AMST 650: WATER AND THE UNITED STATES, 1850-PRESENT

Fall 2007: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:45, HEAV 107

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“Nor let it be feared that the marked predilection for the study of nature, and for industrial progress, which is so characteristic of the present age, should necessarily have a tendency to retard the noble exertions of the intellect in the domains of philosophy, classical history, and antiquity, or to deprive the arts by which life is embellished of the vivifying breath of imagination. Where all the germs of civilization are developed beneath the aegis of free institutions and wise legislation, there is no cause for apprehending that any one branch of knowledge should be cultivated to the prejudice of others. All afford the state precious fruits, whether they yield nourishment to man and constitute his physical wealth, or whether, more permanent in their nature, they transmit in the works of mind the glory of nations to remotest posterity.”

-- Alexander von Humboldt, Cosmos (1845)

Description:

In this course students will examine the relationship between water, literature, and culture in the United States from the nebulous origin of the modern environmental movement in the mid-nineteenth century through to the present. AMST 650 seeks to understand how the United States thinks about water, both artistically and through public policy, especially in how water is viewed in the Wilderness to Industrialization dynamic that has dominated American environmental thought and policy. To accentuate the variety of water in the United States the course is divided ecologically: River, Desert, Ocean, Pond & Lake, and Snow & Ice. Texts are primarily drawn from the latter-half of the nineteenth-century, but we will also consider twentieth-century texts that contextualize the preceding century, or serve as modern examples of the continuing tension between wilderness (preservation) and industrialization (use). Students will be asked to write critical responses, give a presentation, and write a seminar paper.

Required Texts:

1) Marc Reisner, Cadilllac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water.
4) *Water and the United States,* Course Packet. (*found at Copymat*).

With the exception of the Course Packet, texts can be found at Von’s. For those unfamiliar with Von’s, simply walk to the front counter and tell them your class (AMST 650) and instructor (Bousquet) and they will hand you the books. I am not unaware or unsympathetic of the high cost of the Course Packet, so you are free to use whichever edition of the three full texts you wish.

The Course Packet is to be attained at Copymat.

**Suggested Texts:**


**Course Requirements:**

1) Attendance & Discussion (15%)
2) Critical Responses (30%)
3) Presentation (15%)
4) Seminar Paper (40%)

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance in class is expected and mandatory. Other than University functions that require your presence (if you are in band or on a sports team and need to travel, for instance) there are no acceptable absences. Read that again. You may miss two sessions without penalty, and each subsequent absence will result in a 15-point deduction of your final course grade.

To best utilize our time, come to class on time. You are considered absent if 1) you are more than 10 minutes late and/or 2) you are unprepared for class. If you come to class without the books needed for that day, or without having done the reading, you will be counted as absent for that class.

Please note that 15% of your final grade will be determined by “Attendance & Discussion,” which involves your in-class contributions. Do not make the mistake in assuming that it is an automatic 15 points. If you come to class and never speak, you will have earned a “0” for discussion, thus costing you over an entire letter grade. On the other hand, if you come to class and contribute to our critical discussion on a weekly
basis, you will receive a “15.” Your goal should be to add something of value each week that proves you have not only read the assigned texts, but have critically engaged them. You may ask me for an estimate of your discussion grade at any time and I will inform you if I feel you are in danger of receiving a failing grade in this area at the semester’s mid-point.

Critical Responses:

Students will write a three-page response (typed, double-spaced) for each week’s assigned readings. The responses (to be handed in on either day in a given week) may contain informal writing, but they must demonstrate formal thought; in short, I am looking for evidence that you have critically engaged the readings for a given week. I am not interested in summaries (I’ve already read the texts) or anecdotes (I’m not interested in elongated discussions on your summer vacation); I want you to stay focused on the texts and the issues they raise. Students are free to write extensively on one text or to put multiple texts into conversation in their responses.

Responses should center on the treatment of water in any given text. Students should strive to always answer at least three of the following five questions:

1) Where does the text’s representation/treatment of water fall on the Wilderness to Industrialization scale?
2) What political or economical issues are raised by a text’s representation/treatment of water?
3) How do the characters (real or fictional) in a text engage water on a personal basis?
4) How do any of the assigned texts for this week relate to texts from previous weeks?
5) How does the specific body of water in a text influence the characters or the narrative?

Full credit will be received only if the responses are three full pages (not two and a half), typed, double-spaced, and demonstrate critical engagement with the chosen texts. Each response will receive a grade of 0-100 in ten-point gradations. That is, you will receive a 100, 90, 80, etc. and not a 93 or an 86; response assignments are not designed to trick you but to serve as the launching points for class discussion.

Students may opt-out of any two responses, provided they are from different sections; that is, if you opt-out on a response during the River Literature section, you may opt-out of a response for Disaster Literature section, but not on another week of the River Literature section.
Presentations:

Student will give a 10-minute presentation on the major argument of their seminar paper during Weeks 12 - 15. Presentations should seek to go beyond being either a lecture or a paper reading and should engage the audience directly through a multimedia presentation. Students may choose to create a PowerPoint presentation, show clips from a television show or movie, bring in an archival object, etc. The choice on what exactly to present and how to present it is yours to make. You will be graded on your ability to present your findings in an articulate, focused, and clear manner.

Seminar Paper:

Students will write a journal-length article of 20-25 pages on a topic of their choosing (and my approval) that relates to water. A formal proposal (one-page, double-spaced) is due by the end of the eighth week of class, though it can, of course, be handed in early.

Writing Deadlines & Submissions:

You are expected to submit assignments by the deadlines listed. All written work is due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted. In order to be considered for a grade, all assignments are to be complete, of the minimum page length, and must conform to accepted documentation and format (typed, 12-point Times or Times New Roman font, double-spaced, one inch margins). If you are not able to make a class you may still receive credit for an assignment if you email the assignment to me (both as an attachment and copy-and-pasted into the body of the email) prior to the start of class, and give me a hard copy of your work at the start of the next class. Failure to do any one of the three requirements will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.

Correspondence:

The preferred method of contact is email. All email correspondence must include the phrase “AMST 650” in the header in order that it may be quickly and easily identified amidst the other emails I receive on a given day. All email will receive a response from me within 24 hours; if you do not receive a reply you are free to resend the email.

Plagiarism:

Penalties for plagiarism are severe and can entail suspension from the University. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the University policy on Cheating and Plagiarism set forth in Purdue University’s Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students available at http://www.purdue.edu/odos/admin/bacinteg.htm. Plagiarism is, simply, unacceptable.
**Originality:**

I will only accept work for this course that is generated specifically for this course. If you have previously produced work that you would like to incorporate into your seminar paper, please see me at your earliest convenience so that we may discuss any possible reuse.

