

English 340: Appalachian Literature
Adult ACCESS: First Session
Fall 2005
Mars Hill College

Instructor: Dr. Katherine E. Ledford
Consultation times: before class by appointment
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Reading Appalachia: Nation, Region, and Home

Texts

- Ballard, Sandra L. and Patricia L. Hudson, eds. *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003.
- Dykeman, Wilma. *The Tall Woman*. Newport, Tennessee: Wakestone Books, 1962.
- Ehle, John. *The Road*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998.
- Offutt, Chris. *Kentucky Straight*. New York: Vintage, 1992.
- Still, James. *River of Earth*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978.
- Course pack of local color stories, poetry, and non-fiction essays purchased and accessed online at XanEdu.com (contents bulleted below and instructions for access and purchase follow on separate page)
- Selected poems from *The Mountains Have Come Closer*, by Jim Wayne Miller
 - Selected poems from *Spring Garden: New and Selected Poems*, by Fred Chappell
 - “Good Questions” by Jo Carson, in *Bloodroot: Reflections on Place by Appalachian Women Writers*, edited by Joyce Dyer
 - “Piddlin’” by Ann Shelby, in *Bloodroot: Reflections on Place by Appalachian Women Writers*, edited by Joyce Dyer
 - “The Dancin’ Party at Harrison’s Cove” in *In The Tennessee Mountains*, by Charles Egbert Craddock (Mary Noailles Murfree)
 - “The R Word: What’s So Funny (And Not So Funny) About Redneck Jokes” by Ann Shelby, in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, edited by Dwight B. Billings, GurneyNorman, and Katherine Ledford
 - “Where Did Hillbillies Come From?: Tracing Sources of the Comic Hillbilly Fool in Literature” by Sandra L. Ballard, in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, edited by Dwight B. Billings, GurneyNorman, and Katherine Ledford

Description

This course is a survey of the literature of Southern Appalachia, focusing on regional identity as shaped by and participating in the construction of US national identity. We will read a variety of literary texts including travel writing, local color stories, poetry,

novels, short stories, and non-fiction prose. We'll also examine photographic representations of the Mountain South and its inhabitants, documentaries made about the region and its people, and film portrayals of Southern Appalachia(ns). Along the way we will consider how gender, race, class, and sexuality manifest themselves in Southern mountain identity and how those issues play out on a national, and sometimes international, stage. While this course is not designed as an introduction to Appalachian studies per se, it will be necessary to contextualize the Appalachian literature that we read by becoming familiar with major insights from sociology, history, gender studies, geography, and environmental studies. Therefore, this course is purposefully interdisciplinary, but grounded in the power of the literary text for insight, vision, and voice.

Additionally, English 340 is a course in which you will continue to develop your college-level critical reading and writing skills. To this end, we will discuss and practice strategies for effective argumentation, focusing specifically on those necessary for writing about literary texts

Course objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Read Appalachian literature critically and contextually, using fundamental concepts such as style, diction, character, and plot.
2. Form a thesis about a literary text and argue persuasively for that thesis.
3. Discuss a variety of texts, including short stories, novels, poetry, and non-fiction prose, written about the Southern Appalachian Mountains and its inhabitants.
4. Read and discuss these texts as elements of larger debates about class, gender, race, and sexuality concurrent in the nation, placing representation of Appalachia in that larger context.
5. Discuss basic concepts of regionalism and display knowledge of some of the fundamentals of Appalachian studies
6. Speak knowledgeably about one Appalachian-related topic of the student's choice.
7. Respond thoughtfully and respectfully to differing opinions both in writing and in class discussion.

