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KATERYNA A. R. SCHRAY

Literary Ornithology: Bird-Watching Across Academic Disciplines with Honors Students

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As professors of literature, we have a fairly good chance of engaging our students when we teach Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." True, the text can seem daunting on a first read, but who can resist a moody if not downright creepy ghost story told by the survivor of a nightmarish ordeal to a detained and gradually mesmerized wedding guest? The story has an intriguing psychological component in the progressive isolation of its main narrator, strong theological references, and vivid tactile images. And it has a bird in it, an albatross, the image of which has given rise to the well known expression "an albatross around one's neck." Similarly, John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," a beautiful poem that practically embraces the readers with its lyricism and commandeers them with its precision and elegance, is a relatively easy sell to undergraduates. Both of these poems use a bird to reflect some sort of journey of the mind, and while these works are inviting texts on their own, their appeal is enhanced when the reader knows something about the bird at the center of the verse. This appeal is even stronger in poems and literary periods that do not appear quite as immediately attractive to students, such as the longer Middle English debate poem "The Owl and the Nightingale," an entertaining and spirited argument between two species as to which better serves humanity. Or, to move back a few centuries, the Old English poem "The Phoenix," which students tend to find too dry or "philosophical" (they mean theological), or, to move ahead to a more recent era, Edward Thomas's "The Owl," a poem which remains cryptic to students unfamiliar with its World War I milieu. Even Emily Dickinson's "Poem 1463," almost universally acknowledged as a description of a hummingbird, becomes more appealing when the powerful images are reinforced by scientific observation and biological reality. This reinforcement is what we set out to do in our interdisciplinary team-taught honors seminar at Marshall University, playfully entitled "Literary Ornithology."

COURSE CONTEXT

The scientific consensus is that 9,702 bird species live on our planet, just under one tenth of that number on the North American continent; quite a few of these birds have made their way into our literature and culture, appearing in early texts in both practical and metaphoric capacities. The vast majority of these poems can certainly be appreciated without any further knowledge about the birds, but having that knowledge makes the reading experience all the more satisfying and, for lack of a better word, relevant, for our students. The Marshall University Honors Program provided an ideal opportunity to read poems and stories about birds in the spirit of scientific inquiry and in the context of cultural perceptions; like other programs described in *Honors in Practice*, the Marshall University Honors Program is built on team-taught interdisciplinary seminars. Bird-watching is an educational pastime that lends itself ideally to a multi-disciplinary approach; in addition to learning about the many species of birds in our immediate area (representing seventeen of the twenty-one orders in North America; there are twenty-eight orders world-wide), we were also able to observe how birds function as a barometer of an environment's general health. We then read works of literature describing birds in light of our own experiences and measured their literary portrayals against our scientific observations. We looked for birds in literary texts and cultural icons as well as in the field.

Two poems serve as ideal examples of our approach, Walt Whitman's "The Dalliance of the Eagles" (1880) and, on a more complex level, Richard Wilbur's "The Writer" (1976). Whitman's poem is a flurry of activity, punctuated by present participles (the number of *-ing* words is practically overwhelming). Whitman readers will immediately recognize the familiar features of a Whitman poem, notably the extended lines of blank verse and the absence of a main verb. Literary critics will note the poem's use of alliteration and vivid imagery. However, Whitman's accomplishment becomes even more apparent when the bird activity he describes is taken into account; indeed, "The Dalliance of the Eagles" is a beautifully accurate description of eagle courtship. Prior to the actual mating, eagles engage in a dramatic aerial display, locking talons and plummeting to earth in a stunning free fall, an action that naturalists describe as cartwheeling (Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge). Appealing to the reader's auditory sense, Whitman's repetition of key consonants emphasizes the noisy action of this airborne courtship, with the alliteration of a hard "c" (sound /k/) drawing attention to its magnificently violent nature—"The *clinch-
ing interlocking* claws, a *living, fierce, gyrating* wheel" (l. 4, my emphasis)—while the present participles (there are sixteen of them in the ten-line poem) convey the circular motion of the courting pair "in tumbling turning clustering loops" (l. 6). As the eagles fall toward the ground, Whitman repeats his alliterative force to create "a moment's lull" (l. 7), relying on nasal and liquid phonemes to still the action: "A motionless still balance in the air" (l. 8). While a good close reading will almost certainly take into account Whitman's attention to both phonology and morphology in his crafting of this poem, the work

takes on added appeal when students recognize the close relationship between the words Whitman writes as a poet and the scientific reality of what he describes with those words.

