

## **ENG 290: Human Values in Literature**

**John Felice Rome Center**

Summer 2025

Monday & Wednesday | 2 – 5:20 pm |

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Office Hours: By Appointment, M/W

### **Course Description**

This course explores the central theme of nature in literature, examining how various literary and philosophical works portray the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. Through the selected texts, we will investigate the human values attached to nature and its significance in literature, art, and philosophy. Key themes include the sublimity of nature and its ability to evoke awe and fear, the tension between humans and the unpredictable power of the natural world, and the profound impact of human actions on the environment. We will also delve into the desire to return to an authentic, harmonious way of life and the mysticism and spirituality often attributed to nature, which is portrayed as a source of wisdom and a guide to self-discovery.

Students will analyze how these themes shape characters, narratives, and philosophical questions, while ecocritical readings will provide theoretical frameworks to enrich our discussions.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of major literary and philosophical works, as well as key authors in world literature.
- Analyze significant literary texts that explore the human relationship with nature.
- Apply ecocritical theories to deepen their understanding of literature's engagement with environmental themes.
- Critically reflect on ecological themes in literature and their relevance to contemporary environmental issues.
- Strengthen critical reading, thinking, and writing skills by composing academic essays and completing other assignments.
- Develop and articulate well-supported interpretations through class discussions and debates.
- Examine literary works, authors, and ecological issues from a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective.

### **Required Texts / Materials**

Assigned readings posted in Sakai.

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation, and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student. Any lateness or leaving class early will impact the final course grade.

Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Absence due to sickness or injury needs to be corroborated by a doctor's note. Students late to class twice will be credited with one absence in accordance with the JFRC's Attendance policy. Three absences will result in an automatic failure (F). Travel does not constitute a reason to miss class.

**Assessment Components:**

Participation and Close Reading Responses	20%
Presentation	20%
Nature Journal	25%
Paper	25%
Attendance	10%

The course will fulfill its learning outcomes if you comply with the following requirements:

*Participation and Close Reading Responses (20%):* This course is structured as a seminar and relies heavily on class discussions, which means that your active participation is crucial for the success of the course. Your presence and contributions are essential, both for me as your instructor and for your classmates. To prepare for discussions, you are required to complete the assigned readings and actively engage through Close Reading Responses: for each reading, you will select two or three significant quotes, of any length, and provide an analysis that explains both the content and the style. In some cases, I will provide guiding questions to help you reflect on the readings before class.

Be prepared to share your quotes and responses during class discussions, and occasionally, you may be asked to submit them via Sakai. These responses will factor into your final participation grade. To receive a strong participation grade, you should contribute to class discussions at least once during each session, with more frequent contributions leading to a higher grade. Failure to prepare your responses accurately or thoughtfully will negatively impact your participation grade. If you have concerns about speaking in class, please meet with me at the beginning of the course to discuss strategies for active engagement.

Your participation grade also reflects your professionalism in the classroom. This includes arriving on time, staying for the full session except during scheduled breaks, using laptops exclusively for note-taking or class-related activities, and keeping cell phones turned off and out of sight. Failure to adhere to these policies will result in a lower participation grade.

*Presentation (20%):* Each student will present an assigned text from the course readings and lead a class discussion for which s/he will produce a series of relevant questions. Detailed instructions for the presentation can be found under Assignments in Sakai. For larger groups, presentations may be conducted in teams.

*Nature Journal (25%):* You will spend time in a natural environment and write a reflective journal (5-6 pages, double-spaced) that provides a cohesive and meaningful analysis of the environment and your personal reactions to it. The goal is to connect your observations with broader themes discussed in the course. Detailed instructions are available in Sakai under Assignments.

*Paper (25%):* The paper (5-6 pages, double-spaced) will discuss a literary text of your choice that is *not* part of the course readings. Your paper should demonstrate your ability to craft a focused research question, develop a clear thesis, and adhere to the conventions of literary analysis. Please refer to the detailed guidelines posted in Sakai under Assignments.

*Sakai:* This course will utilize Sakai as the primary platform for readings, assignments, and announcements. You are expected to check the course site regularly to stay up to date.

*General Advice:* The type of reading required for this course involves active engagement with the text. You should annotate your readings by marking key passages and noting significant quotes. If the text is provided as

a PDF on Sakai, download and save it to your device so you can highlight important sections or record page numbers and comments for easy reference during class discussions.

### **Grading**

94-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
90-93: A-	84-86: B	74-76: C	60-66: D
	80-83: B-	70-73: C-	59 or lower: F

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml). You are responsible for complying with the LUC Student Handbook.

I expect all work you produce for this course to be entirely your own and original to this class. Submitting work previously completed for other courses is not permitted. Additionally, submitting identical or highly similar Reader Responses as another student (if collected) will be treated as plagiarism. Paraphrasing, copying, or using another person's ideas or words without properly citing the source will also constitute plagiarism.

Using AI tools to write the final paper or complete any assignments is strictly prohibited. Doing so will result in an automatic F for the assignment, and in some cases, an F for the entire course. Such violations may have serious consequences for your academic standing at Loyola, potentially jeopardizing the remainder of your studies.

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will only be accepted for grading with prior authorization from the instructor. Authorization will be granted only in exceptional cases and for serious reasons; travel plans or other personal commitments are not considered serious reasons.

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, during the first week of classes.

### **And finally...**

Welcome to the class! I find the study of literature both intellectually enriching and emotionally engaging, and I look forward to exploring it together. Please feel free to reach out to me at any point during the semester if you have questions or want to discuss the course or the readings. I am committed to ensuring that the class supports your academic goals, in addition to the objectives outlined in this syllabus.

The syllabus is subject to change. Please refer to the most up-to-date version available on Sakai.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

**M 5/19** Introduction to the course.  
The Image of Nature in Genesis. Aristotle's *Physics* (Book II). The Book of Nature.

**W 5/21** Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.



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**Week 2**

**M 5/26**

The ancient tradition of ‘pastoral literature’. Virgil’s *First Eclogue*.  
The ‘green language’ in modern times: Emerson, *Nature*; Baudelaire, *Correspondences*.

**W 5/28**

Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*.

**Week 3**

**M 6/2**

**Nature Journal due.**

The myth of the ‘noble savage’ and reflections on the ‘state of nature’. Readings by Montaigne, Rousseau, Alexander Pope, Melville.

**W 6/4**

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*.

**Week 4**

**M 6/9**

Sublime or supernatural? Readings by Mary Shelley, Herman Melville, Timothy Treadwell.

**W 6/11**

René Daumal, *The Mount Analogue*.

**Week 5**

**M 6/16**

“Thinking like a mountain” and “calling animals by names:” notions of land and animal ethics.  
Readings by Leopold, Treadwell, Hearne.

**T 6/17**

**Final Paper due.**

**W 6/18**

Conference on the final papers. Course conclusions.