**Course Schedule:**

**SECTION I: ENGINEERING WATER**

**Week One**

**Tuesday (Aug. 21): Introduction & Overview**

-- United States Clean Water Act, Title V: Provisions (Sections 501-519); to be handed out and read in class

**Thursday (Aug. 23): The History of Water**

-- Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring,* Chapters 1-2, “A Fable for Tomorrow” and “The Obligation to Endure.”

**Week Two**

**Tuesday (Aug. 28): Ecocriticism**

-- Intro to Ecocriticism: Lawrence Buell, “Introduction,” from *The Environmental Imagination*

**Thursday (Aug. 30): The Dangers of Having Too Much or Too Little Water**

Week Three

Tuesday (Sept. 4): Building an American Civilization In a Water-Scarce Environment


SECTION II: RIVER LITERATURE

Thursday (Sept. 6): The Colorado River

-- Lawrence Buell, “Watershed Aesthetics,” from *Writing for an Endangered World*.

Week Four

Tuesday (Sept. 11): The Colorado River (cont.)

-- John Wesley Powell, “From the Little Colorado to the Foot of the Grand Canyon,” from *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*.
-- Edward Abbey, “Down the River,” from *Desert Solitaire*.

Thursday (Sept. 13): The Mississippi River

-- Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 1, “The River and Its History” through Chapter 9, “Continued Perplexities.”

Week Five

Tuesday (Sept. 18): The Mississippi River

-- Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 10, “Completing My Education” to Chapter 21, “A Section in My Biography.”


SECTION III: DESERT LITERATURE – THE AMERICAN WEST

Thursday (Sept. 20): The Office of Reclamation
Week Six

Tuesday (Sept. 25): Arches National Park and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

-- Edward Abbey, “Water,” from Desert Solitaire
-- Edward Abbey, “The Dead Man at Grandview Point” from Desert Solitaire
-- Craig Childs, “Maps of Water Holes” from The Secret Knowledge of Water

Thursday (Sept. 27): Mojave Desert

-- Mary Austin, “Water Borders,” “Other Water Borders,” and “Nurslings of the Sky” from The Land of Little Rain

SECTION IV: OCEAN LITERATURE – THE AMERICAN NORTHEAST

Week Seven

Tuesday (Oct. 2): Whales

-- Lawrence Buell, “Global Commons as Resource and as Icon: Imagining Oceans and Whales,” from Writing for an Endangered World.
-- Barry Lopez, “The Whaleboat,” from About This Life.


Thursday (Oct. 4): Whaling from New England

-- Nathaniel Philbrick, In the Heart of the Sea, Chapter 1, “Nantucket” to Chapter 3, “First Blood,” and “Epilogue.”

Week Eight

Tuesday (Oct. 9): No Class (October Break)
Thursday (Oct. 11): Whaling from New England

-- Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, “Etymology” to Chapter 9, “The Sermon”

Week Nine

Tuesday (Oct. 16): Nantucket Men in the Pacific


Thursday (Oct. 18): Contemplating the Sea

-- Walt Whitman, “Sea-Drift.”
-- Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat.”
-- David Quammen, “Who Swims with the Tuna?”

Week Ten

Tuesday (Oct. 23): Coastal Life (Maine)

-- Sarah Orne Jewett, “The Country of the Pointed Firs.”

SECTION V: POND & LAKE LITERATURE

Thursday (Oct. 25): The Northeastern Forest

-- Lawrence Buell, “Walden’s Environmental Projects,” from *The Environmental Imagination.*
-- Environmental Protection Agency, “Classifying Lakes and Ponds.”
-- Peter Matthiessen, “Fur Countries and Forest Lakes.”

Week Eleven

Tuesday (Oct. 30): Western Lakes

-- Rachel Carson, “Surface Waters and Underground Seas,” from *Silent Spring.*
-- Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, Chapters 38 “Mono Lake” & 39 “Visit to the Islands in Mono Lake.”
SECTION VI: SNOW & ICE LITERATURE

Thursday (Nov. 1): Alaska in Non-Fiction


Week Twelve

Tuesday (Nov. 6): Alaska in Fiction

-- Jack London, “To Build a Fire.”

Thursday (Nov. 8): Alaska in Fiction (cont.)


Week Thirteen

Tuesday (Nov. 13): Winter

-- Henry David Thoreau, “The Pond in Winter.”
-- Stephen Crane, “The Men in the Storm.”

SECTION VII: DISASTER LITERATURE

Thursday (Nov. 15): Flash Flood & River Flood

-- Edward Abbey, “Havasu,” from *Desert Solitaire*.
-- Bret Harte, “The Luck of Roaring Camp.”
-- George Washington Cable, “Belles Demoiselles Plantation.”

Week Fourteen

Tuesday (Nov. 20): Galveston Hurricane of 1900

-- Pre-Storm: Stephen Crane, “Galveston, Texas, in 1895;”
-- Post-Storm: “National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration’s Galveston Storm of 1900 Retrospective.”

Available online: http://www.noaa.gov/galveston1900/.
-- Isaac M. Cline, “Special Report on the Galveston Hurricane of 1900.”

Available online: http://www.history.noaa.gov/stories_tales/cline2.html.
Suggested Reading: CNN’s Hurricane Katrina Portal (Available Online: http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2005/katrina/)

Thursday (Nov. 22): No Class (Thanksgiving)

Week Fifteen

Tuesday (Nov. 27): Coastal Earthquake (The Hayward Fault)

-- Marc Reisner, *A Dangerous Place: California’s Unsettling Fate*, Chapter 3.

Thursday (Nov. 29): Dam Break

-- Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, Chapters 11-12, Epilogue.

Week Sixteen

Tuesday (Dec. 4): Presentations

Tuesday (Dec. 6): Presentations

Seminar Papers Due in My Mailbox by 5 PM, December 11 (Tuesday)
Course Description & Justification

“Water and the United States, 1850-Present” is designed to have students think about water in an interdisciplinary manner by examining the topic from both an artistic and political perspective. Artistically, the importance of water in American literature is found in some of the nation’s most canonical texts: Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*, Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, among others. Water plays a central role in the works of four of the five “American Renaissance” authors identified by F.O. Matthiessen – the importance of water in Thoreau and Melville’s work is obvious, but Walt Whitman and Nathaniel Hawthorne also lived significant portions of their lives by water (Whitman on Long Island, Hawthorne in Salem), and the Atlantic Ocean influences and infuses their work as much as Walden Pond influences *Walden*. Politically, water lurks under the surface of flashier political topics as one of the most important emerging global issues of the twenty-first century; the United States National Intelligence Council argues that “by 2015 nearly half the world's population -- more than 3 billion people -- will live in countries that are ‘water-stressed’-- that have less than 1,700 cubic meters of water per capita per year -- mostly in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and northern China.”¹

Given the role the United States performs in setting, implementing, and enforcing global policy, and that emerging nations are facing similar issues with water that the United

States has faced in the preceding century and a half during its evolution from wilderness to an industrialized society, it is important to look back at the nation’s history of engagement with water in order to understand the future of this global issue.