This approach is even more enlightening for Richard Wilbur's beautiful poem "The Writer" (1976), in which a father listens as his daughter writes in her room and ponders the challenges that await her as she grows up. He recalls the day when a starling struggled to find its way out of the house. As with the Whitman poem, a literature teacher will find much to offer students: the poem contains clever similes, comparing the sounds of a typewriter to "a chain hauled over a gunwale" (l. 6), and powerful metaphors, "the stuff/ Of her life is a great cargo, and some of it heavy" (ll. 7–8). The speaker of the poem, however, rejects these poetic devices himself and continues by describing the "dazed starling/ Which was trapped in that very room, two years ago" (ll. 16–17). The starling becomes a tender image of the child leaving home as it batters against the glass before finally "clearing the sill of the world" (l. 30), yet Wilbur could not have picked a hardier bird for his poem. Starlings are notoriously aggressive birds, taking nests from other species and leaving those nests unusable once their young have fledged. Although they can be seen just about anywhere in the United States, they are not native birds. In an effort to bring all of the songbirds mentioned in Shakespeare's works to America, Eugene Scheiffelin brought one hundred starlings from England to New York City in 1890–91 and released them in Central Park. Sixteen pairs survived the first two winters. By 1930, the starling population extended to the Mississippi River, by 1940 past the Rocky Mountains, and by 1970 well into Alaska (Cabe). While Wilbur's poem indicates a father's natural concern for his daughter, the central image of the poem—a small bird that takes on larger species and quickly dominates a continent—can hardly be seen as fragile.

SETTING UP THE SEMESTER

We have taught "Literary Ornithology" twice now, both times during the fall semester. To accommodate field trips and other class activities, we met once a week for two and a half hours; in order to maintain a sense of the seminar during the week, both faculty and students posted reflections, announcements, and questions to an email list established specifically for this class. In addition to staying in contact throughout the week, this email list quickly became an opportunity for ongoing dialogue, as will be demonstrated below.

Our first two seminar meetings were devoted to setting up the semester's work. To begin building a sense of community, we asked students to free-write about and then share with the class their most interesting bird encounters (these ranged from tender memories of watching bluebirds fledge to entertaining accounts of being attacked by angry geese). We showed our students a fifty-slide PowerPoint presentation which they jokingly dubbed an "Avian I. Q. Test" (Appendix A): the first ten slides showed birds that most Americans east of the Rocky Mountains can see almost daily; slides 11–17 showed birds that most

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people recognize; slides 18–40 showed birds we expected to see on our three field visits; slides 41–50 showed birds in popular culture and national marketing campaigns. The slides provided ample opportunity to point out the characteristics of birds most useful in identification (eye bars, beak shape, etc.). To round out the genres, we also asked students to identify the source of two literary passages that draw heavily on bird references, one from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the other from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. With this introduction, the students' first challenge was to select a field guide and learn how to wield binoculars, neither of which is an easy task.

Before beginning our field visits, which would keep us out of the classroom for three weeks, we previewed the first two major assignments for the seminar (described below) and, to give the course a sense of literary depth, discussed three works: Ovid's "Story of Phoebus and Coronis," Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Manciple's Tale," and Robert Olen Butler's "Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot." The first two works are clearly related: Chaucer retells Ovid's cautionary tale of a talking crow that reveals a woman's infidelity to her husband who, in a fit of jealousy, kills her. On the surface, Butler's modern short story, the title of which provides a good summary, appears to have little in common with these two canonical works, but, in the context of our honors seminar, it soon became apparent that all three works address the complexity of cross-cultural and cross-gender communication.

FIELD TRIPS: LOGISTICS AND REACTIONS

"Literary Ornithology" was about bird-watching in the broadest sense of the term. As expected, we took our students on bird-watching expeditions and visited three natural sites within easy driving distance from our campus: an urban park, a man-made lake, and a wetlands mitigation project. These sites were selected to reflect a modest but manageable range of natural habitats, and the field trips were scheduled at the beginning of the semester to catch the last of the migrations.

The first field visit was to Ritter Park, a few miles from campus; this popular urban park runs the length of the southwest section of Huntington, West Virginia, bordered by houses on the north side and a hill on the south side with Four Pole Creek running east to west. Despite the constant drizzle on this field trip during both semesters, our students' reactions were positive and set the tone for the grander adventures to come. One student wrote about the validating experience of correctly identifying a bird:

There was a bit of excitement for me at the beginning of the trip because I first noticed the Nuthatch that was hopping down the side of the tree. I remembered what Professor Van Kirk had just said in the classroom about the Nuthatch being the only bird to go headfirst down a tree. So when I saw a bird doing exactly that, I thought that it might be one, and Professor Van Kirk confirmed my guess.

