussed?

6) When we take an environmental justice approach to globalization, what must we be particularly attentive to?

Free Write: Consider the ways you are connected economically, politically, and socially to locations outside of the United States. How does the process of globalization affect your daily life?

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Race, Gender, and Nature
Syllabus

This class introduces eco-criticism. Eco-criticism is a way of reading literature that foregrounds the role of nature in texts. What does a particular text suggest about nature or the environment? How do depictions of nature function in the text? By asking such questions of novels, poems, and essays, we deepen our understanding of the different meanings of "nature" and "the environment" in U.S. popular culture and U.S. social movements. We explore how our ideas about race, gender, and class inflect the way we imagine and understand the landscapes around us.

Early eco-critics focused their work on a genre of non-fiction essays known as "nature writing." This class goes "Beyond Nature Writing" as we apply eco-criticism to poems, novels, advertisements, and films. This class highlights poems, novels, and essays that are part of Ethnic American literature. Focusing on this literary tradition is another way of reaching beyond traditional nature writing.

This class is structured around three themes in contemporary depictions of nature: wilderness, environmental justice, and globalization.

Course Goals:
1. Introduce the history, theory, and practice of eco-criticism.
2. Demonstrate eco-criticism's applicability to a variety of genres including essays, fiction, and poetry.
3. Develop student understanding of the social construction of race, gender, and nature in literary and popular culture texts.
4. Deepen student understanding of the complexity of the term "nature" in U.S. culture.

Objectives: (Students will be able to…)
1. Provide working definitions of the terms eco-criticism, nature, natural, naturalization, nature writing, wilderness, environmental justice, and globalization.
2. Analyze the depictions of nature and the environment in novels, poems, essays, films, and advertisements and communicate these interpretations verbally and in prose formats.
3. Summarize, evaluate and apply the central arguments of scholarly eco-critical essays verbally and in prose.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the social construction of race, gender, and nature.

Required Texts: Available at Drew Bookstore

William Cronon, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York, Norton: 1996.

Alison H. Deming and Lauret E. Savoy. *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*. Minneapolis, Milkweed: 2011.

Marilynne Robinson. *Housekeeping*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux: 1980.

Noel Sturgeon. *Environmentalism in Popular Culture*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009.

Helena María Viramontes. *Under the Feet of Jesus*. New York: Dutton Press, 1995.

Karen Tei Yamashita. *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*. Minneapolis, Coffee House Press: 1997.

Recommended Texts:

Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, eds. *The Environmental Justice Reader*. Tucson, University of Arizona Press: 2002.

Course Requirements:
Participation: 10%
Mini-Assignments: 15%
Paper 1 (1200 words): 15%
Paper 2 (1200 words): 20%
Revision of Paper 1 or 2: 10%
Key Words Project: 5%
Final Paper: 25%

The syllabus contains short summaries of some assignments. Complete instructions will be handed out in class prior to the due date.

Section I: Approaching Nature Critically

A. Introduction to Course
Key Questions: What are the Goals & Objectives of the Course? What is eco-criticism? What does it mean to think about nature critically?

T: Aims & Objectives of Course; Class Expectations; Syllabus Overview

B. Eco-Critical Theory
Key Questions: What is eco-criticism? What is nature-writing? What are the some of the major debates in eco-criticism? What techniques do eco-critics use?

Th: Defining & Applying Eco-Criticism
Sarah Orne Jewett. "A White Heron." *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*. New York: Doubleday, 1989: 161-171.

Mini-Assignment 1: Complete "The Ecocritical Perspective" worksheet.
T: Nature, Natural, and Naturalization
Noel Sturgeon. "Chapter 1: The Politics of the Natural in U.S. History and Popular Culture." *Environmentalism in Popular Culture*: 17-49.

Mini-Assignment 2: How to Read an Academic Article Worksheet.

C. Race, Gender, Nature
Key Questions: How is nature gendered and racialized? How do we use eco-critical techniques to talk about depictions of race and gender in literature? How do authors respond to or reclaim the racialized and gendered landscape in their writings?

