

*Famous Observers of the Outdoors: Their Lives and Their Passions*

*FRPG 188Z – Spring 2009*

*T-H 8:30-10:00 AM, W 12:00-1:30 PM Location TBA*

**Faculty**

William P. Rivers, Office: 107A Brown Hall, Tel: x5249, 386-8461,  
email: [writers@stlawu.edu](mailto:writers@stlawu.edu), Office hours: By appointment.

**Writing Mentor**

Lisa Manoogian, Dean Eaton 2039, Tel (617)921-1064, email: [lmano06@stlawu.edu](mailto:lmano06@stlawu.edu)  
Office location and hours:

**Course Description**

Humans are drawn to the outdoors. The outdoors is where we evolved. The outdoors is where we went to find resources to build our homes, towns, and cities. The outdoors is where we seek physical health, mental clarity, scientific understanding, and spiritual renewal. Numerous famous people have spent their lives, in one way or another, dedicated to observing the outdoors, as naturalists, scientists, writers, hikers, and environmental activists. In this course we will explore the lives of these and other people and learn about the particular outdoors that was their passion. Through library research students will explore the lives, writings, and historical contexts of these influential people who made their life's work observing the outdoors. The major focus of your effort in this course will be to develop skills in conducting library research on these individuals. This research will culminate in a research paper on the individual's life and their chosen passion. Among the questions we will be asking with each figure will be how did the environment they live in shape their views? What were the formative influences on their lives? HOW did they observe the outdoors? What were the issues that they were most concerned with? What is the current status of those issues? Finally, what has been the larger social impact of their work and writings. These and other questions will help you to organize and focus your research strategy.

The first part of the course will be organized around common readings; discussions; shorter, informal writing assignments; and a focus on skill development. We will begin by examining the lives of three observers-of-the-outdoors, Annie Dillard (writer), Edward Abbey (activist), and E. O. Wilson (scientist). The second part of the course will focus on your own research topic and the communication of your results through written and oral assignments. Each student will be responsible for providing a reading and leading a discussion about their research individual and that individual's outdoor passion.

The course schedule is listed below. Common readings will be handed out the week before they are discussed

**Course schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
1	January	20-22	Introduction and overview, Annie Dillard discussion, discussion skills, research journal	Submit your top 4 research topic choices
2		27-29	Database searches, SLU collection, Interlibrary loan, Critical use of Web sources, additional library resources	
3	February	3-5	Discussion of Edward Abbey, Source evaluation, writing précis	Discussion Questions, Research Journal (copy)
4		10-12	E. O. Wilson, Research ethics and proper referencing of sources	First précis, Bring Hacker to class, Sign up for discussions
5		17-19	E. O. Wilson	Readings for discussion, Research Journal (copy)
6		24-26	TBA, Student led discussions, Individual conferences	First draft of letter
7	March	3-5	TBA, Student led discussions / Individual conferences , Functional Outlines	Discussion questions (DQ), Final draft of letter, Research Journal (copy)
8		10-12	Individual conferences	Functional outline #1
		13-22	SPRING BREAK!	
9		24-26	Structure of research paper / Student led discussions	DQ
10	Mar/Apr	31-2	Student led discussions, Individual conferences	Last précis, Research Journal (copy), Functional outline #2
11	April	7-9	Individual conferences	
12		14-16	Field Trip (destination TBA), Individual conferences	First draft due Tuesday Apr 14
13		21-23	Research presentations	Research Presentation
14	April	28-30	Review of Public Presentations, Summary and Course Evaluation	Final paper and Portfolios Due Apr 30

### Course assignments and evaluation

Assignment	Due date	Percentage of Final Grade
Student led class discussion	Feb. 24 – Mar. 31	10
Class participation and attendance	Every class	10
Portfolio and self assessment essay	April 30	5
Research projects (total of 70% of final grade)		
Research journal	Biweekly (copy)	5
Research topic	Thurs. Jan. 22	-
Précis of sources (all that you will use)	Feb. 10- Mar. 31	10
Letter of intent and info request (first draft)	Feb. 24	5
Letter (final draft)	Mar. 5	5
Functional outline 1	Mar. 21	5
Functional outline 2	Apr. 2	5
First draft	Mon., Apr. 15	10
Research presentation	Apr. 21-23	10
Final draft	May 8	20

**Informal writing assignments:** Periodically you will be given informal writing assignments, such as short reflection papers, discussion questions, outlines, in-class response writing, etc. All combined these assignments will be worth 10% of your final grade.

**Student led discussions:** Each discussion will be led by an individual student and based on a reading of that student's choosing (probably something written by the environmental figure who that student is researching). Student led discussions will last approximately 30 minutes each.

**Research project:** This project, which is broken up into several progressive assignments, makes up the majority of the work for this course. Consequently it is worth a total of 70% of your final grade.

**Research journal:** As a way of charting your progress you will be required to keep a research journal. This informal journal will be used to record all of your research activities as well as your thoughts on how your research is progressing. The intent of this journal is to document all the work you do on your research. Think of it as equivalent to a scientific lab notebook, with sufficient detail such that someone else could replicate everything you do. Keep all of your research material in a three-ring binder and make one copy of this material to be turned in every other week. Your research journal should include all results of database searches, references of articles and books found or requested, notes taken while reading these sources, and thoughts on your topic and progress.

**Letter of intent and information request:** This letter will be addressed to the person you are researching (or to a close relative if deceased). In this letter you should introduce yourself, describe what you are doing and your understanding of this person's work, and request additional information which you need to "complete the picture."

**Presentation of Research:** This presentation will be based upon your research and should summarize your main points with supporting data/examples. The presentation will be 15 minutes long and presented to your peers in class using powerpoint.

**Attendance Policy:** You will be allowed three absences (for any reason) after which your final grade will be lowered 0.25 points for each additional absence.

**Late Policy:** Assignments turned in late will be marked down 0.25 points per day.

**Portfolio and self assessment essay:** All of your work for the semester should be compiled into a portfolio and turned in at the end of the semester along with a 2-3 page self evaluation which highlights your work, the specific progress you have made, and the areas in which you see a need for improvement.

**Revised Assignments:** It is expected that your revised assignments are just that, revised. You will not receive credit for a final draft of an assignment unless you have clearly worked to improve it from the previous draft.

## First-Year Program Philosophy and Goals 2008-09

A residentially-based, interdisciplinary first-year program is an ideal environment for beginning the four-year process of developing the complex intellectual and social skills that are at the heart of a liberal education and the habits of considered values and engaged citizenship that such an education should produce. The First-Year Program (FYP) and First-Year Seminar (FYS) are the core of our institutional commitment to improving your ability to engage in critical inquiry and research, to design and deliver written, spoken and/or visual texts that demonstrate rhetorical sensitivity, and to be sophisticated readers, listeners, and viewers of the texts of others. We believe that these same competencies can help develop your ability to communicate across differences (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, political views) as you find ways to live and learn together in the residence halls and as engaged and ethically reflective citizens both during and after your college years. These goals should be understood as the first step in our work with you over a four-year process of helping you to meet the University's Aims and Objectives.

We hope to help you see that writing, speaking, research, and interacting with others are rhetorical endeavors. Effective communicators are, by definition, rhetorically sensitive. Rhetorical sensitivity means understanding that all communication, whether formal or informal, involves having to make choices about your messages, whether written, spoken, or visual. To become an effective communicator, you need to recognize that the creation of a meaningful and powerful message involves both a creator and an audience, and that therefore the voice you adopt in your communication, and the audience you imagine yourself communicating to, matter a great deal in creating your message. The choices you make in writing and speaking are central in

determining how people read and hear your voice. Becoming conscious and reflective about those choices, and their ethical dimensions, is a central goal of the FYP and FYS.

Working with you so that you become more rhetorically sensitive means that you should be increasingly able to assess the requirements of a particular task and make intentional decisions about which mode or modes of communication and inquiry would be most effective in addressing it. To do so, you must develop specific writing, speaking, research, and technological competencies. To accomplish these goals, the FYP and FYS will present you with assignments that ask you to engage in a process that involves **recognizing** the rhetorical situation, **planning** communication strategies to address the task at hand, **composing and presenting** the message, and then engaging in **critical assessment** of your own work and that of others. The results of that assessment process will allow you to rethink, restructure, and revise your work. We further recognize that this process is not linear and that the effective creation of texts requires that you move back and forth among these four elements of the message creation process. This is why we require that your writing and speaking assignments be “projects” that include preparatory exercises and multiple drafts or rehearsals, all of which ask you to continue to reflect critically on the choices you have made in constructing your message.

This process of increased rhetorical awareness and skill development is at the heart of the philosophical and pedagogical perspectives that inform the work of the FYP and FYS. Because this process both transcends and integrates a variety of specific skills, the program has a philosophical commitment to designing assignments that ask you to integrate various modes of communication in furtherance of the higher-level rhetorical goals in which they are situated.

To ensure that the program is meeting its stated goals, all FYP and FYS syllabi are read by other faculty in the program to determine if they include a variety of assignments that forward the writing, speaking, research, and literacy goals of the program. All FYP and FYS courses have to be approved by faculty in the program before they are offered.

## First-Year Seminars Research Project Learning Goals 2008-09

With respect to research skills specifically, our learning goals for the spring are that students should:

- Be introduced to ways of conducting productive and imaginative inquiry and research in order to become a part of the various conversations surrounding issues.
- Learn to differentiate among the various ways that information is produced and presented, between popular and scholarly journals and books, between mainstream and alternative publications, between primary and secondary sources.
- Learn how to evaluate and synthesize information, whether gathered from traditional sources, e.g., books and journals, or from websites or electronic media.

- Begin to develop the skills of critical analysis in the interpretation and use of information gathered from any source.
- Be introduced to the ethical obligations that scholars have to both responsibly represent their sources and inform their readers of the sources of their information, as well as learning, and being held responsible for the proper use of, the conventions of scholarly citation and attribution.
- Present the results of your research in written, spoken, visual and/or other forms that demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively using the conventions of the mode of communication adopted.