Why?
As the evidence for a catastrophic environmental reckoning mounts, it’s worth trying to understand how America, “nature’s nation” (Jefferson), has become the most egregious offender of ecological rationality while yet having produced so many of nature’s most eloquent spokespeople. To do so, we will read and view a selection of texts that reflect the history of nature in America, from wilderness to waste, from earth to asphalt, from green to brown, and from sanity to madness. The goal is to leverage this understanding of nature in America into an articulation of your own stances vis-à-vis nature: what sort of being are you, the student of this course, as an “environed agent.”

Who?
Andrew McMurry
Hagey Hall 265
ext. 2121
amcmurry@artmail.uwaterloo.ca
Hours: M-W-F 10:20-11-20. I’m in my office at many other times—just knock.

Who Else?
You, the student in 481. Your people and places may figure prominently.

Where? In ML 117, outside, and the website:

What?
There are four good things that I hope will come out of this course, listed in order of importance:
1. You will be able to articulate yourself as an environed agent.
2. You will have honed your writing and design skills.
3. You will be familiar with several key texts in American literature of the environment.
4. You will understand that nature is the most complex word in the English language.

How?
This is the hard part. Nature comes to us through language — but not only through language. How do we develop an understanding of the discursive and non-discursive aspects of nature?
The approach we’ll take in this course is to measure ourselves against real and discursive nature, so as to develop what I called “wide scope” reflections on our individual situatedness in our larger environments. To that end, I ask you to read and respond to a number of key nature-texts: books, short articles, paintings, films, and places and things in your biotic communities. By completing these activities, in a stepwise fashion, you will develop the perspectives you need to complete your wide scope project. The diagram below shows you how to imagine the process of development. You can see that the course will put you at the centre of things, embedded in language, culture, and rhetoric, along with the various ideas and entities we take to constitute “nature.” The themes in that latter shell — animals, landscapes, food — and so on, are what you need to grapple with in this course, so that you’ll be able, via the project of wide scope, to articulate yourself as a purveyor of environmental understanding — not an “environmentalist” but an “environed agent” capable of articulating yourself as such and of helping others (individuals, communities, organizations) articulate themselves. But what exactly is the project of wide scope? The answer depends a lot on you, but the diagram at right gives you some sense of what it will entail: a kind of scrapbook/autobiography of you (ego) in your place (ecosystem), charting a career in a socio-politico-economic world (education), your imagination shaped/warped by media and popular culture (entertainment). The project aims to pull these parts of your discursive worlds together around the concept of nature (or, more precisely, environmental subjectivity). So for each quadrant, I will provide

1 I’ve adapted this project from Gregory Ulmer’s “mystery” genre, which he discusses in Internet Invention, Longman, 2003.
activities, texts, and prompts that will filter your thinking on the associated discourse through your “environmental subconscious.” By the end to the term, your project of wide scope will emerge — and with it, an “emblem of wide scope” that captures the look, feel, themata, and values of the various facets of you as an environed agent.

The wide scope project itself may take many forms: a website seems the most likely, but it could be assembled as a book, a PowerPoint show, possibly even a video.

You might be thinking, “all well and good, but how will I be assessed?” Below is what I propose:

1. Manifesto: evaluated but ungraded.
2. Image of wide scope: evaluated but ungraded.
3. Emblem of wide scope: unevaluated, graded for completion only as part of presentation.
4. Relays (heuristics that help lay the groundwork for your project): unevaluated, and graded for completion only, they will also provide fodder for our Friday discussions.
5. Three formal submissions (ego, eco, and edu): evaluated and graded, but the grade is provisional.
6. Final project of wide scope: evaluated and graded. The criteria I’ll use to judge your project and its components are as follows:
   - general engagement with your environed agency
   - specific engagement with the week’s themes/theories
   - quality of writing
   - quality of design
   - integration of project components
6. Contribution (class participation, sharing of resources, reading tips—really, just anything you can do to help your peers): graded. Contributions can be made in class, but they can also be made in our discussion forum at www.nicenet.org. (Use this key code to sign in: ZZ40423467. Once there, post a message in “Conferencing” in the “Welcome” folder.)

Of the graded components, I propose the following distribution:
1. Relays: 20 marks (2 marks for on-time submission; 1 mark for next-class submission)
2. Three formal submissions: 30 marks
3. Final project of wide scope: 70 marks
4. Contribution: 10 marks
Note: The formal submission grades are absorbed into the final project upon completion, generating a total of 100%.
When?
In general, I'll lecture and we'll discuss the readings on Mondays and Wednesdays. Relays are due in class on Fridays, when we'll share and talk about the work you've done for the week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK BEGINNING</th>
<th>RELAYS</th>
<th>READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 12: Care</td>
<td>Manifestos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manifesto due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EGO – THE PERSONAL DISCOURSE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 19: Pond</th>
<th>Image of wide scope</th>
<th>Walden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 26: Home</td>
<td>Cosmogram</td>
<td>Hudson River School painters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wendell Berry, “An Argument for Diversity”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cosmogram due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3: Garden</td>
<td>Slam haiku</td>
<td>Sarah Orne Jewett, “A White Heron”; poems by Frost, Berry, Bishop, Snyder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Haiku due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ENTERTAINMENT – THE POPULAR DISCOURSE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 10: Frontier</th>
<th>Thanksgiving – no class</th>
<th>Moviola</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cormac McCarthy, <em>Blood Meridian</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moviola due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 17: Madness</td>
<td>Chaosgram</td>
<td>Paul Shepherd, introduction to <em>Nature and Madness</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ego submission due; film: <em>Koyaanisqaatsi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chaosgram due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EDUCATION – THE CAREER DISCOURSE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 24: Light</th>
<th>Lab report</th>
<th>Susan Griffin, <em>Woman and Nature</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lab report due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 31: Energy</td>
<td>Flow chart</td>
<td>David Orr, “The Liberal Arts, the Campus, and the Biosphere”; Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entertainment submission due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Project and the Relays

The project of wide scope is, in the end, an account of your engagement with the ideas in this course and your representation of them through a shareable medium. Throughout the course, I’ll provide examples and directions as to how you might build your project, but part of the challenge (and pleasure, I hope) of this assignment is that we are collectively writing the instruction sheet.

The relays are short exercises designed to filter your encounters with texts and ideas into personal statements and self-reflexive observations. They are submitted, in class, each Friday, and they can be repurposed for the project of wide scope. Each Monday, I’ll say more about that week’s relay. In order of submission, they are:

1. Manifesto: What principles should be obeyed? Make a list of some things you think are crucial to alleviating madness.
2. Image of wide scope: Find an image that provides a sting of recognition.
4. Slam haiku: Five syllables, seven syllables, five syllables. Your secret garden. The moods, not the explanations.

5. Moviola: A structural portrait: your position in your world is analogous to the position of the character in your selected movie.

6. Chaosgram: Id energy, why you are not simply logos. A scene of irrationality you'd like to see. Scripted.

7. Lab report: Your career as a rhetorical and ecological choice: what effects will it have on people and nature? Purpose; Method; Results; Discussion.

8. Flow chart: Chart the matter/energy/information flows in and out of you as a student at UW and in this community.

9. Food pyramid: Choose your animal familiar; narrate its ontogeny with respect to the human sphere of influence.

10. Twenty questions: twenty questions, twenty answers. A bioregional survey. Research will be necessary.

11. Coyote speaks: Narrate the ecological history of your place from the perspective of that place or one or more of its non-human inhabitants.

12. Emblem of wide scope

**Fine Print:**

"Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocal/UW/policy_71.html). If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean."