

ENGL 213x

WRITING ON ALASKA

North to the Future.

{ Who doesn't want to go mad sometimes, to be
swallowed up by something greater than ourselves? }

- Sherry Simpson
The Book of Being Lost

Instructor: Ryan Ragan
Office: 8th Floor Gruening
Office Hours: TBA
Phone: 687-7763
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REQUIRED TEXTS:

Into the Wild, John Krakauer
The Way Winter Comes, Sherry Simpson
A Republic of Rivers, ed. by John Murray

"Literature, poetry, science, are the homage of man to THIS UNFATHOMED SECRET, concerning which no sane man can affect an indifference or incuriosity. Nature is loved by what is best in us."

..... Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Last Great Land



WHAT THIS COURSE IS:

This is a writing/reading course designed for students who have an interest in reading and writing about the natural and social sciences from an Alaskan perspective. We will examine largely Alaska-based writings, reflecting cultural, environmental, and historical aspects. We will discuss issues relating to Alaska from the perspective of place and how place is portrayed and perceived, what individual reality and interpretation of place is, and how such factors lead people to behave or act the way they do.

WHAT THIS COURSE IS NOT:

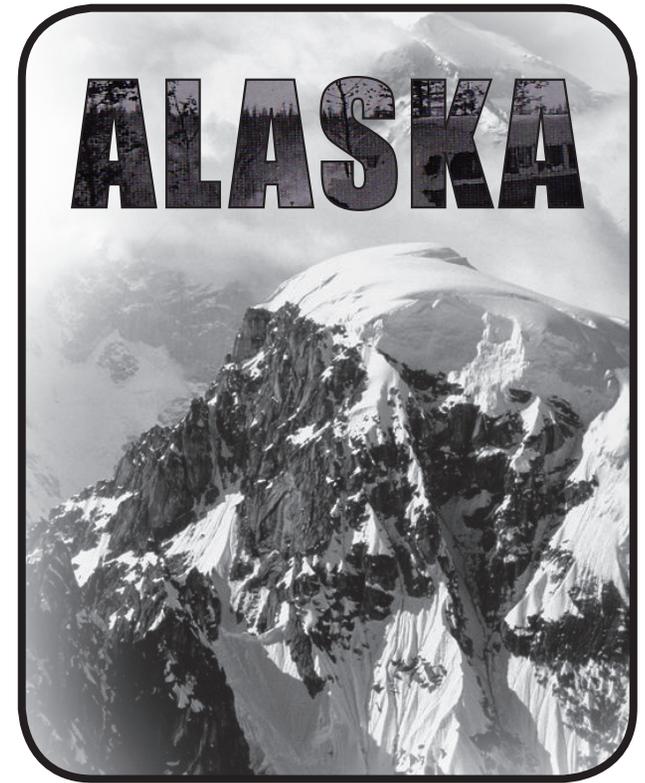
This course is not a literature course, nor is it a science course. You will not learn aspects of creating lab reports or scientific documents, and you will not be writing critical responses to literary works.

Attendance:

You are expected to attend each scheduled class throughout the semester. However, events happen, and at times some of you will be unable to attend. If you know you will be missing class for any reason, please inform me prior to missing class. You will be allowed three unexcused absences throughout the semester. Your final grade will drop 10 points for each additional, unexcused absence.

Plagiarism:

Diana Hacker defines plagiarism as: (1) failing to cite quotations or borrowed ideas; (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words. If you are unsure about citation, please ask a representative at the Writing Center, or consult with me and we'll find an answer. Appropriate action will be taken for any instance of plagiarism. Being found guilty of willful plagiarism can result in expulsion.



“The physical domain of the country had its counterpart in me. The trails I made led outward into the hills and swamps, but they led inward also. And from the study of things underfoot, and from reading and thinking, came a kind of exploration, myself and the land.”

- John Haines
The Stars, the Snow, the Fire



WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM YOURSELF



You should expect to take an interest in YOUR OWN ideas and interpretations. Know that what you have to say is far more interesting than you telling others what other people say about a topic; it is your opinion and ideas that matter.

You should approach this class with interest and curiosity. You should not look at this class as just another class you have to take. Look at this class an opportunity to grow as a writer, thinker, person and student. If this class just doesn't seem interesting to you, please feel free to seek out another course that is of interest to you.

You should expect to come to each class prepared. That means you've done the reading or assignment and you are ready to have an intelligent discussion on the topic. If you enjoy a text/assignment, why? If you despise a text/assignment, why? If you are indifferent toward a text/assignment, why?