A primary goal of “Water and the United States” is to make students active and not reactive thinkers about water, to recognize water as a constant issue rather than a temporal topic to be raised only during a drought or flood and then forgotten. Bill McKibben argues that our society doesn’t think about the natural world when it remains a constant; the natural world “has always been there and we presumed it always would,” he argues, but “as it disappears its primal importance will be clearer.” Indeed, constancy is what man often attempts to impose on water – aqueducts, dams, canals, and reservoirs are all attempts to force order onto the natural world. Arun P. Elhance argues “as nature’s fundamental resource, water tends to attract attention when there’s too much of it, or too little. Accustomed as we are … to a more or less reliable and plentiful supply, we pay scant regard to the quantity of water available to us.” It is far easier for the nation to move on after Hurricane Katrina than it is for the people living in the Gulf Coast who know that the damage inflicted by a flood is not healed the moment the waters recede – just as the people of Galveston, Texas lived with the damage inflicted by a hurricane at the turn of the previous century.

The importance of water to the overall health of the planet and its residents demands further academic inspection. Water covers over seventy-five percent of the Earth’s surface and the planet holds 332.5 million cubic miles of water, yet less than one-

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percent of that water is drinkable to the world’s 6.2 billion humans.\(^4\) Eighteen percent of the world’s population (1.1 billion people) currently lacks access to “improved drinking water sources” - that is, water that has been rendered safe to drink.\(^5\) While that 1.1 billion still in need matches the 1.1 billion that gained access to safe drinking water between 1990 and 2002 (primarily in South Asia), the situation provides as much despair as it does hope.\(^6\) The World Health Organization predicts total world population will rise by an additional one billion people by 2015, with nearly 95% of the increase in developing regions where the availability of drinkable water is already severely stressed.\(^7\)

It is wrong, however, to think of the stress placed on water to be an issue wholly relegated to “developing nations;” the United Nations cautions that groundwater in the United States is being consumed faster than it is being replenished, and that by 2025 the number of people living in areas of moderate to severe water stress will rise to 5.5 billion.\(^8\) The state of California falls into that category. The combination of a growing population and diminishing water supply has had the attention of the state’s political leaders for over a decade as it struggles to find enough freshwater for its citizens to consume. (Note that the state doesn’t seek to make the population adhere to the available

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\(^7\) *Ibid*, 36-37.

water supply, but allows an unchecked population to further increase the stress levels of available water.) The planet’s freshwater supply is already at a disadvantage – 97.5% of the world’s total water supply is salt water, and thus unsuitable for human consumption, and over two-thirds of our freshwater supply is frozen at the polar ice caps and in glaciers.9 When the caps and glaciers melt (as is happening at an exceedingly rapid rate), that freshwater is released into the World Ocean, becoming part of the saltwater supply.10 Natural, solar desalination creates roughly 120,000 cubic miles of freshwater per year that is cycled back to the earth as rain and snow.11 Man-made, saltwater desalination is still a nascent technology whose economic cost outweighs its freshwater gains; in 1992, the state of California commissioned its first study of the viability of desalination for the state’s water crisis and discovered that the production of water from desalination plants currently operating in the state costs between $1,000-$4,000/Acre Foot of water (AF), and offered only a 15% to 50% return on their saltwater investment – that is to say that, at best, the state was capable of generating only 15-50% of freshwater per 100% of

10 It should be noted that there is a confluence of terminology in discussing “freshwater,” “fresh water,” “saltwater,” and “salt water” throughout the relevant literature, and thus here. The terms “saltwater” and “freshwater” typically refer to the supply; that is, you would drink a glass of “fresh water” out of a tap that originated from a “freshwater” reservoir, though you could also have a glass of “freshwater” if you dipped your cup into the supply and drank it straight. Animals are likewise designated by the supply, giving you a “freshwater crayfish” and not a “fresh water crayfish.” There is some slippage in the terms, however. The Oxford English Dictionary’s etymology for “freshwater,” for instance, illustrates the evolution of the term, from “fresh water” (sixteenth-century), to “fresh-water” (eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth-century) to “freshwater” (late-nineteenth-century to the present).
saltwater undergoing the desalination process. The Commission study notes that the city of Santa Barbara paid $1,900/AF for desalinated water, compared to $35/AF for untreated water from the Cachuma Reservoir. Building new wells would cost the city $200/AF to tap into the underground water basin, and $600-700/AF to build wells in the surrounding mountains. During the 1991 drought, however, the city spent $2,300/AF to buy water from the California State Water Project. California decided the costs of desalination too prohibitive in 1993 – better to pay more during emergencies and less during “normal” conditions than to spend enough to eliminate the shortage emergencies altogether. A decade later the state was still commissioning further studies in lieu of action; the 2004 Commission Report still refuses to support desalination, arguing the state’s “Coastal Act policies do not suggest overall support of, or opposition to, desalination” despite the cost difference for imported water versus desalinated water having “declined from up to 3000% in 1993 to roughly 50 to 100% today. […] The higher costs, therefore, represent, at least in part, the costs associated with the perceived benefits of having a local and drought-free water supply.” The Coastal Commission’s refusal to push for a statewide desalination program illustrates just how difficult it is to

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12 An “acre-foot” is a unit that measures the volume of water - the amount of water needed to cover one acre at a depth of one foot. One acre-foot is equivalent to 325,851 gallons of water.

13 California Coastal Commission. *Seawater Desalination in California*. State of California, 1993.; The California State Water Project controls the distribution of water through arid California. Simply stated, it is the means by which California takes its abundance of freshwater in the northern half of the state and delivers it to the more arid and heavily populated southern half of the state.

introduce preemptive and preventative legislation in an era of economic hardship;\textsuperscript{15} despite the very real possibility of drought inflicting the state’s arid southern regions, the Commission still fails to urge the state to adopt a program that would make them immune to drought because it is economically prohibitive, leaving the state of California to wait and hope instead of building, hoping they won’t have to be reactive instead of becoming active and eliminating the threat.