Th: Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature.
Mei Mei Evans. "Nature and Environmental Justice." *The Environmental Justice Reader*: 181-193.
Kate Soper. "Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature." 139-143.
Sanora Babb. "The Matriarch of the Court." *Cry of the Tinamou*: 105-110.

T: African American Writers & Nature
David Lionel Smith. "African Americans, Writing and Nature." *American Nature Writers, Volume II*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1996: 1003-1012.
Camille T. Dungy. "Tales from a Black Girl on Fire or Why I Hate to Walk Outside and See Things Burning." *The Colors of Nature*: 28-32.
bell hooks, "Earthbound: On Solid Ground." *The Colors of Nature:* 184-187.

Mini-Assignment 3: Summarize the main points of Smith's, Howard's, and hooks' arguments in 5 sentences or less apiece. Come to class prepared to discuss the differences in their understandings of the relationship between African American authors and nature writing.

Th: The Ecological Indian
David Ingram, "Ecological Indians and the Myth of Primal Purity" from *Green Screen:* 45-55.
Noel Sturgeon, "Frontiers of Nature: The Ecological Indian in U.S. Film" in *Environmentalism in Popular Culture*: 53-79.
Sherman Alexie, "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel"
In Class: Excerpts from *Pocahontas*, *Avatar*, *Smoke Signals*

Section II: Re-Thinking Wilderness

A. The Wilderness Landscape
Key Questions: What is meant by Wilderness? How have American ideas about wilderness changed over time? How have different Americans perceived wilderness differently in the same historical moment? What does William Cronon mean by saying Wilderness is a "human artifact"? How do wilderness landscapes and representations of wilderness expose ways of thinking about race, gender and nature? How have writers responded to the imperialism of the wilderness construct?

T: Wilderness & American Nationalism

Timothy Corrigan. "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing." *Composition and the Image:* 61-76.
In-Class: The History of the Wilderness Preservation Movement
In Class: Video Clip: *National Parks: America's Best Idea* and images from Ansel Adams's *This American Earth*

Th: The Trouble With Wilderness

William Cronon. "The Trouble with Wilderness." *Uncommon Ground*: 69-91.
Louis Owens. "Burning the Shelter." *The Colors of Nature:* 211-215.

T, 9/27: The Consequences of Wilderness

Mark David Spence. "Crown of the Continent, Backbone of the World: The American Wilderness Ideal and Blackfeet Exclusion from Glacier National Park." *Environmental History* 1.3 (Jul. 1996): 29-49.
Ramachandra Guha. "The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism" from *Battles Over Nature*: 139-157.

Mini-Assignment 4: Complete Consequences of Wilderness Worksheet

Th: Language, Land, and Listening

Jamaica Kincaid. "In History." *The Colors of Nature*: 28-32.
Robin Well Kimmerer. "Learning the Grammar of Animacy." *The Colors of Nature*: 167-177.
Enrique Salmon. "Sharing Breath: Some Links Between Land, Plants, and People." *The Colors of Nature*: 196-210.
Joseph Bruchac. "At The End of Ridge Road." *The Colors of Nature*: 215-219.

Mini-Assignment 5: Download assignment from Moodle.

B. Housekeeping in the Wilderness:
Key Questions: How do we apply eco-critical techniques and analysis of Wilderness landscapes to a critical reading of Housekeeping? Does Robinson embrace or critique Wilderness landscapes? Does Robinson's novel embrace or challenge the collapse of "Wilderness" and "The West"?

T: Housekeeping
Marilynne Robinson. *Housekeeping*.

Th: Housekeeping.
Marilynne Robinson. *Housekeeping*.

Assignment 1: 4-6 Page Paper Responding to Guide Questions on *Housekeeping*.

Section III: The Struggle for Environmental Justice

A. Defining the Movement
Key Questions: How does the Environmental Justice (EJ) Movement define nature? How does it define environment? How do we compare the definitions of environment and nature, and particularly the place of humans, in the EJ movement, to the definitions of environment and nature found in the discourse of wilderness?