You should expect to handle the responsibility of class matters on your own. Do not wait for me to approach you and tell you something is wrong. If you are concerned about your performance, come talk to me. If you are regularly missing class, come talk to me. I will work with you no matter what your situation. One thing I can tell you is that I am not sympathetic to students who show absolutely no interest in being in class and are absent on a regular basis. Don't expect me to drop you from the course if you are failing, that's not my job.

I am not interested in your excuses. Frankly, I would rather you tell me the truth than try to deliver some contrived line. If you're having troubles or if an emergency comes up, just come talk to me. I will work with you.

You should expect a lot from yourself. If you don't challenge yourself to think more critically, write better essays, explore new ideas and observations, and be open to discussing your own thoughts and ideas openly in class, you will not gain much from this course.

You should expect to ask question openly, challenge the material and you should expect to research outside sources to resolve questions you have.

"We may, indeed, analyze an experience involving belief in an object of a certain kind and find that it had its origin in certain conditions of the sensitive organism, in certain peculiarities of perception and of association, and hence conclude that the belief involved in it was not justified by the facts themselves."

- John Dewey



WRITING ON ALASKA

P l a c e P e r c e p t i o n R e a l i t y

Weekly Response Papers:

Each Thursday, you will turn in a 500 to 800 word abstract or response paper. These are informal writing assignments, which means they don't have to be formatted according to any pre-set style-guides, and I don't expect you to put forth as much effort as you would for your formal assignments. This is not, however, an invitation to be mundane or flippant in your writing. Challenge yourself to accomplish something in these assignments, or to at least attempt to accomplish something. You should expect to write after having thought critically about the subject matter/evidence you are analyzing. Be creative and have fun with the assignments. Feel free to express your ideas, thoughts, realizations, findings, questions, etc. For the first few you will be given a topic to write about, after that you're on your own. I do not expect you to give to these assignments the same kind of evaluation and elaboration as you would your formal writing assignments. Completion of these assignments will factor in to your overall grade.

Formal Writing Assignments:

Don't think of these as formal "research papers" that are driven by a single sentence thesis statement. Yes, I am interested in you exploring questions or challenging

subjects of interest to you, but with these assignments, I want you to think about writing a well-balanced, insightful, intriguing and highly communicative article or paper. These assignments will conform to APA or MLA style. Further details are forthcoming.

Group work/ Oral Presentations:

Why? Number one, your future employers will likely look to you to partake in committees, research teams, design teams, etc. Being able to work in a group or team setting (i.e. with other people) is crucial to your success in any career field. Communication – oral and written – are also crucial crafts to master.

I've experimented with ENGL 111x classes in having them complete an individual final research paper/presentation. The results have been highly successful, in my opinion. I intend to do the same in ENGL 213x. However, the final presentation will be done in groups. Again, details of this assignment are forthcoming.

Readings:

My advice to you is read with intention. You're in this class because you want to get something out of it. I'll help you get there, but first I ask that you put forth the



effort and complete the readings as they are assigned. A significant difference between this class and possibly some of your other classes is I'm not going to give you a bunch of facts and ask you to memorize them. Nor do I expect you to memorize particular facts out of the texts we read. Above all else, I am interested in your opinion and critical analysis of the readings. You should expect to come away from a reading with new insights, questions, thoughts, etc.

The readings may at times seem substantial. If you miss a reading, be honest. I can accept the occasional missed reading. I was an undergrad too at one time, and I am well aware of the many distractions college students find. But by now you've all developed your own way of handling class loads, and I expect you will give adequate attention to the materials in this course as you would others.



Other advice:

Be honest with yourself and with me.

If you don't think of yourself as a scientific researcher, that's cool, you'd don't need to be to be successful in this course. Conversely, if you're well-versed in the art of scientific exploration and find research to be intriguing, go with it. If you don't think you're a strong writer, challenge yourself to find areas in your writing that you feel need improvement and work to improve in those areas. If this course is not challenging you enough, come talk to me.

Don't accept failure of any kind.

The last thing I want to do is give a student a failing grade on an assignment, or worse yet for the course. No student who puts forth effort and completes the assignments should receive anything less than the grade they deserve. By the way, if you complete all assignments, show up to and participate in class regularly and show interest in your work, I can almost guarantee you will receive a "good" grade in this course.

Revise. Revise. Revise.

