

Texas State University  
**Part-Time Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award**  
Nomination Form

Name Susan Hanson Net ID sh17

Department English/Honors College Liberal Arts/Honors

Current TXST teaching appointment FTE% 75%

Number of long semesters of TXST teaching at 50% or more FTE 67

Statement of Teaching Philosophy (300 words maximum):

Nothing reflects my philosophy of teaching better than these words by educator Parker Palmer: “We teach who we are.” Unless I know and trust myself, unless I am honest about my own gifts and limits, I will fail.

Given that the word *educate* means “to draw out,” I have long believed that part of my task as a teacher is to help students know themselves—their abilities and passions, as well as their weaknesses and blind spots. As much as I have wished otherwise, I have found no one technique or method for accomplishing this. For me, then, teaching demands a paradoxical stance, an openness and fluidity that leave me both vulnerable and alive.

At the beginning of every semester in my nature writing class, I present the “I-Thou”/“I-It” dichotomy of philosopher Martin Buber. While we initially look at this paradigm as it reflects our interaction with the nonhuman world, we soon see that it also has much to say about our relationships with each other, and to the material that we teach and learn. In short, if I view my students as *objects* to whom I impart another *object*—information—I will fail.

In contrast, real teaching is a conversation among subjects—not just the professor and the students, but also the material being taught. As one who teaches writing—nature writing, professional writing, environmental writing, basic writing—I am also being taught by my students, as well as by the subject itself. I am not so much the “expert” in the class as I am the guide. As Parker Palmer puts it, “I teach more than a body of knowledge or a set of skills. I teach a mode of relationship between the knower and the known, a way of being in the world.”

# TEXAS STATE VITA

---

Susan Hanson, Senior Lecturer in English

## I. ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

### Educational Background

- M.A. 1975, Texas State University, English (creative writing emphasis), *A Collection of Original Poetry with a Critical Introduction*  
B.A. (*Summa cum laude*), 1973, Texas State University, English

### University Experience

Senior Lecturer in English, Texas State University, 1985-present; Fall 1984,  
Fall 1983  
Instructor in English, Texas State University, 1975-1978, Spring 1979  
Teaching Assistant in English, Texas State University, 1973-1974

### Relevant Professional Experience

Columnist and Book Reviewer, *The Chautauquan*, 1999-2001  
Lay Campus Chaplain (part-time) at Texas State, Episcopal Diocese of West Texas,  
1994-2007  
Feature Writer, Columnist, Book Reviewer, *San Marcos Daily Record*, 1982-1999

## II. TEACHING

### Courses Taught

First-Year Composition (Parts I and II)  
Developmental Composition  
Advanced Reading and Writing  
Environmental Writing  
Professional Writing  
Nature and the Quest for Meaning (Honors course)  
University Seminar

## Courses Prepared and Curriculum Development

Nature and the Quest for Meaning (Honors course)  
"Writing the Desert" (English 3311—Desert Literature, taught in Big Bend)  
Environmental Writing (English 3311)

## Honors Theses

### *Supervising Professor*

Christopher Cyprus Walter, "The Eye of Storms: A Short Novel" (2006)  
Christa Margaret Nelson, "What I Learned in College: A Mythic Existential Fairy Tale" (1999)

## Masters Theses

### *Committee Member*

Amanda Drown, "Islandscapes and Savages: Ecocriticism and Herman Melville's *Typee*" (2009)

## Other Teaching

- Guest lecturer Southwestern Studies I, Fall 2012
- Mentor in nature writing for Story Circle Network (one student), 2010
- Workshop leader, Texas Nature Writing Conference, University of North Texas Denton, TX, 2008
- Leader, "Aquarena Springs, San Marcos: A Writing Workshop." "A Land Full of Stories: A Conference & Celebration of Writing about Place and Personal History." Texas State University. June 7-9, 2007
- Leader, "Cultivating a Life: the Stories and Places That Shape Us," a writing workshop. "A Land Full of Stories: A Conference & Celebration of Writing about Place and Personal History." Texas State University. June 7-9, 2007
- Co-Leader, "'Our Endless and Proper Work': the Practice of Attention," a writing workshop. "A Land Full of Stories: A Conference & Celebration of Writing about Place and Personal History." Texas State University. June 7-9, 2007
- Co-Leader, "Gruene: A Texas Historical Town," a writing workshop. "A Land Full of Stories: A Conference & Celebration of Writing about Place and Personal History." Texas State University. June 7-9, 2007
- Leader, Workshop on the Personal Essay, in "A Year of Writers" series. Westlake Barnes & Noble, Austin, TX, February 2006

- Leader, "Earth Works," a weeklong nature-writing workshop. Gemini Ink, San Antonio, TX, July 2005
- Workshop leader, "Joint Lutheran-Episcopal Campus Ministry." National Episcopal Student Gathering, Estes Park, CO, December 2006.
- Co-Leader, Nature-writing workshop. National Story Circle Conference, Austin, TX, February 2004
- Facilitator, "The Courage to Teach: A Discussion," held for public school teachers in conjunction with author Parker Palmer's lecture series at Texas State, April 2003
- Co-Leader, New Chaplains' Orientation, National Episcopal Chaplains Conference, University of Denver, Denver, CO, June 2000
- Leader, Nature-writing workshop. Gemini Ink. San Antonio, TX, November 1997
- Co-Leader, "Writing Your Spiritual Geography," The Church of Reconciliation-Episcopal, San Antonio, TX, January-March 1997

### Conference Organization

- Organized "Save the Night," a day-long program based on writer Paul Bogard's book *The End of Night: Searching for Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light*, Fall 2013. Funding from Common Experience Mini-Grant, the Department of English, the Honors College, and the Hill Country Alliance. Event included
  - class visit
  - meeting with Prof. Dan Price regarding departmental internships
  - conversation hour in the Honors Forum
  - public program in the Witliff Collections (attended by 92 students, faculty/staff, local residents, and others)
  - book signing
- Arranged for a campus visit by Georgia writer Janisse Ray, author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, a book I use in my Honors class, Spring 2011. Funded by the Common Experience and the Honors Program. Event included
  - reading and discussion in the Honors Forum
  - reading at the San Marcos Public Library
  - tour of Aquarena Center/glass-bottom boat ride with community leaders, faculty, and students
  - hike in Spring Lake Preserve with San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance president and Biology faculty member
  - attendance at Juilliard Joins Texas State, which included a reading from her work

- Organized and led "Practicing the Presence," Fall 2008, a conference for approximately 60 students and chaplains from Province VII of the Episcopal Church. Presenters were the Rev. Dr. Michael Battle, Provost and Canon Theologian, Cathedral Center of St. Paul, Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles; and Patricia Hendricks, author of *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians*.
- "A Land Full of Stories: A Conference & Celebration of Writing about Place and Personal History." Planning Committee member. Texas State University. June 7-9, 2007

### Professional Development \*

- "Saving Time by Grading with Rubrics," 2014
- "Using Online Discussions Effectively," 2014
- Adobe Days-Sneak Peak of the New CS6, 2012
- Teaching with Sakai Webinar Series, 2012
- "Lessons Learned in Virtual Worlds," 2011
- Webinar training for using WritingClass, a Bedford/St. Martin's online grammar program I incorporated into my Professional Writing curriculum, 2010
- Online Collaboration: Supporting Student Teamwork, 2010
- Virtual Worlds: Using "Second Life" as a Teaching Tool, 2010
- TRACS: Using Gradebook 2, 2010
- "Sustainability" Symposium, 2009
- Lone Star Editors Forum, University of Texas, San Antonio, TX, 2009

\* At Texas State, unless otherwise noted

### III. AWARDS AND HONORS

Willa Literary Award for Creative Nonfiction, 2008, Women Writing the West, for *What Wildness Is This: Women Write About the Southwest*

Sam Portaro Award for Creative Expression & Intellectual Enquiry, National Episcopal Chaplains Organization, June 2007

Runner-up, ForeWord Magazine's Book of the Year Award (category: nature), 2005

Nomination: 2004 Whiting Writer's Award (The recipients are nominated and chosen by a committee of writers, literary scholars, and editors. There is no application process.)

Runner-up, Presidential Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity, Texas State, 2004-05

Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity, School of Liberal Arts,  
Texas State, 2004-05  
More than 30 awards for journalism, including the Texas Associated Press  
Sweepstakes Award

## IV. SCHOLARLY/CREATIVE

### Books

*What Wildness Is This: Women Write About the Southwest*, co-editor/author  
(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).  
*Icons of Loss and Grace: Moments from the Natural World* (Lubbock: Texas Tech  
University Press, 2004).  
*A Creation Steward's Handbook*, published by the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas  
(2002).  
*Maverick Lawyer* (biography of alumnus J. Edwin Smith), published by Texas State  
University (1997).

### Chapters and Essays in Books

"The Bay of Broken Things." *Artifacts and Illuminations: Critical Essays on Loren  
Eiseley*. Thomas Lynch and Susan Maher, eds. Lincoln: University of  
Nebraska Press, 2012

"Celebrating a Lively Earth: Children, Nature, and the Role of Mentors in *Prodigal  
Summer*." *Seeds of Change: Critical Essays on Barbara Kingsolver*. Priscilla  
Leder, ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010.

"Homeland Security: Safe at Home in the World." *To Everything on Earth: New  
Writing on Fate, Community, and Nature*. Kurt Caswell, Susan Tomlinson and  
Diane Warner, eds. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010. 17-24.

"The Shape of Kindness." *Sustaining Abundant Life: Women's Prayer and Poetry*.  
Episcopal Diocese of West Texas: 2009. 57.

"The Way Life Waits." *Sustaining Abundant Life: Women's Prayer and Poetry*.  
Episcopal Diocese of West Texas: 2009. 56.

"Deep in the Heart: A Texan Looks at the Night Sky." *Let There Be Night: Testimony  
on Behalf of the Dark*. Paul Bogard, ed. Reno: University of Nevada Press,  
2008. 30-48.

"Education: Lessons in Ameaning." *Moral Cruelty: Ameaning and the Justification of  
Harm*. Timothy Hulsey and Christopher Frost. Lanham, MD: University Press  
of America, 2004. 41-54.

"Why Write About Nature?" *Getting Over the Color Green*. Scott Slovic, ed. Tucson:  
University of Arizona Press, 2001. 29-31.

"Oh, for a Yellow Tablet." *The Minutes of the Lead Pencil Society*. Bill Henderson, ed. Pushcart Press, 1996. 164-68.

## Articles and Essays

- Excerpt from "The Act of Attention." *O, the Oprah Magazine* (March 2009), 37.
- "Signposts." *ExploreFaith.org* (daily online meditations for December 2007).
- "Signposts." *ExploreFaith.org* (daily online meditations for August, September, October, and December 2004).
- "Homeland Security: Safe at Home in the World." *EarthLight* (Autumn 2004), 24-27.
- "Instructed by a Seed: Or, How the Garden Tells Us What It Knows." *Writing Nature* (Summer 2004).
- "For Love of the Earth." *r•t•w: the magazine for reading •thinking• and writing* (March 2002).
- More than 20 columns and reviews for *The Chautauquan* (1999-2001).
- "Let's Talk About Interviewing." *r•t•w: the magazine for reading •thinking• and writing* (November 2001), 3.
- "Liturgy and Space." *The Church News* (a publication of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas) (July 2001).
- "Icons of Loss and Grace." *ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment)* (Summer 2001). 195-200.
- "What Is Dust." *Northern Lights* (Spring 2001).
- "A Knowledge as Heavy as Lead." *Story Circle Journal* (May 2001).
- "Wild in the City." *Texas Parks & Wildlife* (October 2000).
- "Another Day, Another Moment." *The Solitary Voice* vii.2 (2000): 1-2.
- "Seeds of Spring." *Sombrilla* (Spring 2000).
- "Observing Through the Seasons," *r•t•w: the magazine for reading •thinking• and writing*, (November 1999).
- "In Native Harmony," *Texas Parks & Wildlife* (February 1999).
- Hundreds of feature stories, columns, and reviews for the *San Marcos Daily Record* (1982-1999).
- "Palmetto Pocket," *Texas Parks and Wildlife* (November 1998).
- "Writing in Place: Teaching Attention to the World," *Writing Teacher* magazine (March 1998).
- "Why Write About Nature?" *Southwestern Literature* (Spring 1995).
- "Advance Patient Directives: Assessing the Alternatives," co-author. *Medical Interface* (May 1994).
- "A Suggested Paradigm for Developing Quality Initiatives in Health Care," co-author. *Medical Interface* (May 1993).
- "Managed Health Care Systems: A Revolution in the Making," co-author. *Medical Interface* (October 1993).
- "The Liberal Arts Yesterday and Today." *Symposium* (Spring 1989).

## Reviews

- "Review of *The Bridge to Take When Things Get Serious: A Memoir* by Lori Jakiela  
Story Circle Reviews (Oct. 2013).
- "Review of *Solitary Goose* by Sydney Landon Plum. *The Literary Bird Journal* 1.1  
(Fall 2008), 130
- "Review of *Flash Floods in Texas* by Jonathan Burnett. *Texas Books in Review* 28.3  
(Fall 2008) (page number not available at this time).
- "Review of *Oh, Give Me a Home: Western Contemplations* by Ann Ronald."  
*Southwestern American Literature* (Fall 2007), 95.
- "But Is It Edifying?" A review of *The Passion of the Christ*. *The Church News*  
(a publication of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas) (April 2004).
- "*Indigo Dying: A Review.*" *Texas Books in Review* (Summer 2003), 17.
- "*Down by the Lemonade Springs: Essays on Wallace Stegner: A Review.*"  
*Southwestern Literature* (Spring 2003), 98.
- "*Birds of the Texas Hill Country: A Review.*" *Texas Books in Review*  
(Spring/Summer 2002).

## Papers, Presentations, and Readings – A Partial List

- "River Time," paper to be presented at the John Burroughs Conference: "The  
Practice of Natural History in Science, Literature, and Art," SUNY-Oneota,  
June 2015.
- "The Vicissitudes of Good Water (with slides)," paper presented at the Sowell  
Collection Conference, Texas Tech University, April 2014
- "The Vicissitudes of Good Water," paper presented at the conference of the  
Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, University of  
Kansas, June 2013.
- "The Memory of Water," paper presented at the conference of the Association for  
Literature, Environment, and Culture in Canada, University of British  
Columbia-Okanagan, Kelowna, British Columbia, August 2012.
- "Haunted by Waters: Dreams and Chimeras of the Deep," paper presented at the  
conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment,  
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, June 2011.
- "A Desert, and Then Perhaps a River," paper presented at the conference of the  
Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, University of  
Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, June 2009.
- "By Water and the Spirit," paper presented at The Fifth Environmental Writers'  
Conference in Honor of Rachel Carson, Boothbay Harbor, ME, June 2008.
- "Haunted by Waters," paper presented at the Texas Nature Writers Conference,  
University of North Texas, Denton, TX, April 2008.
- "Deep in the Heart: A Texan Looks at the Night Sky," paper presented at the  
conference of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment,  
Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC, June 2007.



“Formed in the Woods: Childhood Wonder in the Work of Barbara Kingsolver and Janisse Ray,” paper presented at the conference of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, Philadelphia, PA, November 2006.

## Other

Manuscript reviewer for textbook publishers including Houghton Mifflin and Longman, 2001-present  
Judge, Polly Bonds Awards, a program of the national organization Episcopal Communicators, 2001-2002  
Editorial Board, ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) 1999-2008  
Member, Editorial Board, r•t•w: the magazine for reading • thinking • and writing, 1998-2003.  
Editorial Assistant, Simone Weil: On Politics, Religion And Society (Women of Ideas series) (Paperback) 1997

## V. SERVICE

### University

Faculty Advisor, Christ Chapel (Episcopal-Lutheran Campus Ministry), 2008-present  
Team leader, Bobcat Build, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014  
Copy editor, University's Quality Enhancement Plan  
Reviewer, Honors Thesis Proposals (3)  
Reviewer, Honors Course Proposals (2)  
Guest speaker, Alpha Lambda Delta (Freshman Honor Society) initiation, April 2009  
Guest speaker, Southwestern Studies (multiple times); graduate class in Social Work Policy (multiple times)  
Member, University Allies, Fall 2008-present  
Organizer, ONE chapter, Fall 2008  
Introductions of guest lecturers at Texas State: the Rt. Rev. John Shelby Spong, author (1996); Gary Snyder, poet (1997); Parker Palmer, author and educator (2003); Kathleen Dean Moore, author and philosophy professor (2007)  
Invocation, Women's History Month Luncheon, 2006, 2007, 2008  
Organizer, “Faith Fair,” January 2006  
Founding Faculty Advisor, Red Cross Club, 2004-2005  
Secretary, Interfaith Campus Chaplains Association, 1999-2007  
Member, Price Lecture Committee, 1995-2003  
Invocation, Campus-wide 9/11 Memorial Service, September 11, 2002  
Presentation on J. Edwin Smith, Herstory, Fall 1998

Presentation on American Women Nature Writers, Faculty Lunch Bunch, Fall 1997  
Editor, Mosaic (Liberal Arts Newsletter), 1996-1997  
Faculty Advisor, Baha'i Student Organization, circa 1990

### Departmental

Member, First-Year English Textbook Committee, -present  
Member, Gates Thomas Committee -present  
Chair, First-Year English Reader Selection Committee, 2007  
Banquet Speaker, Sigma Tau Delta, April 2002  
"Nature Writing as a Genre," Presentation for Sigma Tau Delta, September 1999  
Publications Committee, Editor of *Folio* (Liberal Arts newsletter), 1997-2000

### Community – Partial List

Volunteer Webmaster, Christ Chapel (Lutheran-Episcopal Campus Ministry, Texas State University), 1999 - present  
Habitat Restoration Team, Bastrop State Park, March 2011  
Member, Provincial Council, Province VII of the Episcopal Church, 2008-present  
Communications Officer, Province VII of the Episcopal Church, 2008-present  
Disaster Relief Volunteer, Lutheran Disaster Response, New Orleans, LA, March 7-13, 2008  
Member, Communications Committee, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, San Marcos, TX, 2008- 2011  
Disaster Relief Volunteer, Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA, March 10-17, 2007

**Honors 2391V: Nature and the Quest for Meaning  
Spring 2014**

Ms. Susan Hanson

LAMP 501

Office: Flowers Hall 249

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 TTH and by appointment

Telephone: 245-7697 (office), 245-2163 (Dept. of English), 353-0440 (home),  
393-4827 (cell)

(Leave messages at school only between 8 – 12:30 Tues.--Thurs.)

sh17@txstate.edu or skhanson@gmail.com

<http://www.susankhanson.com>

**Course Goals:**

While human history abounds with examples of men and women struggling against nature, it also reminds us that for many, nature has been a guide, a teacher, a friend. Indeed, for such contemporary writers as Gary Nabhan, Stephen Trimble, and Janisse Ray, the natural world offers insight not only into the meaning of individual lives, but also into the experiences human beings share in confronting such phenomena as “otherness” and loss.

In examining the work of some of today’s leading nature writers, students will consider the following questions, among others: What is the relationship between our perception of nature and the way we interact with it? In what sense is the human experience of the natural world a lesson in the nature of paradox? What does it mean to confront the “other” in nature? How does the observation of nature assist us in understanding our journeys as individuals? In what sense is the experience of nature an experience of transformation?

Studying a selection of nonfiction texts, students will look at the relationship between perceptions of nature and such variables as gender, form, and style. Starting with Parker Palmer’s assumption that “[t]he way we interact with the world in knowing it becomes the way we interact with the world as we live in it,” the class will look for links between conceptions of nature (e.g., as a commodity, as a subject for research, as a resource in need of protection, as a source of revelation) and responses to nature in daily life.

Students will write one short paper, responding to a published article, an annotated bibliography, and two longer papers, a documented paper and a personal essay based on the journal they will be keeping throughout the semester. They also will be asked to lead class discussion, to participate in several service projects and/or

enrichment activities, and to make a presentation with a partner.

**Please read if you are taking this course to satisfy your English requirement:**

The Department of English has adopted student learning outcomes for general education courses in writing and literature and for degree programs in English. These outcomes are available for your review at <http://www.english.txstate.edu>. Pull down the Student Resources menu and go to “Learning Outcomes.”

**Required Texts:**

*The Eye of the Mammoth: Selected Essays* , Stephen Harrigan  
*The Geography of Childhood* , Gary Nabhan and Stephen Trimble  
*Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* , Janisse Ray  
*Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, Theodore Roszak, et al

**Class Format:**

Primarily discussion, minimal lecture, guest speakers, class presentations, videos, and field trips

**Grades:**

Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

<b>Short Essay</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Documented Paper</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Creative Nonfiction Paper (final)</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Project (with partner)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Daily Work (performance as discussion leader, class participation/attendance, journal, other in-class work)</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Annotated Bibliography</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Service Projects and/or Enrichment Activities</b>	<b>5%</b>

Your work will be graded for its *overall effectiveness*—that is, grammar, spelling, and general readability will matter.

**Attendance:**

Your attendance will not be directly reflected in your grade; however, when you are absent you will miss work that will go into the computation of your daily grade. Consequently, you will be penalized indirectly.

**Late work:**

I will deal with this on a case-by-case basis. See me as soon as possible if you miss an assignment.

**Manuscript form:**

All papers—with the exception of your journal—*must* be typed. See any standard handbook for other specifics.

**Plagiarism:**

The Texas State University Honor Code states, “We do our own work and are honest with one another in all matters. We understand how various acts of dishonesty, like plagiarizing . . . conflict as much with academic achievement as with the values of honesty and integrity.”

Plagiarizing is submitting work that is in any way not your own. Any case of verifiable plagiarism, whether deliberate or accidental, will result in a failing grade on the assignment.

**Students with Special Needs:**

Students who require accommodations for successful completion of this course must notify both the TSU Office of Disability Services and the instructor by no later than the end of the first week of classes so that accommodations can be made.

**The Writing Center:**

If you have serious problems with your writing, I may recommend or require individual counseling in the English Department Writing Center (ASB-1<sup>st</sup> floor). You may also seek help from the Center on your own.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Journal:** Keep a writing notebook, with a minimum of three entries per week. At the end of the semester, you should have at least 40 entries. Your grade will be based on the number you have completed. For example, 30 entries would earn a 75; 35 would earn an 88; 40 would earn 100. This number will be figured into your daily grade. Entries may be just a paragraph or a list, but the subject should be the

natural world or interactions with that world.

**2. Short Essay:** Your first assignment will be to find an essay or article on an environmental issue and write a three-page reflection on it. What is the author observing or arguing? Do you agree? Disagree? Why? Is it an effective argument? Why or why not? What questions, if any, does the article raise for you? What is your response? In short, the nature of your reflection will be dictated by the type of article you select. If it's an argument, then you'll look at how the author makes his or her point, as well as the effectiveness of that strategy. Remember, an argument can be well-constructed and still leave you unconvinced. If the article you choose is expository—that is, if its purpose is simply to convey information—then you'll summarize that information and reflect on where it leads you. Does it raise questions for you to ponder? Does it make you change your mind about something? Does it reinforce something you already believed?

You will be expected to quote from the essay you read, but the method for citing the source will be informal; that is, this will not be a documented paper in the formal sense. **Note: Try to find an article on a subject you might consider for your research paper.**

**3. Leading Class Discussion:** You will be responsible for co-leading (with one other student) a discussion on one of the readings. On that day, you and your partner should come to class with a list of questions and comments you can use to elicit response from your classmates. When preparing your questions and comments, please consider the following:

- What attitudes toward the natural world does this text reflect?
- What cultural values and assumptions does it challenge?
- What contribution does it make to the field of nature writing?
- How does it compare to the other texts you've read in this class?
- What impact has it had on you? What questions has it raised?

You will turn your questions in on a single sheet (combining your questions) at the end of class.

Tips for leading the discussion:

- Avoid overly broad questions such as "What do you think of that?"
- Avoid questions that can be answered simply with "yes" or "no."
- You may ask questions about details that are peripheral to the author's main topic, but don't spend all your time on these.
- When discussion lags—and it will—try asking a question of a specific person.

**4. Forum Responses:** Once a week, you will be expected to respond to a question I will pose on Forum in TRACS. Each response will be evaluated using just two criteria: (1) Does it reflect an understanding of the reading from which it's drawn? And (2) Is it thorough?

**5. Class Responses:** Each time we have a student-led discussion, you will write a very brief critique of the leaders' performance. These critiques, which will be part of your daily grade, should not exceed one page. They will be due *at the end of class*. These are some issues you might address in your critique: Did the leaders show a thorough understanding of the text? Did they ask engaging questions? Did they elicit responses from more than one or two students? Did they cover the most important points in the reading, or did they focus on incidental details? Were they able to keep the discussion on track? Did they work well together? These are just *suggested* questions, some of which can be answered in a sentence or two. Don't nit-pick in writing your response, but do hold your classmates to a high standard. \* Note: Be sure to comment on the two students as individuals as well as partners. Also be sure to include their names.

**6. Presentation:** With a partner, make a presentation *on a topic approved by your instructor*. The form your project takes is up to you: e.g., a video or slide presentation, a debate, a demonstration, a visitor's guide, a web site, etc. Upon the project's completion, submit a one-page abstract describing your work. *Note: Each partner will submit his or her own paper.* Your presentation, including a question-answer period, should take no more than 20 minutes. Your elicitation of class response (that is, questions and comments) will be considered as part of your grade. In giving your presentation, try to make the issue relevant to the lives of your classmates, and if possible, suggest ways that they can become involved.

**7. Longer Essays:** Write two papers whose combined length is at least 20 pages. The first of these papers will be scholarly, using the MLA form of documentation and taking a persuasive approach. The second will be a work of creative nonfiction.

For the first, you will be given a list of topics from which to choose. You also will be allowed to select a topic on your own, provided I approve it. You may approach your topic from the perspective of any academic discipline—literature, environmental history, natural history, political science, economics, ecology, biology, nutrition, psychology, education, and so on.

While the work of creative nonfiction should be drawn from your own experience, it may be expository in part. That is, it may include information drawn from your reading of natural history, environmental history, etc.

**8. Annotated Bibliography:** As preliminary work for your research paper, you will create an annotated bibliography in which you explore *potential* sources. \*An annotated bibliography includes a summary and evaluation of each of the sources.

**9. Service/Enrichment Experience:** During the semester, you will be expected to participate in **seven** service and/or enrichment activities. These are some of your options. **Others will be added as they become available or as we learn about them. (You may also suggest/create activities for the class.)**

**Scheduled activities:**

Jan. 10—11 Retreat at Wessendorff

Jan. 30 – Aquarena Springs

Feb. 15—Bamberger Ranch field trip, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (There will be a charge of \$15.)

March 1—San Marcos River Cleanup

March 29—Bobcat Build (Prospect Park)

April 4-6—Camping Trip, site TBA

TBA—Class Visit to Campus Planetarium

**Activities you can do on your own:**

- Congress Avenue Bat Emergence, Austin
- Find a bat emergence site in San Marcos
- Organize a river or local park cleanup
- Bald eagle viewing <http://www.lakesandhills.com/eagles.htm>

**Misc.**

- Prior to the writing of your scholarly paper, I will be holding at least one in-class session on research and documentation.
- If you have questions regarding style, documentation, or manuscript form, please consult any standard handbook. Note that OWL Purdue has an excellent online site.
- *American Nature Writers* (John Elder, ed.) is a two-volume work located in the reference section of the library. It is an excellent resource.
- Please see the ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) Web site for links to pages on some of the writers you will be studying: <http://www.asle.org>

## Other online resources of interest:

- *Wild Thoughts: An Online Journal of Environmental Writing*  
<http://www.wildthoughts.org/>
- *Orion* magazine, <http://www.orionmagazine.org>
- “The Psychological Benefits of Wilderness,” Garrett Duncan  
<http://ecopsychology.athabascau.ca/Final/duncan.htm>
- “A Literature of Place,” Barry Lopez  
[http://arts.envirolink.org/literary\\_arts/BarryLopez\\_LitofPlace.html](http://arts.envirolink.org/literary_arts/BarryLopez_LitofPlace.html)
- “Beauty,” Scott Russell Sanders  
[http://arts.envirolink.org/literary\\_arts/ScottRSanders.html](http://arts.envirolink.org/literary_arts/ScottRSanders.html)
- “Arousing Biophilia: A Conversation with E.O. Wilson,” Robert Finch  
[http://arts.envirolink.org/interviews\\_and\\_conversations/EOWilson.html](http://arts.envirolink.org/interviews_and_conversations/EOWilson.html)
- “Paying Attention: An Interview with Barry Lopez,” Kenneth Margolis  
[http://arts.envirolink.org/interviews\\_and\\_conversations/BarryLopez.html](http://arts.envirolink.org/interviews_and_conversations/BarryLopez.html)
- “Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education,” David Sobel  
[http://arts.envirolink.org/arts\\_and\\_education/DavidSobel1.html](http://arts.envirolink.org/arts_and_education/DavidSobel1.html)



**Honors 2391V—Spring 2014  
Tentative Schedule**

“Once in his life, a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience; to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder upon it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it.

“He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of the moon and the colors of the dawn and the dusk.”

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

\* \* \* \*

“To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.”

Mary Oliver, *White Pines*

\* \* \* \*

“The way we interact with the world in knowing it becomes the way we interact with the world as we live in it.”

Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*

\* \* \* \*

“This is a highly sensual business you are setting about. So think small, move slowly, look sharply, be patient--and prepare for extraordinary pleasures.”

Robert Michael Pyle, *Handbook for Butterfly Watching*

\* \* \* \*

**WEEK 1**  
**January**

- 1/14 Discuss syllabus and course requirements. Why do we need nature? What is nature? What do we know about the nature of the place where we live? Schedule camping trip.
- 1/16 Sign up to lead class discussion. Select team leaders for Bobcat Build. Announce due dates for writing assignments. Discuss Prologue to *A Natural History of Nature Writing*. What is nature writing? What forms does it take? Also discuss "Very Like a Whale." (See Resources in TRACS)
- 

**WEEK 2**

- 1/21 Video (Robert Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*)
- 1/23 *Geography of Childhood*
- 

**WEEK 3**

- 1/28 *Geography of Childhood*
- 1/30 **Aquarena Springs (main dock at 11:15)**
- 

**WEEK 4**  
**February**

- 2/4 Sign up for Bobcat Build (We'll need a team leader to do this.) *Geography of Childhood*
- 2/6 **Field trip to Prospect Greenbelt with Todd Derkacz, Board President, San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance**
- 

**WEEK 5**

- 2/11 *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*
- 2/13 *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*; **short writing assignment due**
- 

**WEEK 6**

- 2/18 *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*

2/20 Discussion of Assignment #2 (research paper); visit from librarian

---

**WEEK 7**

2/25 **Author Stephen Harrigan visits**  
2/27 *Eye of the Mammoth*

---

**WEEK 8**

**March**

3/4 *Eye of the Mammoth*; **annotated bibliography due**  
3/6 Writing Workshop

---

**WEEK 9**

**Spring Break**

---

**WEEK 10**

3/18 *Eye of the Mammoth*  
3/20 *Ecopsychology*

---

**WEEK 11**

3/25 *Ecopsychology*, **research paper due**  
3/27 *Ecopsychology*

---

**WEEK 12**

**April**

4/1 *Ecopsychology*  
4/3 **Lunch at the river**

---

**WEEK 13**

4/8 **Work on presentations**  
4/10 **Bat Conservation International Visits**

---

**WEEK 14**

4/15      **Presentations**  
4/17      **Presentations**

---

**WEEK 15**

4/22      **Presentations**  
4/24      **Presentations**

---

**Final Exam**

Thursday, May 1      11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. (Lunch at professor's house)

## Representative Instructional Material

---

### Service/Enrichment Experience

During the semester, you will be expected to participate in seven service and/or enrichment activities. These are some of your options. Others will be added as they become available or as we learn about them. (You may also suggest/create activities for the class.)

#### Scheduled activities:

Jan. 10-11—Pre-Semester Retreat at Wessendorff Ranch

Jan. 30—Glass-bottom boat tour, Spring Lake-Meadows Center

Feb. 15—Bamberger Ranch field trip, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (There will be a charge of \$15.)

March 1—San Marcos River Cleanup

March 17—Presentation by David Bamberger, 6:30 p.m., Meadows Center (We will be sitting in on Andy Sansom's Environmental Leadership class.)

March 29—Bobcat Build (Prospect Park)

April 4-6—Camping Trip, Colorado Bend State Park

April 11-12—Texas Wild Rice Festival/showing of *Yakona* on 4/12

TBA—Possible Class Visit to Campus Planetarium

#### Activities you can do on your own:

- Congress Avenue Bat Emergence, Austin
- Find a bat emergence site in San Marcos
- Organize a river or local park cleanup
- Bald eagle viewing <http://www.lakesandhills.com/eagles.htm>

## Student Comments About Honors 2391V, "Nature and the Quest for Meaning"

"It allowed a conjunction of two schools of thought regarding nature. Both the physical aspect, as well as the more ungraspable *idea* of nature, and how to relate to it."

"This class was amazing. Mrs. Hanson is such a wonderful teacher and allowed us to think deeply for ourselves, with guidance."

"This course has actually taught me a lot about myself, and has shaped my views on the world a little differently. I plan on pursuing more study in the field of nature & environmentalism."

## Reflection on the Rubric

---

Given that my Honors course substitutes for English 1320, the second semester of freshman composition, I necessarily emphasize writing skills and require a number of assignments that reinforce those skills. That said, another of my goals is to increase my students' engagement in the world around them. My hope is that they will move past the dualistic thinking that presupposes a "world out there"—aka the "real world"—and the world of the mind that they inhabit while in class.

To help with this process, I require my students to participate in at least seven service or enrichment activities during the semester. These are designed to accomplish several things: (1) a physical, hands-on experience of the natural world, (2) greater connection to the community outside of the university, (3) increased awareness of the complexity and richness of the ecosystem in which they live, and (4) stronger bonds between the students as a class and a community of learners.

How do these requirements meet the criteria in your rubric? While these activities do not represent a "variety of assessment strategies," they do reflect a variety of "engagement strategies." Moreover, the "learning objective" in each case is quite clear.

The students' "performance" is based simply on participation, and their participation ultimately requires the use of all of their senses: being awakened by the sound of bird song on a camping trip, seeing the plants and animals that thrive in the waters of Spring Lake, feeling the smooth contours of the rocks at Wessendorff Ranch, smelling the scent of blooming mountain laurel on a walk through the woods in spring, even savoring the taste of food prepared after an arduous hike. In short, these activities collectively require the participation of the *whole person*. If that occurs, then I consider this element of the course to be a success.