Th: Defining the Environmental Justice Movement
Come to class prepared to define environmental justice and prepared to discuss how and why Gonzalez and Young's narratives are environmental justice narratives.

Giovanna Di Chiro. "Nature as Community: the Convergence of Environment and Social Justice." *Uncommon Ground*: 298-320.
Ray Gonzalez. "Hazardous Cargo." *The Colors of Nature: 134-141.*
Al Young. "Silent Parrot Blues." *The Colors of Nature*: 141-150.

Recommended: Robert D. Bullard. "Confronting Environmental Racism in the Twenty-First Century." *The Colors of Nature*: 89-95.

Mini-Assignment 6: Write a 1-2 page response using either the work by Gonzalez or by Young. How does the author think about the relationship between humanity and nature? How does the author define environment?

B. Labor & Landscape
Key Questions: How do we imagine the relationship between human labor and the natural environment? Is all labor environmentally destructive? When we privilege some forms of labor as less environmentally destructive than others (doctor versus logger for example) what conceptions of humanity's relationship to nature do we appeal to? How does race shape the way we imagine the relationship between nature and labor? What might an environmental justice perspective on labor look like?

T: Teamsters & Turtles: Together at Last
Richard White. "Are You an Environmentalist or do you work for a living?" *Uncommon Ground*: 171-186.
Brian Mayer. *Blue-Green Coalitions:* 1-11.
In-Class: Van Jones

Th: Farm Labor
Robert Gottlieb. "Where We Live Work Play…And Eat. Expanding the Environmental Justice Agenda." *Environmental Justice* 2 (November 2009): 7-8.
Kirsten Schwind. "Growing Local Foods into Quality Green Jobs in Agriculture." *Race Poverty & The Environment* (Spring 2007): 66-69.
Martín Espada. "Federico's Ghost."
David Mas Masumoto. "Belonging to the Land." *The Colors of Nature*: 309-318.
In Class: Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

C. Under the Feet of Jesus

T: Environmental Justice Movement
Helena María Viramontes. *Under the Feet of Jesus*.

Mini-Assignment 7: Read "Steps in Paper Editing" on Moodle. Write one paragraph describing something thing you would like to improve in your next paper.

Th: Labor & Landscape.
Helena María Viramontes. *Under the Feet of Jesus*.

Assignment 2: 4-6 page paper. You have two topics to choose from 1) How do you compare the depictions of nature in the Environmental Justice Movement to depictions of nature in *Under the Feet of Jesus*? Is *Under the Feet of Jesus* a novel of Environmental Justice? Why, or Why not? 2) How does Viramontes represent the relationship between labor and landscape?

Section IV: Nature in the Neoliberal Global City

A. Nature in the Global Economy
Key Questions: How do we approach advertisements as a primary source? When we buy products that are sold through nature, what are we buying? What is the relationship between consumption and production of nature?

T: Buying Nature

Susan Davis. "Touch the Magic." *Uncommon Ground*: 204-217.
Jennifer Price. "Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company" in *Uncommon Ground*: 186-203.

Th: Selling Nature

Read Making Sense of Advertisements: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/Ads/
Noel Sturgeon. "Purity and Privilege or Justice and Sustainability" Natural Consumers in the Global Economy," *Environmentalism in Popular Culture*: 171-186.
Laura L. Sullivan, "You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman: The Political Economy of Contemporary Cosmetics Discourse," *The Nature of Cities*: 213-230.

Mini-Assignment 8: Bring in an advertisement that uses nature. What ideas about nature (and nature's relationship to humanity) are embedded in the advertisement? What ideas about race, gender, and labor are present in this advertisement? How does this advertisement conceptualize the relationship between production and consumption? What is this advertisement actually selling? Be prepared to present your eco-critical reading of the advertisement to the class as well as discuss the relationship of your reading to the articles by Sturgeon, Sullivan, Davis, and Price.

T: Representing the Amazon
Candace Slater, "Amazonia as Edenic Narrative." *Uncommon Ground*:114-132
In Class: "Radiant Amazon" Episode of *Captain Planet*

B. Globalization
Key Questions: What are the ecological issues around borders, immigration, and population? What is the role of "the nation" and "borders" in environmentalist discourse? How do we approach globalization and the global justice movement from an eco-critical perspective?