Revision is a large part of the writing process. As such, I encourage you to re-think and revise any bit of writing you do in this course.

Show up to class and participate.

I have no sympathy for students who show little to no interest in being in class. Of course, in the event of something significant that keeps you from attending, please come

talk to me and we will work something out. I am a very reasonable person.

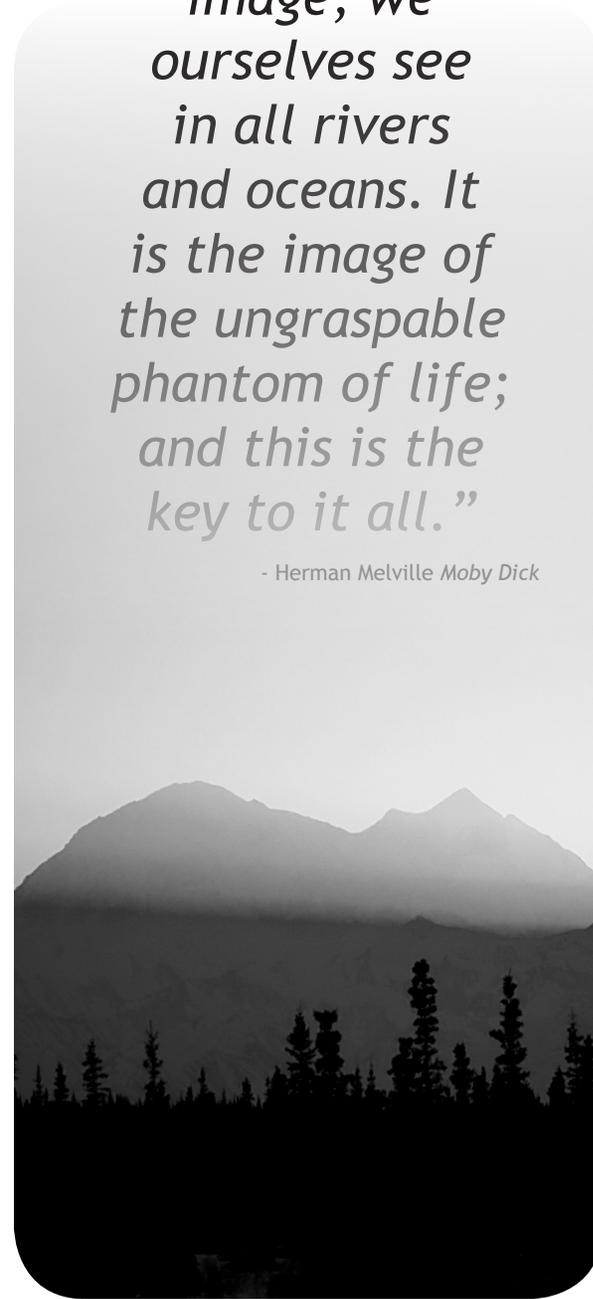
Blogging:

There's really no better way to say this, I am not the most technologically savvy person in the world, and I am for the most part fairly anti-social. Hence, I don't spend a lot of time exploring or maintaining social websites of any kind. But, I understand the importance of social connectivity via blogging, and as a result I am introducing blogging as an aspect of this course. I am doing so in the hopes that this class will utilize the blog to create and share content with members of this class and other writing classes as UAF. Each student will be responsible for creating and maintaining their own personal blog directly related to this course. You are the author of all the content. Use the blog any way you wish, but you must actively use the blog. I will no doubt invite outside instructors and students to view the blogs with the intention of using it as a model for their future efforts. Also, how we make use of the blogs will no doubt progress throughout the semester. Any of you with blogging experience are invited to share your ideas as to how the class can better utilize its presence. Any student's efforts dedicated to the blog outside of required posting will not go unrewarded.



“But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.”

- Herman Melville *Moby Dick*



ON CAMPUS RESOURCES:

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES:

Campus Activities And Events

Outdoor Adventures offers an increasing number of outdoor-related activities and events. We help sponsor events such as the Banff Mountain Film Festival, the Warren Miller Ski Movie, Teton Gravity Research Ski Movie and the Annual Winter Gear Swap! We sponsor skill workshops such as cross country skiing, avalanche awareness and others.

(907) 474-6027
fywild@uaf.edu

Office Hours:

Monday through Friday 10AM - 5PM

Located in UAF's William Ransom Wood Campus Center on the bottom floor and south side of the building.

Student Support Services

Services include a drop-in tutoring center, instruction in mathematics skills, tutorial services, academic advising and mentoring, cultural and social engagement, a loan program for laptop computers and other media, and direct financial assistance to qualified participants.

For information, contact Student Support Services in 512 Gruening Building, 907-474-6844, e-mail fyssp@uaf.edu or visit: www.uaf.edu/sssp/ for an application.

WRITING CENTER:

I encourage you to take full advantage of the outstanding resources at the Writing Center. The Writing Center is located on the 8th floor of the Gruening Building. You are required to visit the Writing Center at least 2 times during the semester. I will assign 5 points extra credit to your overall grade for each additional visit.

Appointments are suggested, but walk-ins are welcome.

- Contact: 907.474.5314

DISABILITY SERVICES:

If you have a disability that you feel may affect your performance in class, UAF Disability Services will take the necessary steps to accommodate you.

- Contact: 907.474.5655

RURAL STUDENT SERVICES:

RSS specializes in providing advising and tutoring to rural and Native students in a multitude of forms. A Writing Center Tutor is available there Mon. through Thur. from 2-4 p.m.

- Contact: 907.474.6619

UAF Psychology Department Clinic: For questions, stop by the office in Rm . 215 Gruening, or contact: 474-1999

GRADES TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A In order to get an A in this class you will have to show exceptional dedication, complete all assignments on time and attend class regularly.

B In order to get an B in this class you will have to show above average dedication, complete all assignments on time and attend class regularly.

C In order to get an C in this class you will have to show poor attendance, poor participation, poor dedication to assignments and quite simply a lack of interest in your work.

D You will have to work harder to get a D in this class than you will to get a passing grade. Ds are for those who don't attend class, don't turn assignments in and generally don't care about their performance.

F If you get an F in this class, let's be honest you'll know why.

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"I think the big mistake in schools is trying to teach (students) anything, and by using fear as the basic motivation. Fear of getting failing grades, fear of not staying with your class, etc. Interest can produce learning on a scale compared to fear as a nuclear explosion to a firecracker."

- Stanley Kubrick

ATTENDANCE:

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GRADING SCALE:

Your grade is figured on a total of 1,000 possible points. Points are awarded on the following scale:

- Class Participation (including attendance) = 100 points
- Blogging Assignments/ Responses: 100
- Weekly Writing Assignments: 150
- Formal Writing Assignment 1 = 150 points
- Formal Writing Assignment 2 = 150 points
- Final Writing/Presentation Assignment = 350 points

- A = 940 – 1000
- A- = 900 – 939
- B+ = 870 – 899
- B = 830 – 869
- B- = 800- 829
- C+ = 770 – 799
- C = 730 – 769
- C- = 700 – 729
- D+ = 670 – 699
- D = 630 – 669
- D- = 600 – 629
- F = less than 600

*** I will not issue a passing grade for the course to anyone who does not complete the formal writing assignments and the final writing/presentation assignment.**

WEEK 8

Oct. 18: Krakauer: Ch. 6 - 8

Oct. 20: Krakauer: 9 - 10
Response paper due

WEEK 9

Oct. 25: Krakauer: 11 - 13

Oct. 27: Krakauer: 14 - 15
Response paper due

WEEK 10

Nov. 1: Krakauer: 16 - 18

Nov. 3: Watch *Into the Wild*
Response paper due

WEEK 11

Nov. 8: **In class peer review**
Simpson: *Killing Wolves*

Nov. 10: **Second Essay due**
Simpson: *Book of Being Lost*
Response paper due

WEEK 12

Nov. 15: Individual Conferences

Nov. 17: Individual Conferences

WEEK 13

Nov. 22: Revisions due
Simpson: *On the Island of Desire*
Strange Grace
Response paper due

Nov. 24 (No Class)

WEEK 14

Nov. 29: Simpson: *The Way Winter Comes*

Dec. 1: Simpson: *Telling Raven Stories*
Response paper due

WEEK 15

Dec. 6: Final Presentations

Dec. 8: Final Presentations
Response paper due

WEEK 16

Dec. 13: Final Presentations

Dec. 15: Final Presentations



From Call of the Wild by Jack London

There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life,

and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight. He was sounding the deeps of his nature, and of the parts of his nature that were deeper than he, going back into the womb of Time. He was mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being, the perfect joy of each separate muscle, joint, and sinew in that it was everything that was not death, that it was aglow and rampant, expressing itself in movement, flying exultantly under the stars and over the face of dead matter that did not move.