“Water and the United States, 1850-Present” is designed as an American Studies course that employs ecocriticism as its primary theoretical component. Vernon Louis Parrington, Perry Miller, and Leo Marx directed the early decades of the American Studies movement (the 1920s through to the 1960s), creating an interdisciplinary foundation that contains echoes of an ecocritical approach. Their work is, to a large extent, infused with environmental concerns, suggesting that employing ecocriticism under the American Studies umbrella is less about following a recent trend as it is recovering significant portions of the discipline’s foundation that have fallen out of critical favor in the four decades since Leo Marx published \textit{The Machine in the Garden}. Marx’s seminal 1964 work examines the relationship in the United States between the pastoral past and industrious future. In his discussion of \textit{Moby-Dick}, Marx argues, “While whaling is a rationalized, collective operation … it remains a bloody, murderous hunt” that illustrates the “illusion that civilized man has won his freedom from physical

nature.” Marx’s words ring true about our modern present; despite the significant technological advances from Melville’s novel to today, we face the truth of his words not just when we are confronted with hurricanes and floods but also every time we shop at the grocery store, pour water from the tap, or even when we use paper. For all technology can do, it has yet to make the natural world irrelevant; “Water and the United States” will force students to confront this reliance with each text.

Where Leo Marx serves as an academic precursor to modern environmentalists and ecocritics, Vernon L. Parrington’s contribution is based as much on how he accomplished his work as the work itself; his desire to “go it alone” and carve out his own brand of criticism marks him as a spiritual precursor to ecocritics. Gene Wise argues that Parrington is an academic frontier man, pushing into new territory and opening up new avenues of study by creating a “usable past” where history not only becomes relevant to a modern audience but creates “order and direction from masses of disparate materials on the whole history of American experience.” Parrington’s antipathy towards the academic establishment and his individualistic approach gives him much in common with many of the writers selected for this course (Thoreau, John Muir, Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, etc.) whose own anti-establishment attitudes often served as a driving impulse to journey alone into the wilderness in order to understand and experience what others had not, and to question the federal government’s laws and practices that were harmful to the environment. Abbey’s anti-establishment Desert Solitaire emerges out of his experiences as a park ranger at Arches National Monument.

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17 Wise, Gene. “‘Paradigm Dramas’ in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement.” *American Quarterly* 31.3 (Fall 1979).
and his writing style is opinionated and often angry, blending anecdotal history, tragedy, observation, and philosophy in his discussion of the American West. Like Parrington, Abbey is less interested in conforming to established modes of criticism as he is in finding his own style. Like Marx, Abbey is aware of being caught between the natural world and the technological world; he pushes a concept of “moderate extremism” to navigate the different spheres of wilderness and civilization: “Unlike Thoreau who insisted on one world at a time I am attempting to make the best of two.” Abbey would follow his six months in the desert as a park ranger with six months in Manhattan, yet it is his time in the wilderness that provides the main focus of his work.

The work of the early Americanists engage the natural world as a topic, but are so tied to the F.O. Matthiessen-created American Renaissance that their work is colored by that paradigm; if the best America had to offer was a collection of writers from the mid-nineteenth century then it follows that the best America was the version that Renaissance writers celebrate. Thus, the early Americanists are not interested in the natural world as much as they are in the change that is modernization. They are tied up in the loss, but they don’t participate in the growing environmental movement. As a result, there is no academic-driven ecocritical movement emerging alongside environmental writers like Muir, Mary Austin, and Abbey. Desert Solitaire (1968) and The Machine in the Garden (1964) are published a mere four years apart and are both concerned with the same “natural world/wilderness vs. civilization/industrialism” issues, yet they whistle past one another. It could have been different. Roderick Frazier Nash publishes his first edition of Wilderness and the American Mind in 1967, blending environmental history with literary

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criticism, but it fails in bringing academics and environmentalists together in a significant manner.

There is evidence the gap between the academy and the outside world is slowly closing, however. Unlike issues of race, class, and gender, where the interests of the humanities are involved in issues important to American culture, the field of American Studies has yet to fully embrace the environment as an important issue, ceding it, to a large extent, to the hard sciences. It is important our field embraces the issue or it risks having no voice in the developing environmental discourse; as Randall R. Reeves argues: “At times biologists have been to eager to dismiss [first-hand] observations” from non-scientific sources.19 There is a living environmental history of water available to us in many of the same texts already employed in courses focused on race, class, and gender; the United States Geological Survey can inform us on the thickness of sand and gravel in the Mississippi River and how that effects the flow of the river, for instance, but Mark Twain can show us how the flow of the Mississippi was engaged by the people who lived and worked on its waters a century ago.20 Both science and literature help to inform and contextualize the other and American Studies can serve as the nexus point between the two fields.

20 For what the USGS can tell us about the thickness of sand and gravel, see: J. Arthur Kerry and Eric W. Strom. “Thickness of the Mississippi River Alluvium and Thickness of the Course Sand and Gravel in the Mississippi River Alluvium in Northwestern Mississippi. USGS Water-Resources Investigations Report 96-4305. Available online: http://ms.water.usgs.gov/ms_proj/eric/delta/index.html. (Alluvium is the sediment deposited by a flowing stream or river.)
“Water and the United States” helps to put that idea into practice in order to make the students actively aware of the environmental discourse taking place inside and outside the academy. Not only is ecocriticism establishing itself as a recognized academic discipline, but there is greater emphasis on environmental concerns in American culture, as well. From American automakers greater R&D emphasis on hybrid cars to a growing recognition of the importance of the polar ice caps to Al Gore’s Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to raising environmental awareness, we are ensconced in a legitimate social movement – the “greening” of America. As George Lipsitz argues in *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*, the power of social movements derives from the collective ability to “know more together than we know apart, because we are stronger collectively than we can ever hope to be as individuals.”

“Water and the United States, 1850-Present” asks students to heed Lipsitz’s call, and follow in Roderick Frazier Nash’s wake to examine our cultural environmental discourse, engaging both the American Renaissance writers as well as the twentieth-century environmental writers in order to examine how writers, naturalists, and scientists engage the continually changing natural world.

As a literary and interdisciplinary theory, ecocriticism asks us to not forget the very real object at the center of a text. The ocean may be a symbol, but it also covers 75% of the globe; there’s significantly more of the ocean’s surface than whatever it is you’re standing on right now. Herman Melville certainly employs, as Richard Slotkin argues, “mythical and biblical archetypes” in *Moby-Dick* and views man’s relationship with the ocean as a “product of man’s mythically motivated confrontation with the irrational,

oceanic forces of nature,” but he also enhances his narrative with the so-called “whale chapters,” where he employs a naturalist’s skill at describing whales outside of the main story. Melville, for all his use of the mythical and biblical archetypes, doesn’t forget there is an actual mammal at the center of his novel, even if he mythologically enhances the whale for dramatic purposes.

Lawrence Buell’s approach to ecocriticism is the most prominent in my course, and I draw most directly on his concepts of the environmental imagination and the environmental unconsciousness. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell provides the clearest, simplest rationale for the importance of an ecocritical lens on American literature, arguing we should look for the “most searching works of environmental reflection that the world’s biggest technological power has produced; for in these we may expect to find … the pathologies that bedevil society at large and some of the alternative paths it might consider.” The value of applying Buell’s approach to “Water and the United States” is that “works of environmental reflection” don’t preclude or privilege one genre over another. Buell’s approach creates room for Thoreau and Abbey, Melville and Carson, London and Muir, etc. Buell’s concept of “environmental imagination” is a reorientation of human values towards a non-human, environmental perspective, which translates into an ecocritical approach to literature that requires us to “rethink our assumptions about the nature of representation, reference, metaphor, characterization, personae, and canonicity,” and argues “if such a thing as global culture ever comes into

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being, environmentalism will surely be one of the catalysts.”

Buell is pushing for a geographical, rather than geopolitical, approach to literary criticism - the environment, in short, takes no notice of our geopolitical structuring of the planet. Buell’s geography-over-geopolitical concept is key to interpreting texts ecocritically, but I believe it is equally important to remember that many authors will think and write geopolitically instead of geographically, especially in a time and place like nineteenth-century America when a nation is engaged in a conversation over what “being American” actually means. My course will allow students to explore the idea the nineteenth-century concern with American identity and the twentieth-century concern with how the consequences of that identity effect the natural world.

Locating the Course at Purdue

I have located “Water and the United States, 1850-Present” with the American Studies AMST 650 designation in Purdue University’s American Studies Program, cross-listed with the English Department’s ENGL 596 course designation. AMST 650 is one of four required courses for PhD students, and open to Masters students, who may use the course to fulfill their elective requirement. AMST 650 is a “variable title/variable content interdisciplinary reading seminar” that may be repeated for credit, thus encouraging students to engage different topics through an interdisciplinary lens during

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24 Ibid., 3.
the coursework period of their studies. Courses with the AMST 650 designation are cross-listed with courses from other departments, and ENGL 596 is the logical choice for this course. ENGL 596 courses are variable-title courses focused on special topics that go beyond core English Department offerings. Purdue has had two environment-based literature courses in the past five years that support my proposed designations, one of which was also cross-listed as an AMST 650 course: AMST 650: Bioregionalism (Fall 2003) and ENGL 596: Ecocriticism (Spring 2006).

Locating the Course in the Field

“Water and the United States, 1850-Present” is a unique course in the American university system. The American Studies Association’s breakdown of department and program specializations does not include an Ecology or Environmental Studies field. Courses focusing on ecocriticism are growing, however. While there are not yet any Ecology Studies Departments, there is a growth in environment-centered courses. The University of Oregon is at the fore of this field, offering a Literature and Environment Structured Emphasis graduate option. The Structured Emphasis Option allows “faculty members in a shared field to create a special curriculum for their students in order to assure that they receive appropriate and in-depth training” and involves “interdisciplinary course work and doctoral study.” Only one environment-based course holds a permanent slot in the Oregon English Department’s catalogue (ENGL 569), but “many

26 Ibid., 4.
28 University of Oregon English Department. “Structured Emphasis Options.” Available Online: http://uoregon.edu/~engl/graduate/phd/emphases/
courses on special topics are offered each year, including a graduate seminar on ecocritical theory at least every other year. Because faculty and student interests are rapidly evolving with the growth of the field, course topics change from year to year, with four to six courses taught most years.”

None of the courses offered over the past several years, however, have been organized around water. I am aware of only one other Literature/American Studies course focusing specifically on water, Benjamin Goluboff and Charles Miller’s “American Waters” course, taught at Lake Forest College in the Fall 1995 semester as an undergraduate, introductory course. “Water and the United States,” provides Purdue the opportunity to offer a unique course in a growing field.

Organizing Principle

I have organized “Water and the United States, 1850-Present” in terms of humanity’s engagement with water. Primarily, this organization revolves around the body/form of water: River Literature, Ocean Literature, Pond & Lake Literature, and Snow & Ice Literature. My intention with this organizing principle is to allow students

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29 University of Oregon English Department. “Structured Emphasis in Literature and Environment.” Available Online: http://uoregon.edu/~engl/graduate/phd/emphases/#LitEnviGradStudy.
30 I am indebted to Kristina Bross for bringing this course to my attention.
31 In order to draw attention to how a geographic region affects the relationship between literature, culture, and water, I have concentrated the Ocean Literature section in the American Northeast, the Desert Literature section in the American West, and allowed the River Literature section to touch both the Colorado and Mississippi Rivers. Instead of spreading the course readings too thin and attempting to hit every possible mix of water body and geography, the organization here sacrifices expansiveness for a concentrated dosage of two specific water/geographic relationships – the scarcity of water in the American desert and the nineteenth-century fishing/whaling industry of New England. In an American Literature course devoted solely to, say, Ocean Literature, there would be a
to develop an understanding of how each distinct geographic feature affects literature differently – similar to the way a standard late-nineteenth-century literature course handles the differences between realism, sentimentalism, and naturalism. A geographic-based arrangement of literature does not operate in exactly the same manner as our traditional literary labels, of course; we mark a text as “realist” or “sentimental” based on how it conforms to a certain set of literary standards where my course is creating the literary groupings based on content as opposed to execution. Part of the goal of the course, however, is to determine how each particular body of water affects literature, to determine if there are, in fact, just as many similar conventions employed in ocean literature or river literature as there is in naturalism or romanticism. While not even an entire course devoted simply to pond & lake literature could hope to answer that question definitively, there is enough room in this course to start the process of having students think of the importance of specific bodies of water in the literature they read.

Augmenting the four key body of water types are three sections – Engineering Water, Desert Literature, and Disaster Literature – that allow students to think in a more thematic manner about water. These sections are designed to contextualize water – to look at how a civilization is both dependent on water for its survival, then beholden to water for its continued existence, and finally at the mercy of water when nature provides too much, or too little. Civilization comes with a price, after all, and it is not just paid in dollars or man hours of labor; the cost of creating the American West we know today is also paid by the natural world: “Nature has paid the highest price. Glen Canyon is gone. The Colorado Delta is dead. The Missouri bottomlands have disappeared. Nine out of ten sectional breakdown based on geographic regions of the Atlantic (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Gulf Coast) and Pacific (Southern California, Northwest, Alaska, and Hawaii).
acres of wetland in California have vanished … the great salmon runs in the Columbia, Sacramento, the San Joaquin … are diminished or extinct.”

Engineering Water opens the course and offers students several examples of the way we need to think about water in the course: politically, historically, and ecocritically. Desert Literature confronts the absence of water found in the American West, and Disaster Literature examines an over-abundance of water caused by the Galveston Hurricane of 1900. Civilizations need water to survive, of course, but what all civilizations desire alongside having enough water is having a consistent water supply that isn’t solely dependent to the amount of rainfall or snowmelt. Through these two sections the students will examine the ability of the United States to react to that lack of consistency and impose human-centric order on the natural world.

In organizing the individual sections in relation to one another my intention is to move neither chronologically nor directionally, but rather organically. Moving chronologically is unsatisfactory because it would result in an imbalance in the semester’s workload, with works of fiction occurring in the first half and the naturalists in the second-half of the semester. Similarly, while moving directionally opened up some interesting opportunities (moving east to west, replicating the historic, national expansion, for instance), I feel such a move ultimately works against my desire to structure the course by water-body type – I would rather not split the Pond & Lake and River Literature sections up into their eastern and western components. Better, I believe, to examine them in connection with one another in order to draw out how region affects individual bodies of water. I have opted for an “organic” approach, meaning that they

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have been arranged how I believe they best connect with one another, taking into account the relative size of each section and the time during the semester the students will engage them.

“Water and the United States, 1850-Present” contains, in order, the following sections: Engineering Water, River, Desert, Ocean, Pond & Lake, Snow & Ice, and Disaster. Engineering Water prepares the critical skills the students will need to engage the course materials and, ultimately, succeed in the course: a history of water, an example of water legislation, and an explanation and example of ecocriticism. River Literature follows, being the section with the best overall variety of genre and engagement with water; this section contains work by ecocritics (Buell), naturalists (Carson), environmental historians (Reisner), surveyors (Powell), nature writers (Abbey), and novelists (Twain). I have located Desert Literature next in order to move from a section focused on plentiful water to one with scarce water; the focus is to move from an area where water is taken for granted to one where its presence becomes almost sacred to force intertextual readings from the students. Continuing with the theme of water quantity, the section on Ocean Literature is placed fourth. While deserts and oceans are antithetical of one another – both have in abundance what the other lacks – the language employed in desert literature is often reliant on oceanic terms to help describe the vastness of the landscape. Ocean Literature is also the largest section of the course, so placing it in the middle of the semester (Weeks 7 – 10) makes logistical sense. Coming off the ocean, Pond & Lake Literature keeps the students in the geographic northeast before moving west. I’m interested here in playing Thoreau’s personal, philosophically driven engagement with Walden Pond off the previous section’s economically driven
engagement with the Atlantic Ocean. Snow & Ice Literature takes us to Alaska, and asks
the students to consider how writers engage water in its frozen forms. The semester ends
with Disaster Literature, focusing on the Galveston Hurricane of 1900. As the shortest
section in the course, it allows students a small reprieve moving into the final weeks of
the semester, where they will be required to give a Presentation in class and complete
their Seminar Paper.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Text Selection Overview}

In choosing texts for “Water and the United States, 1850-Present” I have offered
students an interdisciplinary approach to studying the relationship between water, culture,
and literature. My course is purposely ambitious in terms of the variety and quantity of
chosen texts. Instead of concentrating on a few select works, I want the students to
experience the variety of water-based literature available in this period. Each of the
course’s seven sections provides a mix of ecological writing from novelists, poets,
naturalists, scientists, and politicians. I have used mid- to late- nineteenth-century texts
whenever possible for two reasons. One, it is the era of birth for environmental discourse
in the United States. While there have always been writers (John Smith, St. John de
Crèvecoer, Thomas Jefferson, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, etc.) interested in the
ecology of the continent, it isn’t until the mid-nineteenth century that we begin to see a
reconsideration of how the nation’s industrial complex is negatively effecting the natural
world. Beginning with Alexander von Humboldt (\textit{Cosmos}), George Perkins Marsh (\textit{Man
and Nature}) and Henry David Thoreau (\textit{Walden}), what we recognize as a modern

\textsuperscript{33} The in-class Presentation is on the Seminar Paper, so the same set of research will
work for both assignments.
environmental discourse is born.\textsuperscript{34} Secondly, few of the texts (or their authors, at least) should be uncommon to graduate students of the century’s literature. Traditional nineteenth-century writers selected for the course include Mark Twain, Herman Melville, Stephen Crane, Walt Whitman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Henry David Thoreau, and Jack London. If students aren’t aware of these chosen authors/texts, “Water and the United States” will correct that lack of knowledge. My intention is to enable the students to think about known authors/texts from a new perspective.

I have supplemented the traditional nineteenth-century texts with a variety of work from naturalists, scientists, and politicians in order to achieve the interdisciplinary goals of the course; the texts are bound together by their engagement with water. The non-literary texts should not be thought of as secondary texts, but rather part of the whole, as important to this course as the more famous selections. The “non-literary” texts range from geological surveys (John Wesley Powell’s \textit{Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons}), environmental histories (Marc Reisner’s \textit{Cadillac Desert}, Roderick Frazier Nash’s \textit{Wilderness and the American Mind}, J.R. McNeil’s \textit{Something New Under the Sun}), environmental warnings (Rachel Carson’s \textit{Silent Spring}), federal legislation

\footnote{As Aaron Sachs argues in \textit{The Humboldt Current}, Alexander von Humboldt’s contributions to the American environmental movement are far too-often overlooked. He was a direct influence on Thomas Jefferson and a spiritual precursor to Thoreau (though the five-volume Cosmos wasn’t published until the mid-1840s, the ideas expressed are largely solidifications of ideas Humboldt had expressed throughout his career). Indeed, I am aware that I am trafficking, to an extent, the same mistaken idea that too easily locates Marsh and Thoreau as the first people to write about the American environment. Indeed, it is clear that, in their shared time, Humboldt achieved far greater success and fame than either Marsh or Thoreau – while Marsh was experiencing some influence in Europe and Thoreau was busy starting forest fires around, and generally annoying the people of Concord, Humboldt had achieved global fame and influence. The primary reason Humboldt’s work is not included in this course is that \textit{Cosmos} does not engage the issue of wilderness vs. industrialization (especially not as it relates to the United States) to the extent of Marsh and Thoreau’s work.}
(“United States Clean Water Act”), ecocriticism (Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* and the *Future of Environmental Criticism*), and naturalists with varying approaches (Mary Austin, Edward Abbey, Rachel Carson, Craig Childs). All of the texts, obviously, engage water, but they also demonstrate varying perspectives on the process and cost of the transformation of the natural world from wilderness to an industrialized society – Powell is witness (and facilitator) to the alpha of this movement as he completes the first geological survey of the Colorado River, and Abbey serves as the omega, offering a “record of a last voyage through a place we knew … was doomed. […] I was one of the lucky few … who saw Glen Canyon before it was drowned.” Powell and Abbey illustrate how quickly the transformation can occur; Powell’s exploration begins in 1874 and the Glen Canyon Dam begins construction (effectively ending the Colorado River as “wilderness”) in 1956, turning the American West from unknown and inhospitable to civilized and welcoming.

