

Fall Semester, 2005  
HNRS 4100.002  
Honors Colloquium

Instructor:

Dr. David Taylor, University Honors Program

## Texas Environmental Issues and Literature: Writing About a Wide Land

Course Description:

Texans overtly promote their pride in and love for their state in tourism, outdoor adventures, storytelling, and even in anti-littering campaigns (e.g. “Don’t Mess with Texas”). Exactly what Texas is, though, is harder to define because of its vast landscapes, differing cultures, and idiosyncratic notions of place. Texas encompasses over eleven physiographic regions ranging from mountain desert to swampy bayous to Cross Timber forests to Tall Grass Prairies. It serves as home to many endangered species, especially migratory fowl. However, Texas also increasingly faces some important environmental concerns: species extinction, habitat loss, air quality, water use, conservation and preservation of undeveloped land, private/public land use, and urban sprawl. This class will detail many of these problems looking at multiple perspectives and explore the social, philosophical and literary responses to them. Topics covered will include:

- general introduction to environmental issues
- place of environmental literature
- natural and cultural history of Texas
- specific problems in Texas
- major texts in Texas environmental writing
- conservation/preservation
- public land use/private land use
- ecological restoration
- sustainability
- community involvement.

Students are required to attend at least two of three field trips (dates and places to be determined later).

Class Readings:

*Texas Land Ethics*, Gunter & Oelschlaeger

*Goodbye to a River*, Graves

*A Natural State*, Harrigan

*The Deer Pasture*, Bass

Packet of selected readings

### Class Requirements:

Journal of each week's class notes, discussions, and field experiences.

Readings Tests (two)

Final Paper due last class day.

Final Exam

*Journal:* The journal should include a detailed response to the readings and lectures for that week. Beyond these, the journal should include lengthy discussions of each student's impressions of the cultural, environmental, and social issues of each of the topics. The field trips also require a journal entry.

*Readings Test:* The class will take two readings tests. This test will review the class readings prior to and including the reading for that day.

*Final Paper:* The final paper will be drawn from a student's journal, readings, and research. It should address a particular issue, cite relevant sources, and develop a clear thesis. The papers will be collected into a volume (along with student-selected journal entries, and the instructor's introduction) and be made available to other Honors students.

*Final Exam:* The exam will ask students to respond to two or three questions based upon topics raised throughout the class. The responses will be argumentative essays.

### Class Schedule:

8/29 Introduction: "What is an environment? What is environmental? What can we say about it?"

9/6 Where is Texas? selected readings from packet

9/13 Environmental problems in Texas: Gunter & Oelschlaeger

9/20 Continued from last week

9/27 Texas environmental writing: Graves: *Goodbye to a River*

10/4 Graves cont. & selected authors

10/11 Conservation & Preservation Efforts in Texas: Federal, State, & NGOs in Texas; selected readings from packet

10/18 Harrigan: *A Natural State*

10/25 Harrigan cont.; Public/private land issues

11/1 Selected readings from packet; Bass, *The Deer Pasture*

11/8 Bass, cont.; Ecological Restoration: A New Vision?

11/15 Texas Society for Ecological Restoration

11/22 *Don't Mess with Texas: Community Involvement & Sustainability*; Selected Readings from packet

11/29 Last Thoughts on Texas and such

12/6 Last Day & Review; Paper Due

### **OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS**

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

It is the policy of the University and your instructor to comply fully with the Americans With Disabilities Act by making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.

Please present your written request for accommodation to the instructor at the start of the semester.

### **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

It may well be true that we live in an uncivil time, but our classroom should not reflect lack of respect or uncivil personal behavior. Each student is expected to conduct himself/herself with respect for self and others. Among the unacceptable types of behavior are the following: placing or taking telephone calls; engaging in personal conversations while a program is being conducted; reading newspapers or other materials during class; and sleeping. In addition, it is important to recognize that freedom to express and discuss ideas is the hallmark of a free society. Nowhere is it more evident than in a college classroom. We want a classroom environment that will foster free and open discussion. Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately, with respect for the rights and views of others.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

As a University student and member of the University Honors Program, you are expected to demonstrate academic honesty and integrity. Among the acts of academic dishonesty are the following: copying the work of others; using unauthorized materials during a test; taking the ideas or words of others and submitting them as your own; giving your work to others to copy; and claiming work that is not actually yours. Please be advised that academic dishonesty, including cheating, stealing, and plagiarism, is a serious matter and should be scrupulously avoided. The usual minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is failure in the course and referral to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Honors students may be dropped from the Honors Program for such violations.