Course procedures and requirements

Class meetings: Since this class meets in four-hour blocks, and at the end of a long workday, I will incorporate a variety of instruction methods during our sessions. We will have whole-class discussions and small-group activities. I will present material and class members will present short reports. We will view photographs, films, and documentaries. We will read poetry, especially, aloud, and we will practice analytical writing skills in class. By changing to a new activity every thirty minutes, or so, I hope to keep our energy level reasonably high on a Monday night. Four hours is a long time to meet and the success of the class depends to a great extent on the attitude of the participants. I'll do my

part to create an engaging atmosphere. You do your part to be engaged. I ask that each of you attend class regularly and in a timely manner, thoughtfully read the material assigned for that day, and share your thoughts with your classmates and with me respectfully and intelligently. I expect each of you to contribute to discussion at least once every class meeting. A significant percentage of your course grade is class participation. I will assign points in that area based on your contribution to class discussions and your participation in small-group activities. (Simply attending each class or asking “plot summary” questions won’t be rewarded with points for participation. We will all benefit from hearing your thoughtful opinions. If you have difficulty speaking in class, please see me early in the semester so we can determine ways to help you express your opinions in class.)

Attendance sign-in: At the beginning of each class, I will circulate an attendance sheet for each student to sign. If you miss this circulation, it is your responsibility to sign the sheet at the end of class. Otherwise, you will be counted absent for that day.

Essay: You will write one essay this semester about the text(s) we have read that most interests you, in which you develop and defend a thesis about themes, characters, and/or events in the text(s). I will help you make your essay rhetorically effective and conform to college writing standards, the basic elements I will be grading. To aid your successful completion of this assignment, we will discuss and practice methods of reading and writing about literature throughout the semester. Papers must be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, and adhere to MLA format (see handout distributed later). The essay’s length will be 1,500 words (approximately 5-6 pages). **The essay will be due on the day noted in the reading schedule at the beginning of the class period. I will not accept late work.**

Midterm exam: This one-hour exam will test your ability to identify authors, characters, and themes and to discuss issues we have encountered in our readings and class meetings. Before the exam, you will learn how to approach examinations about literature.

Final exam: This one-and-a-half-hour exam will test your ability to write about authors, characters, and themes examined in this course. You will be asked to think about what you have read and discussed in class and then write about it. You will be expected to identify significant terms, concepts, and/or characters, critically analyze authors and their ideas, and write a well-organized essay investigating a major theme of the course.

Additional class: There are nine Monday nights in this short term. Mars Hill College’s academic calendar mandates that we meet for one additional class. In lieu of attempting to schedule a face-to-face class meeting at a time besides Monday night, I am requiring that each of you spend three to four hours at your convenience participating in some activity in the region. You could attend a play, a lecture, a reading, or a concert. You could hike, bike, canoe, raft, fish, or hunt. You could interview an older member of your community about life in the region or spend an afternoon photographing your favorite

place. Almost anything is acceptable, as long as it's related to life in the region, is appropriate for sharing in class, and has been cleared with me in advance. You'll deliver a short talk about your activity in class on Sept 26. Throughout the semester I'll bring specific opportunities (dates of readings, for example) to your attention.

In-class presentation: This is different from the brief talk on your "extra class" activity outlined above. For this presentation you will choose a topic from a list I provide, research that topic, and present a 20 minute report for your classmates. I will circulate the topic list and the presentation schedule early in the short term. The list will include historic events, organizations, concepts, and people of importance to Appalachia.

Reading journal: Your successful completion of this course depends, to a great extent, on your reading of the assigned literary texts. You won't have anything valuable to discuss in class or write about if you haven't read the material assigned for that day. To help you keep on track with your reading schedule and to help you develop ideas for class discussion and writing projects, you will submit a reading journal entry at the beginning of each class. The entry should be typed, double-spaced, and fill one page. Use this space to record your reactions to the text you read, make connections between texts, raise questions for class discussion, and/or contextualize texts in your growing understanding of Appalachia, Appalachian studies, and regionalism. You will submit seven reading journal entries this session. I will drop the lowest grade before I average them.

Evaluation

In order to earn a passing grade for this course, you must satisfactorily complete all major assignments (one paper plus rough draft, two exams, "extra-class" report, and in-class presentation) on time with a cumulative passing average and attend 80% of the class meetings. You must also earn a passing grade for class participation (determined by attendance and participation in discussion, daily written work, and involvement in class activities).

- "Extra-class" report 5%
- In-class presentation 15%
- Reading journal 15%
- Essay 15%
- Midterm exam 15%
- Final exam 20%
- Class participation (discussion, class activities, in-class written work) 15%

Course Policies

1. Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than two class meetings will result in failure of the course.

2. I do not accept late work.

3. Plagiarism is the representation of the ideas or words of another as your own, such as turning in a paper, or portion of a paper, you did not write. Plagiarism will result in a grade of F on the work involved, possible failure of the course, and possible investigation by the college. I am aware of the prevalence of Internet sources that provide student papers, and I monitor the content of those sites.

4. Journal entries must be typed, not hand-written. Your essay must be typed in MLA format (see the *MLA Handbook*, sixth edition, and the handout I will provide in class), and carefully edited. Journal entries and essays shorter than the required length or not in accordance with MLA style will lose points.

5. Students are not allowed to make up missed assignments (including journal entries). This includes activities a student missed by being late for class or leaving early.

6. When absent, it is your responsibility to collect information, notes, handouts, returned journal entries or other class materials that you have missed from other classmates or from me.

7. No essay/journal entry drop-off or pick-up from third parties.

8. During in-class discussions, please exercise courtesy in your interactions with fellow students and with me. While it is often helpful to offer an opposing opinion during discussions, please be considerate of others' feelings.

9. I am always happy to discuss and explain my grading of journal entries, exams, and essays; however, I will only do so after you have had at least twenty-four hours to read through my comments thoroughly. This time will allow you to prepare specific and focused questions for a meeting with me.

I look forward to getting to know each of you in class during this short session. Remember that I am available by appointment before class for individual consultation and extra help. If your schedule conflicts with this time before class, I will be happy to set up an appointment with you at our mutual convenience.

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Reading/Assignment schedule

Aug 8

Introduction to course.

Aug 15 journal entry due; from *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States*, Anne Newport Royall ([Listen Here](#)); “The Dancin’ Party at Harrison’s Cove,” Charles Egbert Craddock (Mary Noailles Murfree) (course pack); “The R Word,” Anne Shelby (course pack); *The Tall Woman*, Wylma Dykeman (through page 158)

Aug 22 journal entry due; finish *The Tall Woman*; *The Road*, John Ehle (through page 101); “Where Did Hillbillies Come From?” Sandy Ballard (course pack);

Aug 29 journal entry due; finish *The Road*; poems in “Turn Your Radio On” section of *The Mountains Have Come Closer*, Jim Wayne Miller (course pack)

Sept 5 Midterm exam; journal entry due; *River of Earth*, James Still

Sept 12 journal entry due; Harriette Arnow selections ([Listen Here](#)); Marilou Awiakta selections ([Listen Here](#)); Jo Carson selections ([Listen Here](#)); “Good Questions,” Jo Carson (course pack); Nikki Giovanni selections ([Listen Here](#)), Anne Shelby selections ([Listen Here](#)); “Piddlin’,” Anne Shelby (course pack); Denise Giardina selections ([Listen Here](#)); Sharyn McCrumb selection ([Listen Here](#)); Lee Smith selection ([Listen Here](#)); Meredith Sue Willis selection ([Listen Here](#))

Sept 19 Essay due; journal entry due; *Kentucky Straight*, Chris Offutt; various poems from “Spring Garden,” Fred Chappell (course pack)

Sept 26; “extra-class” report; journal entry due (make connections between texts we’ve read); review for final exam

Oct 3 Final exam

“Extra-class” Activity Suggestions

- John Ehle’s *The Road* is the 2005 selection for Western North Carolina’s “Together We Read” program. Check out the program’s website (<http://togetherworead.org/index2.htm>) for a schedule of events you could attend.
- A play by Jo Carson, a write that we will read this session, is being performed at The Orchard at Altapass off the Blue Ridge Parkway in Mitchell County. Performances are Sept 4 and 11 at 6:00pm. The cost is \$12.
- Attend a play at Mars Hill College’s Southern Appalachian Repertory Theater. Sean O’Leary’s *Shelton Laurel* is the SART’s 51st world premiere production. SART describes the play this way: “The historic drama explores the massacre of 13 unarmed men and boys by a Confederate militia detail during the Civil War and the repercussions of the tragedy generations later. In 1894, Colonels Keith and Allen, two of those blamed for the killings, meet in a Marshall church with Patsy Shelton, whose husband and two sons were among those killed. On the verge of madness induced by his lifelong guilt, Keith is haunted by ghosts of the dead. As the three confront each other and try to expiate the horrors of that long-ago day, the ghosts infiltrate their thoughts and memories, leading to a moment at which reconciliation might be possible. O’Leary, who has developed a reputation as a taut and exciting historic playwright, has also written *Pound*, about the questionable madness of poet Ezra Pound, and *Rain In The Hollow*, set in WV coal mining country.” Show times for *Shelton Laurel* are 7:30 p.m., August 3-6 and August 11-14, with 2:30 p.m. matinees on August 7, 11 and 15. Tickets are \$23. For more ticket information, call the SART box office at (828) 689-1239. For information about the Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, call (828) 689-1384, or visit www.sarthatre.com.
- Listen to live music. Please choose a show related to traditional Appalachian music, such as bluegrass or gospel. WNCW maintains a listing of live music shows throughout the region at <http://events.publicbroadcasting.net/wncw/events.eventsmain?action=showCategoryListing&newSearch=true&categorySearch=2405>
- Check out postings on community events calendars for ideas. Some resources are: <http://events.publicbroadcasting.net/wncw/events.eventsmain>; <http://www.main.nc.us/>; <http://www.yanceychamber.com/calendar.php>; <http://www.mitchell-county.com/events/index.shtml>; <http://www.madisoncounty-nc.com/info/events.html>
- Keep an eye on regional college and university events. Try these links: <http://www.visitingwriters.appstate.edu/>; <http://www.web.appstate.edu/arts.html>; <http://webcal.lmc.edu/month.php>; <http://www.mhc.edu/>; <http://www.unca.edu/news/events/>

In-class Presentation Topics

You may choose a topic from this list or develop your own, subject to my approval.

- Appalachian Studies Association
- Appalshop (an organization that “works for positive social change by disseminating non-commercial film, radio, theater and music of the region.”)
- Mountain top removal (controversial mining practice)
- Tourism in Appalachia
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Second-home development in WNC
- Appalachia on the Internet
- Shape-note singing
- Appalachian dialect
- Hillbilly stereotype
- Bluegrass music
- Buffalo Creek Disaster (a coal slurry pond collapsed in WV in 1972 and drowned 125 people; survivors struggled to hold the coal company legally responsible)
- West Virginia Mine Wars (early 20th century struggles to unionize the WV coalfields)
- Battle of Blair Mountain (a central event in the WV mine wars)
- A particular writer or performer
- Penland School of Crafts
- Mount Mitchell and the Black Mountains
- Urban Appalachia
- Mountain foods (ramps, etc.)
- Snake handling
- *Sodom Laurel Album* (collection of contemporary photographs of residents of Madison County)
- Christianity in Appalachia (or a particular sect such as the “No-Hellers,” Primitive Baptists, etc.)
- Center for Rural Strategies (particularly their involvement in the *Real Beverly Hillbillies* reality TV program proposal)
- The Hatfield-McCoy feud
- The hillbilly in film
- Images of Appalachian in the 1960s era War on Poverty
- The broad form deed (a contract for mineral rights that allowed coal companies to do anything to landowners’ lands to get to the minerals below; grassroots efforts by citizens in KY got the deed declared unconstitutional in 1987)
- Appalachian out-migration (to Detroit, Cincinnati, mill towns in the South, etc)
- The Blue Ridge Parkway
- Southern Highland Craft Guild
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Toe River Arts Council

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CoursePack Title: English 340

CoursePack ID: 237684

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Format: Digital access with desktop printing

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