

# School of Communications

**Course:** Journalism 2350, Outdoor/Nature Journalism

**Term:** Spring 2010

**Instructor:** Professor Don Corrigan, [corrighd@webster.edu](mailto:corrighd@webster.edu), 247D Sverdrup

## **Course Description:**

This course has a three-fold purpose: to acquaint new journalists and writers with the best works of those who have found inspiration for their prose from the outdoors; to familiarize student writers with journalism about nature sites in the Missouri and Midwest region; to encourage developing outdoor/nature writers to experiment with expository and advocacy journalism.

## **Extended Course Description:**

Outdoor recreation/nature journalism has a long and diverse history in the United States, from the earliest writings of American sportsmen to the conservation articles of nature champions such as Izaak Walton. In our contemporary era, we find a new, thoughtful nature journalism in the tracts of such writers as John McPhee, Wendell Berry and Bill McKibben.

Student writers can only find their place in the historical continuum of outdoor/nature journalism by examining the masters, both past and present. With that in mind, students in the class will be asked to adopt "mentors" from among outdoor adventure writers, New Age nature romanticists, environmental advocates and investigative journalists. These writers will be taken up in WSYK Sessions (Writers You Should Know).

Student writers can only write about nature after knowing what is available in their own "back yard." With that in mind, students will be asked to learn more about the landscape of the Midwest and Missouri. Bluffs, caves, springs, streams, glades and forests will come under scrutiny, as well as the outdoor enthusiasts and nature groups which frequent these natural assets.

Finally, student writers can only find their voice by engaging in a variety of writing assignments on the outdoors and nature. There will be a number of writing projects from expository to advocacy to investigative. Class visitors will include writers who work in these areas of exposition.

As a state, a nation and a world, we confront critical decisions about stewardship of the earth. Although the issues involving the nurture of nature can be complex, individuals and policy makers have no choice but to confront them.

**Prerequisite:** Sophomore standing; JOUR 1030, Fundamentals of Reporting; or WRIT 2072; or permission of instructor

# School of Communications

## Course Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will understand the origins of outdoor and nature writing, from the era before Teddy Roosevelt, to the current era of environmental journalism in defense of nature.
- 2) Students will learn the basic vocabulary of nature and ecology as it relates to bluffs and glades, caves and grottos, springs and streams, forests and plains.
- 3) Students will learn basic state and federal laws related to conservation and preservation practices that are essential to informed media coverage.
- 4) Students will develop local sources who work in such groups as Sierra, Audubon, Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense and more.
- 5) Students will produce a range of articles on nature and the outdoors and submit them for publication when applicable.
- 6) Students will understand the history of local nature and outdoor issues, from limitations on recreation and development to expansion of trails, parks and outdoor opportunities.
- 7) Students will be aware of major national and international policies on protecting nature and the outdoors.

## Materials and/or Required Textbooks:

Corrigan, Don; "Show Me... Natural Wonders;" (St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2007)

Neuzil, Mark; "The Environment and the Press;" (Evanston: Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University Press, 2008)

## Course schedule:

- Week 1: Jan. 11
1. Introduction: Nature/Outdoor Journalism
  2. Early American Nature Writers
  3. Contemporary/Outdoor Journalists
- Week 2: Jan. 18
1. Bluffs of the Mississippi River Valley
  2. Twain Country Explored
  3. (WYSK: Izaak Walton) Assign #1 Outdoor Profiles
- Week 3: Jan. 25
1. Bluffs of the Missouri River Valley
  2. Lewis & Clark's Legacy
  3. (WYSK: Henry David Thoreau)
- Week 4: Feb. 1
1. Tributary Bluffs: Meramec, Osage & More
  2. Native American Folklore, History
  3. (WYSK: John Burroughs)

# School of Communications

- Week 5: Feb. 8
1. Springs, Unique Water Features
  2. Big, Blue, Greer, Welch springs & More
  3. (WYSK: John Muir) #1 Due; #2 Profile Nature Group

- Week 6: Feb. 15
1. Rivers, Streams, Creeks
  2. Ozark Riverways Heritage
  3. (WYSK: Aldo Leopold)

- Week 7: Feb. 22
1. Falls & Shut-ins
  2. The Johnson Shut-in Story
  3. (WYSK: Sigrud Olson)

