

***Southern Studies 401—Southern Ecologies***  
***Fall 2003---M 4:00--6:30***

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Office Hours: M, W, Th 1:00-2:00; other times by appointment

**Required Texts**

Ecology of a Cracker Childhood by Janisse Ray  
Silent Spring by Rachel Carson  
Dumping in Dixie by Robert Bullard  
A Wetlands Biography by Gay Gomez  
Go Down, Moses by William Faulkner  
Billy Ray's Farm by Larry Brown  
Rising Tide by John Barry  
The Most Southern Place on Earth by James Cobb  
Water Street by Crystal Wilkinson  
Reserve articles

**Course Description**

The theme of Southern Studies 401 is "Southern Ecologies." We will approach this phrasing interpretively, considering not just the biological definition of "ecology," but also the idea of interconnection that is fundamental to all disciplines. In the South, as elsewhere, the landscape both shapes and reflects the culture. Thus it serves as a ready beginning point for studying topics as deceptively different as race relations, literary representation, environmental policy, and history. Our goal, then, is to read our Southern world, most particularly Mississippi, noticing elements of it that we have previously overlooked. This course is a seminar that will rely heavily on student-generated discussion and necessitate respect for the ideas of other class members. The sequence of Southern Studies 401/402 is the culmination of your work in this field. It should elicit your best work.

**Course Objectives**

This class will strive to accomplish the following goals:

- raise students' awareness of the diversity of the physical South and acquaint them with environmental issues confronting its residents;
- demonstrate for students the complexities involved in telling the story of any physical place;
- illustrate for students the reliance of one discipline upon another in fully exploring a topic.

**Weekly Events**

***Discussion leaders***

Each student in the class will be responsible for leading discussion on one day during the semester. On her assigned day, the discussion leader should come prepared with 4 or 5 provocative questions, none of which she need be prepared to answer herself. She should be prepared to steer discussion for 15-20 minutes.

***Environmental challenge***

Each student in the class will take a turn issuing a challenge to the rest of the group that will raise its environmental awareness. The goal here is not so much to change behavior as it is to help us all be more cognizant of our own behavior as it relates to our physical environment. I'll go first.

***The Southern environment in the news***

We will begin each class meeting by discussing issues we have read or heard about in the news as they relate to the physical place of the South. Be on the lookout for appropriate news stories. I'll expect each class member to volunteer information on at least one occasion.

**Graded Work*****In-class writing responses***

At the beginning of each class, students will respond in writing to a broad question regarding the day's reading. These questions are designed to help students organize their thinking about central issues in the text and prepare us all for class discussion. Students may use their books and notebooks during these twenty-minute, timed writings. Responses will be graded; students may drop their lowest in-class writing score at the end of the semester. Students who are absent will not be able to make up the writing at a later date.

***Mini-papers***

Students will write two short papers (2-3 pages) about current issues in Southern Studies. Students will compose the first of these in class on August 25, although they will receive questions to consider in class on August 18. These short essays will serve as entries, if the writer wishes, for the essay contest sponsored by the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, in conjunction with its first international conference on race. In order to write the second mini-paper, each student will need to attend one session of the Porter Fortune History Symposium, this year devoted to the topic "The Environment and Southern History." The symposium runs from September 17—September 19. I will distribute schedules well in advance of the event so that students can plan accordingly.

***Research project***

Each member of this class will complete a semester-long research paper of 20-25 pages and discuss her work in a 20-30 minute oral presentation. Please see attached assignment sheet for specific instructions. Students will receive separate grades for their essay and their presentation.

***Final examination***

The final examination will be cumulative and take the form of several broad essay questions that ask students to make connections between the works we've studied and reach some conclusions about the issues we've discussed. Students may use their notebooks, their books, and the writing responses they have previously completed in preparing their answers. One of the exam questions will draw from students' presentations of their own research and depend upon the student being able to discuss knowledgeably both his own work and the work of several other presenters.

**Course Policies**

I expect every student to come to every class on time, prepared to ask provocative questions and to offer thoughtful comments.

### ***Attendance***

Students who miss more than two classes will not pass this course. Those who find it necessary to miss class should notify me in advance that they will be absent, preferably by speaking to me in person or by telephone.

### ***Paper Requirements***

I do not accept late work. Papers are due at the beginning of class. Papers should be typed and double-spaced.

### ***Evaluation***

I will examine your written work for evidence of these qualities:

- thoughtful engagement with the subject matter and awareness of the topic's complexity;
- logical and convincing interpretation that leads the reader to some insight;
- clear and logical organization of ideas within paragraphs and throughout the essay;
- adherence to the basic rules of grammatical construction in English and general facility with language;
- adherence to the guidelines of the assignment regarding appropriate content, length, and documentation.

Of course, the writing that you do during class will be less polished and less formal than the writing that you do outside of class and will be evaluated accordingly.

These components will determine your final grade for the semester:

- average of in-class responses=20%
- final examination=20%
- oral presentation=15%
- final project=30%
- mini-paper (racial reconciliation)=5%
- mini-paper (history symposium)=5%
- class participation=5%

### ***Plagiarism***

Plagiarism is academic dishonesty and ignorance of what plagiarism entails is not accepted as an excuse. Each student should complete all academic work with the standard of personal integrity that the University of Mississippi demands. According to A Writer's Reference (Diana Hacker, 2nd edition, 1992), "To borrow another writer's words and ideas without proper acknowledgement is a form of dishonesty known as plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, you must cite all quotations, summaries, and paraphrases as well as any facts or ideas that are not common knowledge. In addition, you must be careful to put paraphrases and summaries in your own words" (214-215). Acceptable channels of assistance with written work completed for this class include the Writing Center and conferences with me. Students unclear about the precise

definition of plagiarism should see me early in the semester to clarify their understanding of this term.

\*\*\*\*\*Students with special learning needs or physical disabilities should notify both the professor and their graduate instructor early in the semester so that we can know how best to help you complete the course.

### Reading Schedule for Southern Studies 402

Week 1	August 18	introduction to course
Week 2	August 25	Reserve articles: --introduction to <u>The Environmental Imagination</u> by Lawrence Buell --“The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” by Lynn White, Jr. --“Some Principles of Ecocriticism” by William Howarth --“Again the Backward Region?” by Otis L. Graham <b>Mini-paper about racial reconciliation</b> (written in class)
Week 3	September 1	no class—Labor Day Holiday
Week 4	September 8	<u>Ecology of a Cracker Childhood</u>
Week 5	September 15	<u>Silent Spring</u>
	<i>September 17—19: “The Environment and Southern History”</i>	
Week 6	September 22	<u>Dumping in Dixie</u> <b>Mini-paper about history symposium due</b>
Week 7	September 29	<u>A Wetlands Biography</u> <b>Last day for preliminary conference</b>
Week 8	October 6	<u>Billy Ray’s Farm</u> <b>Prospectus/annotated bibliography due</b>
Week 9	October 13	<u>Go Down, Moses</u>
Week 10	October 20	<u>Rising Tide</u>
Week 11	October 27	<u>Rising Tide/The Most Southern Place on Earth</u>
Week 12	November 3	<u>The Most Southern Place on Earth</u> <b>Last day for phase two conference</b>
Week 13	November 10	<u>Water Street</u>
Week 14	November 17	presentations

Week 15	November 24	no class—Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 16	December 1	presentations <b>Final project due</b>