Through the selected texts, students will also be asked to examine the difference between narratives that take place on differing bodies of water. An example of this

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35 *Desert Solitaire*, 152.
36 “Wilderness” is a problematic environmental term. Some argue that “wilderness” can only mean land untouched by human improvement; such a narrow definition, however, allows for those seeking to industrialize the natural world by arguing that there’s no use saving an area (such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge) when it’s not really any longer “wilderness.” My definition of “wilderness” comes from the Barry Lopez-edited *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*, where William de Buys explains “wilderness is a cultural, not an ecological, concept. […] It stands essentially for the land and space where culture is not, or at least where the impact of human culture are minimal.” The federal government defines wilderness in the Wilderness Act of 1964, as de Buys mentions, as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” For a more complete discussion, see: de Buys, William. “Wilderness.” *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*. Ed. Barry Lopez. San Antonio: Trinity University Pess, 2007, 2006. 390-391.; Glen Canyon Dam was completed in 1964.
approach would be to look at how a text that occurs on the ocean (Owen Chase’s *The Wreck of the Whaleship Essex*) and a similarly-themed narrative that takes place on a river (Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*) offer an intertextual reading that has as much to do with the water type as it does with who wrote it, or where they wrote, or when they wrote their narrative. Chase and Twain are both young men attempting to make a living in a water-based profession, yet each narrative is dependent on, and influenced by, the differences between “ocean” and “river” as much as it is the differences between Chase and Twain. While Chase has the grander adventure, (the *Essex* is struck by a sperm whale in the Pacific Ocean, causing the ship to sink and the crew to spend months in lifeboats searching for land) it is Twain who spins the greater adventure tale. Certainly this difference has something to do with the differing skills of the authors, but it also has to do with the difference between the untamed Pacific and the increasingly-tamed Mississippi. Twain laments how the “national government has turned the Mississippi into a sort of two-thousand-mile torch-light procession. [...] This thing has knocked the romance out of piloting, to a large extent.”37 When Chase laments it is not about the government-stolen romance of his profession, but rather the danger the crew finds themselves in after the whale has sunk the *Essex* and they’ve been forced into cramped whaleboats: “How many long and watchful nights, thought I, are to be passed? How many tedious days of partial starvation are to be endured before the least relief or mitigation of our sufferings can be reasonably anticipated?”38 Thinking of how water effects Chase and Twain opens up a variety of other avenues: the regional differences


between New England and the South, for instance, or the differences in industry between the whaleship, where the new technology is applied to the business conducted on the ship (turning whale into oil), and the steamboat, where the technology is applied to the vessel itself. Ocean literature and river literature are as different from one another as texts that take place in a forest differ from those that are set in a desert.

Sample Sectional Breakdown: Ocean Literature – The American Northeast

I want to give a brief breakdown of the Ocean Literature section to demonstrate how I envision the texts relating to one another and where intertextual connections reside. While it is my desire to let the interests and observations of the students guide the course as much as possible there are, of course, specific reasons why texts have been organized in their respective order. Every individual class meeting has its own organizing thematic, as I want to encourage students to think intertextually as much as possible; themed class meetings will prompt the students’ critical engagement with each text, reinforcing the course’s interdisciplinary approach. What follows is a brief breakdown of how I envision the interdisciplinary approach working in the Ocean Literature section.

Tuesday (Oct. 2): Whales

Readings:
1) Lawrence Buell, “Global Commons as Resource and as Icon: Imagining Oceans and Whales,” from Writing for an Endangered World.
2) Barry Lopez, “The Whaleboat,” from About This Life.
We open the section on Ocean Literature with three readings centered on whales; Buell provides the theoretical component, Lopez offers a naturalist’s thoughts on whaleboat construction, and Melville here serves as a naturalist in his own right about the animals Lopez’s whaleboats hunted.\(^{39}\) Whales were a key component of nineteenth-century coastal economies in the northeastern United States, though by the latter-half of the century that economy was in decline, giving writers of the whaling industry (like Melville) access to the blend of perspective, loss, and nostalgia that filled many ports that were no longer the center of power they were in the immediately preceding generations. Buell’s ecocritical “Global Commons” chapter seeks to resymbolize the ocean. The move is a common one for Buell, demythologizing a topic (here, the ocean) from the meaning established by the Myth-Symbol-Image school in order to remythologize the topic with a greater ecological understanding. In his argument of the late twentieth-century’s “great demythologization” of an “awakening to the awareness that three-quarters of the globe, hitherto thought virtually immune from human tampering, might be gravely endangered,” Buell argues the prime example of the shift in thinking is the “reevaluation of whales.”\(^{40}\) What makes Buell particularly valuable for my course is not only that he re-engages *Moby-Dick* ecocritically (perhaps “mytho-ecocritically” would best describe Buell’s approach), but that he rightly points out that “Melvillians have expanded far more

\(^{39}\) A preemptive attempt to explain two potentially confusing terms – a “whaleship” is the large vessel that launches from port and contains the crew and its cargo, while a “whaleboat” is the smaller vessel launched from the whaleship in which the actual kill of the whale is accomplished. The whaleship, in short, takes a whaler to the hunting ground, while the whaleboat takes the whaler to the whale itself.

\(^{40}\) Buell, *Endangered World*, 201.
intellectual energy [on the decoding of Ahab] than they have on its cetology.” I have paired Buell with the so-called “Whale Chapters” of *Moby-Dick* in order to focus on the cetology, and Buell creates a theoretical framework for the students to engage the naturalist aspects of Melville’s novel.