Th: Reproductive Ecologies & the Discourse of Overpopulation

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. "People or population: Towards a New Ecology of Reproduction." *Ecofeminism*: 277-298.
Finis Dunnaway. "This American Earth." *Natural Visions*: 130-142

Mini-Assignment 9: Write a one page response to the main arguments from the Mies & Shiva or the Dunnaway article.

T: Environmental Privilege & Aspen Logic
Lisa Sun-Hee Park & David Naguib Pellow, *The Slums of Aspen*: *Immigrants vs. the Environment in America's Eden*. 1-67.

Th: Environmental Anxieties about Racial Degradation

Jake Kosek. "Racial Degradation and Environmental Anxieties." *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico:* 142-182.
In-Class: *Wild Versus Wall*

T: Environmental Reproductive Justice
Noel Sturgeon. "Penguin Family Values." *Environmentalism in Popular Culture*: 120-146.
Timothy Corrigan. "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing": 76-81
View *March of the Penguins*.
Mini-Assignment 10: Write a 1-2 page analysis of the use of sound in *March of the Penguins*.

Th: Globalization
Chris Barker. "Globalization." *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004: 76-77.
Maria Melendez. "Mujeres De Maíz: Women, Corn, and Free Trade in the Americas." *The Colors of Nature*: 127-133.

C. Through the Arc of a Rainforest

T: Consumption in *Through the Arc of a Rainforest*
Karen Tei Yamashita. *Through the Arc of a Rainforest*

Th: Globalization in *Through the Arc of a Rainforest*
Karen Tei Yamashita. *Through the Arc of a Rainforest*.

Date TBA: Key Words Project Due.
Date TBA: Revision of Paper 1 or 2 Due.
Date TBA: Final Paper Due.

Key Words Project
At the end of this course, you should be able to produce working definitions of the terms eco-criticism, nature, natural, naturalization, nature writing, wilderness, environmental justice, and globalization. Each definition is worth 12.5 points. Definitions are expected to be 100-500 words long. DO NOT write more than 500 words per definition. You should be able to adequately define all terms in no more than 250 words. You will not be graded on length. You will be graded by the accuracy of your definition, the sophistication of your understanding (understanding the complexities of the term), and the conciseness of your definition. Can you define the term clearly and quickly? Define the terms in the context of the class and readings, not what you find in the dictionary. Late glossaries will not be accepted. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. This is a definition in your own words.

Revision of Paper 1 or 2
For this assignment, you will revise either your *Housekeeping* paper or your *Under the Feet of Jesus* paper. You will be graded on the quality of your revision, not on the quality of your final product. This assignment requires you to work through the 12 steps of revision posted on Moodle as well as the comments I provided on your paper. Work through the 12 steps of revision paying particular attention to issues I raised (lack of close readings, length, structure).
Your revision should include: 1) Your new paper 2) Your original paper 3) 1 page explanation of the revisions you made to your paper.

Final Paper: This will be a 4-6 page reading of Karen Tei Yamashita's *Through the Arc of a Rainforest*.

Approaches from ENG 270/370 Environmental (In)Justice in American Literature

by Lisa Woolley, Wilson College

I used *The Colors of Nature* in ENG 270/370 Environmental (In)Justice in American Literature at Wilson College, located in Chambersburg, PA. The course examined inequality in access to natural resources and the wealth they produce, in exposure to toxins, and in participation in environmental decision-making as represented through literature by Native American, African-American, Latino, and Asian-American authors.

The course was open to all students who had completed the college's foundations in writing requirement. It counted toward the English major as an American literature course, or it filled a general education requirement in either literature, cultural diversity in the U.S., or environmental studies. The course was also writing-intensive.

The other texts for the course were *Black Mesa Poems* by Jimmy Santiago Baca, *Solar Storms* by Linda Hogan, *Trouble the Water* (directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal)*, A Mercy* by Toni Morrison, *Woven Stone* by Simon J. Ortiz, *Dead Voices* by Gerald Vizenor, and *Tropic of Orange* by Karen Tei Yamashita.