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Both semesters only one student in a class of fifteen came to the class with any experience (or, for that matter, interest) in bird-watching. This next reflection typifies the experience of a new birder:

Before this class started I had no experience watching birds and did not care about it, really. I took this class not realizing that we would actually be watching birds, so when we were told we would be, I was surprised. At first I did not like the idea because I have no idea what I am doing, but after watching at our campus spot and going to Ritter Park I am really growing to like it. I find myself noticing birds flying around no matter where I am. I listen more closely when I hear them. This class already has opened my eyes to something I had never considered before.

The highly interactive nature of the class, which required students to huddle together under a picnic shelter at one point, resulted in a supportive learning environment where the students easily shared their concerns about the course. One student posted this first reflection (note the salutation after only the third class meeting), the last sentence of which was echoed by everyone in the seminar:

Dear friends, I must admit that tramping around in the rain is not usually my cup of tea, but I did enjoy our experience in the park. . . . I'm still feeling pretty unsure of my ability to identify anything that is not common, but my abilities are getting better with practice. I am definitely looking forward to our next field visit.

The second field trip was to Beech Fork Lake, where we were able to spot birds from two large pontoon boats. Beech Fork Lake is a man-made lake approximately ten miles from campus. During both semesters, some good-natured rivalry developed between the two boats, which ranged from racing to the observation destinations to competing for the coveted title of "party barge." Beech Fork Lake was perhaps our most memorable trip during our first run of this seminar because we were able to observe a Bald Eagle. As we were leaving the marina, boaters coming ashore claimed to have seen a Bald Eagle an hour earlier. Their report raised expectations but still sounded too good to be true. It wasn't, and most of us stood breathless as we watched a Bald Eagle circle overhead for the better part of fifteen minutes. In the words of one student,

Out of all of the species that we were able to see, the one that had the most impact on me was the Bald Eagle. All of my life I had heard about how rare they were and I had understood that they were only really found in places like Alaska or other extreme wildernesses . . . But then, there it was, just as majestic as I had imagined. I could not take my eyes off him and I found myself following his flight until he was out of sight. It was definitely an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life.

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Our students' comments moved from purely descriptive to more contemplative:

Who would have thought that seeing a single bird could cause such great joy? . . . The Bald Eagle looked every bit the striking national symbol it is, with its brilliant white head and tail flanking its darker brown body. As I watched it soar through the air, I was overwhelmed by the majesty and grace with which it moved. Yet, this was no pretty-boy bird. The Bald Eagle's wings flapped with immense power and determination . . . I understood, as I watched the Bald Eagle, why it had been chosen as our national bird. It exhibited many qualities that one would hope our nation exhibits.

All of the students posted their reactions to this unexpected sighting in exuberant terms:

I have talked on and on about our Beech Fork trip to everyone I meet, chattering away like a giddy five-year-old . . . But I knew the trip merited such excitement when I even impressed my cool, disinterested fifteen-year-old brother.

On this trip, we also got prolonged looks at a Belted Kingfisher and a Great Blue Heron (which many of our students claimed looked prehistoric), and spotted Goldfinches, Wood Ducks, Killdeer, and Turkey Vultures. As we had hoped, our students' written reflections became more specific and substantial. One student described our sighting of the Belted Kingfisher in colorful prose:

We pulled a little closer to his stately perch in the pontoon boat, and he cockily stood his ground, just daring us to frighten him away . . . With his bright blue crown slipped over his eyes, he looks at the world in style. He wore his royal blue cape jauntily fastened under a snowy white muff . . . He finally did fly away, but only because he was good and ready.

By this second field trip, the weekly email reflections made it clear that the class activities were generating a supportive academic environment and the students were building good working relationships; this would become important later in the semester as they began their work on group presentations. Emails sent to the list, while generally substantial in content, good-naturedly lamented the weather or terrain or mosquitoes and often opened with such friendly salutations as "Hola mi amigos" and "Hey gang" and ended with such sentiments as "Have a Great Week."

Our third trip was to Green Bottom, a wetlands remediation project of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, located along the Ohio River about twenty miles east of Huntington. On this trip, we observed an American Kestrel, a Red-Tailed Hawk, Double-Crested Cormorants, Catbirds, Red-Winged Blackbirds, and several species of woodpeckers. The most impressive bird of this field visit during our first run of the seminar was an Osprey that flew in from the distance and

hovered over the swamp for several minutes before leaving the area. On that same trip, we also observed a Great Blue Heron:

One of the most exciting sightings for me was witnessing a Great Blue Heron's sudden flight in front of us when we surprised it on the muddiest part of the walk—the part when I started believing that the professors' wading boots were actually necessary instead of just another part of their bird watchers' fashion ensemble. We were straining our eyes and focusing our binoculars on a woodpecker that instantly became tiny when the heron appeared. This trip especially excited me because I had the opportunity to add the Osprey to my life list . . . I could feel power emanating from the bird as it masterfully flew over the water, and I almost pitied the first fish it spotted, though I would have been happy to see it catch one.