**Thursday (Oct. 4): Whaling from New England**

Readings:

Nathaniel Philbrick’s *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex* in a new interpretation of an historic inspiration for *Moby-Dick*. The *Essex* was a Nantucket vessel attacked by a rogue sperm whale in the South Pacific Ocean. The chapters chosen here demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach on Philbrick’s part to examine the story of the Essex, and is beneficial to my course for contextualizing whaling (specifically as it relates to Nantucket) that will provide students with a multi-faceted foundation for their examination of ocean literature in general, and Melville in particular.

**Tuesday (Oct. 9): No Class (October Break)**

**Thursday (Oct. 11): Whaling from New England**

Readings:
2) Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, “Etymology” to Chapter 9, “The Sermon”

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The brief selection from Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration Through Violence* offers a reading of *Moby-Dick* that engages on a mostly traditional Myth-Symbol-Image interpretation; important for this course is his examination of Melville’s use of “island mythology.” When placed in the middle of an ocean, islands are, to the travelers of the World Ocean, what water is to travelers in the desert, but as Slotkin argues, Nantucket is an island, as well, and one that Melville views as a “product of man’s mythically motivated confrontation with the irrational, oceanic forces of nature.”\(^{42}\) Slotkin may be a Myth-Symbol-Image critic, but his work is filled with ecological concerns, never more so than when he asks what could be the most relevant question to ask in this section of the course: “What relationship can islanded man have with the ocean that sustains or, at a whim, destroys him?”\(^{43}\) While Slotkin’s phrasing might be a tad grandiose, the point of his question asks us to engage my course’s core concept of the relationship between man and water.

**Tuesday (Oct. 16): Nantucket Men in the Pacific**

**Reading:**

Owen Chase was the first mate on the *Essex* and his personal narrative of the ship’s voyage is significant in its own right, no matter its relationship to Melville’s more famous novel. Unlike *Moby-Dick*, which becomes embroiled in Ahab’s obsession, Chase’s narrative is closer in practice and language to that a captivity narrative, though

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\(^{42}\) Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 541.
\(^{43}\) *Ibid*, 541.
one that is absent an ardent religious component; Chase writes: “Our determination was to suffer as long as human patience and endurance would hold out. […] Our extreme sufferings here commenced. The violence of raving thirst has no parallel in the catalogue of human calamities.”44 The attack of the rogue whale on the *Essex* is merely the set-up for the narrative’s main focus – the tale of the crew surviving on the ocean for three months in their smaller whaleboats.

**Thursday (Oct. 18): Contemplating the Sea**

Readings:
2) Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat.”
3) David Quammen, “Who Swims with the Tuna?”

The penultimate class meeting in the Ocean Literature section contains a varied grouping of authors that all, in their differing ways, contemplate the relationship between man and ocean. Taken from the 1891-1892 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman’s “Sea-Drift” is the poet’s most sustained contemplation of the ocean, though Whitman’s engagement with the actual ocean is less ecological than it is creative and philosophical. In “The World below the Brine” Whitman envisions life beneath the surface of the ocean but he never connects ecologically to that world; after his familiar catalogue of flora and fauna, Whitman anthropomorphizes the ocean: “Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-depths, breathing that thick-breathing air.”45 Whitman uses the ocean to launch into his larger questions of, and interests in, American society. Stephen Crane’s

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“The Open Boat” works as a literary cousin to Chase’s narrative, while Quammen’s short essay examines the modern plight of tuna.

Tuesday (Oct. 23): Coastal Life (Maine)

Reading:
1) Sarah Orne Jewett, “The Country of the Pointed Firs.”

Sarah Orne Jewett’s novella, “The Country of the Pointed Firs” examines the life of Dunnet Landing, a small, coastal village in Maine. The text serves as a gender binary of *Moby-Dick*; where Melville’s novel centers around an all-male community where men fill typically female gender roles, Jewett’s novella centers around an (almost) all-female community where women take on typically male gender roles. For Melville, the absence of women is explained by the men being on a boat, and Jewett’s community is largely female for the same reasons – the men have gone to sea and never come back, rendering the town old and without heirs. When Captain Littlepage tells his personal ocean narrative to the narrator, it serves as a sign to the reader of the kind of story Jewett isn’t going to tell – a fitting end to the section that has largely focused on exactly the kind of stories Littlepage would relate.

Assignments

There are four components that determine the students’ course grade for “Water and the United States, 1850-Present:” Attendance & Discussion (15%), Critical Responses (30%), Presentation (15%), and a Seminar Paper (40%). The first two components are crucial for helping students develop an ecocritical and interdisciplinary
skill-set that will be needed to successfully complete the latter two assignments. The inclusion of Attendance & Discussion, a Presentation, and a Seminar Paper are standard in graduate seminars, but the inclusion of Critical Responses (of forcing the students to write every week) varies. While some graduate students may balk at having to produce at least three pages of response writing each week, I have experienced no better method for critically engaging assigned readings. I have designed the Critical Responses to lead the students into focusing on the course’s central topics in order to facilitate class discussion, encourage intertextual readings, and acclimate the students to both the ecocritical and interdisciplinary approach – the first being critical to the course and the second to their development as American Studies scholars.
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G. The iPhone from Apple was released in June of 2007 and radically changed the way mobile phones are used personally and in business. Older phones included voice communications and sometimes a keyboard. Phones that offered Internet access were usually unreadable and difficult to use.

Suzdal â€“ the gem of the Golden Ring of Russia. Suzdal is one of Russia's oldest cities, dating back to 1024. It is officially protected from the industries, so its 200 monuments of history and architecture, 4 of which are in UNESCO World Heritage list, jointly create a A_. This town is an important tourist center with nearly 1 mln tourists visiting the town annually. It is amazing, minding B_ trains going to Suzdal. Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet. Example: 0 A report.Â James Stanton meets â€˜Kombat Kateâ€™ Waters, who trains theatre actors in how to â€˜fightâ€™ on stage.Â Waters, known in the industry as Kombat Kate, is showing me how actors fight each other without getting hurt, and that includes sword-fighting. (She inspires fierce devotion: when I tweet that Iâ€™m meeting Waters, one actress friend responds: â€˜Sheâ€™s amazing. She taught me how to be a secret service agent in two days.â€™) Perhaps the most famous play Kate has worked on recently was called Noises Off. She taught the cast how to fall down stairs without breaking any bones. One of the fight scenes is fairly close, Kate tells me, to the one weâ€™re trying out now. Women's suffrage in states of the United States refers to women's right to vote in individual states of that country. Suffrage was established on a full or partial basis by various towns, counties, states and territories during the latter decades of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. As women received the right to vote in some places, they began running for public office and gaining positions as school board members, county clerks, state legislators, judges, and, in the case of