- Week 8: March 1
1. Advocacy Journalism: Nature & Environment
  2. Midterm Review of Material
  3. Midterm Exam; #2 Due; #3 Advocacy Article

- Week 9: March 8

## SPRING BREAK

- Week 10: March 15
1. Exam Review
  2. Flora & Fauna In Nature
  3. (WYSK: Rachel Carson)

- Week 11: March 22
1. Caves: Commercial & Developed
  2. From Meramec to Marvel
  3. (WYSK: John McPhee)

- Week 12: March 29
1. Caves: Recreational
  2. From Cliff Cave to Devil's Icebox
  3. (WYSK: Wendell Berry) #3 Due; #4 Investigative

- Week 13: April 5
1. Caves: Hobbyists & Explorers
  2. Cave Discovery, Exploration, Preservation
  3. (WYSK: Annie Dillard)

- Week 14: April 12
1. State Parks
  2. National Parks
  3. (WYSK: Ken Burns)

# School of Communications

- Week 15: April 19
1. Conservation Centers & Outdoor Refuges
  2. Future For Outdoors Recreation
  3. (WYSK: Eddie Harris) #4 Article Due

- Week 16: April 26
1. Forests, Woodland Issues
  2. Wetlands, Runoff Issues
  3. End-term Review

- Week 17: May 3  
**Finals, Story Reviews, Course Roundup**

## **Assessment of Learning Outcomes/Course Policies:**

### GRADING SYSTEM:

Position Papers, Articles:	60%
Exams:	30%
Class Participation:	10%

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Regular attendance is a prerequisite for satisfactory completion of the course. Material in the exams will come from guest speaker visits. If your attendance is not satisfactory, you can expect your final grade to fall by at least the 10 percent allocated for class participation.

## **University Policy Statements:**

### **University Grading Standards:**

**The Undergraduate Catalog provides these guidelines and grading options:**

**A, A-** Superior work in the opinion of the instructor

**B+, B, B-** Good work in the opinion of the instructor

**C+, C, C-** Satisfactory work in the opinion of the instructor

**D+, D** Passing, but less than satisfactory work in the opinion of the instructor

**I** Incomplete work in the opinion of the instructor. If an Incomplete grade is submitted by the instructor, the student and the instructor must have an agreed upon deadline for completion of the required work.

**ZF** An incomplete which was not completed within one year of the end of the course. All Incompletes should be completed within a much shorter period of time before the automatic ZF is entered on the student's transcript. This grade of F cannot be undone.

**F** Unsatisfactory work in the opinion of the instructor

**W** Withdrawal from the course

***This course is governed by the University's policies, as published in the University catalog.***

# School of Communications

**Academic Honesty:** The University is committed to high standards of academic honesty. Students will be held responsible for violations of these standards. Please refer to the university catalog for a definition of academic dishonesty and potential associated disciplinary actions. (Each instructor and/or Program Facilitator can add to and supplement this statement with their own policies on items such as plagiarism.)

**Drops and Withdrawals:** Please be aware that the Drop/Add and Withdrawal dates are listed each semester on the University website, in the University catalog and in the Course Description book. If the course is dropped within the Drop/Add period, no notation of the course will appear on the student's transcript. Withdrawals take place after the published Drop date and a "W" in the course will appear on the student's transcript.

**Special Services:** If you have registered as a student with a documented disability and are entitled to classroom or testing accommodations, please inform the instructor at the beginning of the course of the accommodations you will require in this course so that these can be provided.

**Disturbances:** Since every student is entitled to full participation in class without interruption, disruption of class by inconsiderate behavior is not acceptable. Students are expected to treat the instructor and fellow students with dignity and respect, especially in cases where diversity of opinions arise. (Each instructor can list their own policies here with regards to cell phones, eating in class, etc.)

**Student Assignments Retained:** Some random student assignments or projects will be retained by the School of Communications for the purpose of academic assessment as it relates to student learning outcomes. In every such case, the student's name and all identifying information about the student will be removed from the assignment or project.

**Contact hours for this course:** It is essential that all classes meet for the full instructional time as scheduled. A class cannot be shortened in length without rescheduling and/or make up activities.