The Colors of Nature served three main purposes in the course: 1) to insure that no one text was representing or "speaking for" a racial/ethnic group, 2) to introduce undergraduate students from a variety of majors to environmental concepts in both "nonfiction" formats and overtly literary ones, and 3) to give students a breather between longer texts, especially when a paper was due, in this night-class format.

Weeks 1 & 2

I began with Robert D. Bullard's essay "Confronting Environmental Racism in the Twenty-first Century," Yusef Komunyakaa's essay "Dark Waters," and Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy.* Bullard's and Komunyakaa's essays and the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice, adopted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, served as an introduction to environmental justice. *A Mercy* encouraged students to examine America's past, starting with the question of how slavery and indentured servitude are issues of environmental justice.

Questions for class discussion: How are natural resources abused in *A Mercy*? To what extent are the enslaved, Native Americans, and the poor seen as natural resources in the novel? How is their labor misused?

Writing prompt: How are "exploitation of land and exploitation of people intricately linked" (Bullard 93) in *A Mercy*?

Weeks 3-5

We read and discussed Jamaica Kincaid's "In History," Francisco X. Alarcón's "Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America," and Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*.

Jamaica Kincaid's "In History"

- Why is she uneasy about the names for plants?
- How is her history connected to that of Carl Linnaeus?
- Why does she think that her experience and that of her ancestors goes unnamed?

Francisco X. Alarcón's "Reclaiming Ourselves, Reclaiming America?"

- What specifically is Alarcón reclaiming?
- Alarcón uses the term "ecopoetics" (40). What is the role of language in understanding our relationship to nature?

Weeks 6 & 7

The questions raised by Kincaid and Alarcón continued to be relevant in our reading and discussion of *Black Mesa Poems* by Jimmy Santiago Baca and *Woven Stone* by Simon J. Ortiz.

Weeks 8-10

I paired Ray Gonzalez's essay "Hazardous Cargo" with Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*. Gonzalez's essay introduced trade and transportation as issues of environmental justice.

Prior to the students' reading the essay, I shared an anecdote about unexpectedly walking to our local mall, a practice that I discovered too late was forbidden by signs posted along the route, which I had never noticed before. Subsequently I began noticing people walking in places not meant for walkers, and since the recession began I also have seen many middle-aged men bicycling in town. Their clothes and the conditions often suggest that their trips are not recreational. I asked students to pay attention over spring break to roads and how people were using them.

Questions for class discussion: What did you observe about roads last week? Did you notice anyone using the road in a way that planners had not anticipated? Why do you think the person was traveling in that way? Were any roads carrying more traffic than was originally intended? If so, why do you think traffic has increased? What was the effect on the immediate surroundings?

- What does Gonzalez notice about trucks and signs?
- Is transportation of hazardous cargo truly separated from other urban activities?

- How do Yamashita and Gonzalez suggest that some of us take for granted that highways will be part of the landscape? What do they want us to notice about them?
- In *Tropic of Orange* does Yamashita identify similar dangers to the ones Gonzalez notes in "Hazardous Cargo"?
- In the novel, what inequalities do freeways cause?

The last week students also read David Mas Masumoto's "Belonging on the Land" to deepen our discussion of issues of identity in *Tropic of Orange*.

- What does Masumoto learn distinguishes him from Jessie Alvarado?
- How is ownership of land connected to identity?
- How does the author establish his identity?
- Sometimes a sense of belonging or lack thereof is related to our individual or familial circumstances, and sometimes it is linked to such socio-historical factors as race, ethnicity, class, immigration status, or gender. How can structural inequalities in American society affect someone's feeling of belonging or not?
- How does the infrastructure of Los Angeles affect residents differently in *Tropic of Orange*?
- What does it mean that Emi is a casualty of "restoring order" to the city?

Weeks 11 & 12

I paired Melissa Nelson's "Becoming Métis" and Louis Owens's "Burning the Shelter" with Gerald Vizenor's *Dead Voices*.

Questions for class discussion:

- Nelson writes, "We all have Earth-based spiritual traditions in our past and we should work to uncover our heritage" (151). What are the Earth-based spiritual traditions in your heritage? What rituals (spiritual or otherwise) have linked you to your surroundings?
- How/why does Nelson embrace a "cross-blood" or multi-ethnic identity?
- Why is Nelson both attracted to and repelled by deep ecology?
- What does she mean by "decolonizing the mind"?
- What is the role of ceremony in forming a right relationship with our surroundings?
- What is the role of the wanaki game in *Dead Voices*?
- How is Nelson's sense of a Native American identity similar to or different from Bagese's place in the city in *Dead Voices*?

- With what idea about wilderness does Owens begin the essay?
- What does he believe about wilderness at the end?
- How might the first idea contribute to environmentally unjust practices?
- How do Owens and Vizenor suggest that we survive a legacy of environmental injustice?

Weeks 13 & 14

You could pair “70117” with the film *Trouble the Water* (directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal), which portrays one family’s experience in Hurricane Katrina.

- How did Hurricane Katrina’s displacement of Americans continue a pattern of separating black families and communities?

Birth Witness

by Ofelia Zepeda

The poem “Birth Witness” serves as documentation and serves as witness on various levels. First, it documents the situation of tribal members whose traditional lands straddle contemporary political borders. The Tohono O’odham of southern Arizona is such a tribe. The O’odham, their traditional homeland, language, culture, history, and memory exist in what are now two distinct countries, the U.S. and Mexico. The status of many members as legal citizens of the U.S. is held in question due to lack of written documentation of their birth. The media focuses on the issue of immigration for new immigrants, whether legal or illegal; however, indigenous people who must negotiate political boundaries and borders fall into a unique category and are little known. This poem is a small part of their experience and their memory.

Discussion Questions

1. Considering the poem, what other events or things are being documented in the poem? What things, events are chronicled and serve as a form of documentation?

2. Why is the focus on language important in this piece? Discuss why the “purposes or functions” of the O’odham language are or must be listed? What is this list offering to the reader?

3. Why is the author claiming that this language, the O’odham language is “much too civil for writing minor things like my birth?”

4. Consider the politics of borders natural ones, politically imposed ones, and others. Write a poem that includes the notion of “border.” What markers or identifiers document that one “belongs” or is a member of one side and not the other? Document the justifications of the sense of “belonging” or being a “member.”

Contributor Biographical Information

Elmaz Abinader is an Arab American writer from Oakland, California, who has won the San Francisco Bay Guardian's Goldie Award in Literature, the Josephine Miles PEN Oakland Award for poetry, and an Arts Council Silicon Valley Grant for Fiction. Her publications include *In the Country of My Dreams*, a collection of poetry, and *Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey from Lebanon*, a memoir. Her performance plays have toured eleven countries, and Country of Origin, a three-act work, won two Drammies from the Portland Drama Critics Circle. She is a cofounder of VONA, a foundation that holds summer writing workshops for writers of color.

Joy Ackerman's interests encompass environmental ethics and philosophy, religious environmentalism and eco-theology, ecological identity and narrative, and eco-criticism as applied to reading the landscape. She investigates the ways that human values, especially spiritual practices and religious beliefs, shape the landscape. She also explores the power of place to shape our values and beliefs.

Faith Adiele is the author of *Meeting Faith* (W.W. Norton), which won the PEN Beyond Margins Award for Best Memoir; writer/narrator/subject of *My Journey Home*, a PBS documentary about her multicultural identity; and co-editor of *Coming of Age Around the World: A Multicultural Anthology* (The New Press). She teaches nonfiction around the world; she is currently Associate Professor at the California College of the Arts. Visit her at http://adiele.com.

Holly Adiele is a retired junior high school teacher living in Sunnyside, Washington, the predominantly Latino farming community where she raised her half-Nigerian daughter. The grandchild of working-class Finnish and Swedish immigrants, she was the first in her family to attend college and now exists suspended between the "real world" of books, films, and travel, and Sunnyside's expansive vistas of blue sky, brown sagebrush-covered hills, and green, irrigated farmland.

Fred Arroyo is the author of the novel *The Region of Lost Names*. A recipient of an Individual Artist Grant from the Indiana Arts Commission, he has published fiction, poetry, and essays in various literary journals. Also a faculty mentor in the University of Nebraska MFA Writing Program, Arroyo is working on new fictions and completing a book of essays, *Close As Pages in a Book*, in which he explores his interest in literacy and a writing life, while returning to memories of childhood, migration, and work.

Cynthia Belmont is Associate Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies at Northland College, an environmental liberal arts college in Northern Wisconsin. She teaches courses in poetry and essay writing, literature, and ecofeminism.

Joseph Bruchac spent three years at Cornell University, majoring in wildlife conservation, before transferring to creative writing. For over thirty years Joe has been creating poetry, short stories, novels, anthologies and music that reflect his Abenaki Indian heritage and Native American traditions. He is the author of more than 120 books for children and adults. The best selling *Keepers*

of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children and others of his "Keepers" series, with its remarkable integration of science and folklore, continue to receive critical acclaim and to be used in classrooms throughout the country.

Chiyo Crawford received her PhD in English at Tufts University. Her teaching and research interests include U.S. multiethnic and environmental literatures, feminist and antiracist ecocriticism, and environmental justice. She has been a Holyoke Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at Mount Holyoke College.

Debra Kang Dean is the author of two full-length collections of poetry and a chapbook of poems. She has also published essays, most recently *Until Everything Is Continuous Again: American Poets on the Recent Work of W. S. Merwin*. "Archaic Mysteries: An Appreciation of Robert Hayden and 'The Night-Blooming Cereus'," is forthcoming in *Love and Logic*, a collection of essays on the life and work of Hayden. *Blue Sky with Koi*, a manuscript of poems, was a finalist for the Ciardi Prize in Poetry in 2012, and her poems are forthcoming in an anthology of work by poets of Okinawan ancestry from Hawai'i. She teaches in the brief-residency MFA in Writing Program at Spalding University and currently lives in Indiana, where, in late spring, she began teaching taiji.

Renée Dowbnia considers race and the development of eco-consciousness in American women's turn-of-the-century writing. Her work explores how American women writers of color portray conceptions of nature as crucially linked to politics and structures of domination while envisioning possibilities of transgressing that framework to promote a more socially just and environmentally sustainable world.

Linda Helstern is an associate professor of English at North Dakota State University where she teaches American literature, including courses in both Native and environmental literature. She has published widely on such Native writers as Louis Owens, Gerald Vizenor, and Jim Barnes.

Christopher Justice, Lecturer, University of Baltimore, teaches courses in writing, literature, and linguistics. His scholarship draws upon the intersections of environmental discourse, ecocomposition, and ecoliteracy and examines how people compose, textualize, talk about, and write about the ecological "place" known as a fishery and how diverse, multimodal discourses—including literary, journalistic, cinematic, and scientific texts—influence how we conceptualize, regulate, and interact with fisheries.

Adela C. Licona is an associate professor in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English at the University of Arizona. She is affiliated faculty in Gender and Women's Studies, the Institute for LGBT Studies, and Mexican American Studies. Her interdisciplinary research and teaching interests include borderlands rhetorics, cultural and gender studies, social justice media and visual culture, community literacies, im/migration and critical race studies, action research, and public scholarship.

Kyhl Lyndgaard is Professor of Writing and Environmental Studies at Marlboro College. He holds a Ph.D. from the Literature and Environment Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, and his articles have appeared in ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment as well as Green Theory and Praxis: The Journal of Ecopedagogy.

Andrew Mahlstedt completed his doctorate in literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2012, and his MA and BA at Middlebury College. He has twice taught a course on transnational narratives of the mountains at Middlebury College as a Visiting Instructor, and previously taught at the Mahindra United World College of India.

Akilah Martin earned her doctorate from Purdue University. Her professional interests include enhancing environmental and natural resources sustainability and science and engineering education. Her teaching and research interests include enhancing soil and water quality through education and promotion of its awareness locally, nationally, and globally.

Aaron Moe is a doctoral student at Washington State University. His work has appeared in several journals including *ISLE, Humanimalia, The Journal of Ecocriticism,* and *Spring: The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society.*

Kathleen Dean Moore is a philosopher, essayist, and activist best known for her books about wet, wild places – *Wild Comfort, Holdfast, Pine Island Paradox, Riverwalking*, and others. The co-editor of *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*, she teaches environmental ethics at Oregon State University and writes during the summers in a cabin where two streams and a bear trail meet a tidal cove in Alaska. She is Senior Fellow of the Spring Creek Project at Oregon State University.

Thylias Moss offers limited fork theory in both the departments of English and the School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where she is Professor. Search online for forkergirl (and/or limited fork), and you may find forms of her!

Ashley Murphy is the Head Teacher of Secondary English Education for Seoul Metropolitan public schools. She develops teacher education workshops in language teaching pedagogy, leads writing workshops for Seoul English teachers, and teaches ESL. Dr. Murphy received her PhD in English from Ball State University, where she taught composition and ESL and served as the Assistant Director of the Writing Center. She lives in Seoul with her husband.

Since 1990, **Danyelle O'Hara** has worked with organizations and communities in Africa and the southeastern U.S. on issues related to rural development, conservation, and community capacity building. She is most interested in helping to strengthen community organizational infrastructure to develop practical plans for achieving community aspirations in the most inclusive ways possible. Danyelle's interest in black land ownership and relationship to land has grown out of this work and her own personal "connection to land" journey.

Jennifer Oladipo is a writer non-fiction and journalism. Her writing and other projects focus on issues of culture, arts, environment, history, and the many places where those subjects intersect. She has received awards and fellowships from the Kentucky Foundation for Women, the National Tropical Botanical Garden, and the Society of Professional Journalists. She has a master's degree in Pan-African Studies with certificate in Public History from the University of Louisville.

Alexis Pegram-Piper is a fourth year academic writing instructor and Ph.D. student who is currently working on her dissertation at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee in the field of Rhetoric and

Composition. Her research interests include Environmental Rhetoric, Eco-Composition, Native writing on the environment, and conceptions of Invention.

Sarah Jaquette Ray is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Alaska Southeast, where she also coordinates the Geography and Environmental Studies program. She teaches literature and environment, composition, and geography. Her book, forthcoming in 2013 from the University of Arizona Press, is called *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture.*

Enrique Salmón learned from his Rarámuri mother and grandparents how to harness the medicinal and spiritual value of plants. He was founder of the Baca Institute of Ethnobotany, and a program officer at the Christensen Fund in support of indigenous communities in Mexico and the American Southwest. His consulting firm supports indigenous community cultural expression, landscape and ecological restoration, and language preservation. He is currently faculty at the California State University, East Bay.

Mistinguette Smith is a performance consultant to the social sector, and a poet and playwright. She explores black relationships to land and place from her home base in rural Massachusetts. She founded The Black/Land Project in 2010.

Joni Tevis teaches literature and creative writing at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. She is the author of a book of lyric essays, *The Wet Collection* (Milkweed Editions), and is finishing a new book of essays about ghost towns, tourist traps, and atomic dread.

Sarah D. Wald is an Assistant Professor of English and Environmental Studies and Sustainability at Drew University. She received her PhD in American Studies from Brown University in 2009. She is currently completing a book entitled *The Nature of Citizenship: Race, Citizenship and Nature in Representations of Californian Farmers and Farm Workers*.

Lisa Woolley teaches English at Wilson College in Chambersburg, PA. She is author of *American Voices of the Chicago Renaissance*.

Ofelia Zepeda is a Regents' Professor of Linguistics and poet. She has published three books of poetry including *Ocean Power: Poems from the Desert* and *Where Clouds are formed.* Some of her writing is in her first language, O'odham. Her scholarship focus is on Indigenous language revitalization and maintenance.