At one point on the Green Bottom trip it became clear that a field we had to cross was still soggy from a recent hurricane's remnant-induced flood, and we gave our students the option of circling back to the starting point or continuing on the muddy trail. The group split up fairly evenly and we were surprised by which of our students chose the more arduous route. One of these students reflected on her experience:

I did not have as much enthusiasm for yesterday's trip as for the last, after being told that it was necessary to wear clothes and shoes we didn't care about. Little red flags started to shoot up, as I am not a real outdoorsy sort of person. I figured if I was going to get that dirty, it should at least be worth it. Had someone told me that I would be one of the few that went through all the mud and water, I never would have believed it. Not for just a few birds! But I did, and it was great! I'll admit I was afraid of falling, and the first oozing slime that entered my shoe definitely elicited a sharp cry of horror. That's what made it great, though. I was totally out of my element, but I was seeing all kinds of interesting birds . . . It's really silly, but I left my mud-caked sneakers out on my stoop last night just so everyone could see.

By this final excursion, students were pointing out birds from the road; one student wrote in her reflection:

Of course on the way home, our minds were still on what we had just been doing. Calls of 'There's a bird,' 'A flock just flew by,' and 'Canada geese to your right' informed the rest of the car of what we were seeing.

We were especially pleased with the immediate rewards of the field visits, reflected in such comments as "I'm sorry that our field trips have ended—it was so nice to be out of the traditional classroom and doing something new and interesting"; "Even a bad [rainy] day in the field beats an ordinary day in the

classroom”; “not only do we have the added bonus of seeing birds that live in more rural areas, but we also have a chance of falling into a lake! That’s always a good time in my book”; and “This class has helped me to become more observant of the things around me that I take for granted.” Because of the field trips, a once-a-week class made the most sense, but we were concerned about waiting a week between classes; posting email reflections on each field trip (rather than turning in weekly essays to the professors) maintained an engaging dialogue throughout the week.

BIRD WATCHING IN A LITERARY AND CULTURAL SENSE

Our field adventures translated well back into the classroom; for one thing, we had a bonded group of students who had trekked through mud and rain together now reading poems and stories about birds. In their weekly posts, some of our students commented on the healthy group dynamics:

Ok, yeah, it can’t all be field visits and boating, but the experiences we had in the field and those relationships we formed with others will carry over into the classroom and help stimulate our thoughts there.

The tangible field experiences became a fitting preparation for the rest of the course as we invited our students to go bird-watching in the texts and cultural artifacts of several nations and many different traditions, beginning with classical literature and ending with modern popular culture(s).

Students completed five major assignments over the course of the semester, beginning with a scientific consideration of birds and then moving to literature, art, music, film, and popular culture, finishing up the semester with a creative writing assignment. With class time devoted to field visits, students were working outside of class on their first writing assignment: a field study of the population, habitat, and habits of a selected bird species on Marshall University’s campus. Working in small groups, students selected a site on campus, worked individually to obtain detailed information about a bird species of their choosing through regular observation, and then reconciled their findings with published articles in professional scientific journals. In addition to posting their field trip reflections, students also used our email list to alert one another to bird sightings on campus relevant to our field studies:

By the way, for those having cardinal problems: I spotted a young male this morning in the bush on the corner of the science building and Morrow (near 3rd Avenue). I saw him about a week and a half ago with an adult male near the other corner of the science building . . . I suppose he may be a she, but he’s small and there’s a lot of red on him (as if he’s changing from being a brown youngster to an adult male). I heard him before I saw him—he has a short, high chirp. Hope anyone looking for him is able to find him, he seems to be a resident.

The second assignment was a class presentation with a partner, a literary analysis of a work or works about birds selected from our anthology, *Birds in the Hand* (2004); this assignment followed several weeks of class discussion on well known poems and stories about birds, including Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron." To offer an example, one team explored how eagles are portrayed in Native American poetry, focusing on works by Sherman Alexie and Joy Harjo. The third assignment, also a team presentation, was an analysis of birds in either religion or mythology, the arts (music, painting, sculpture), or popular culture (marketing, film, television); our students' choices varied widely, from bird characters in Looney Tunes cartoons to the Phoenix in the *Harry Potter* stories and *X-Men* films, and pigeon symbolism in the 1954 film *On the Waterfront*. For these presentations, students were asked to select relevant literary/artistic/cultural artifacts that build upon a bird species and present those artifacts to the class, analyze the portrayal of the species, assess its scientific accuracy, examine the authors' emphases, explore the reasons for those emphases, and make interesting connections to our course content. The fourth assignment was poetry or creative prose drawing inspiration from birds or the observation of birds; for this assignment, many of our students revisited their empirical notes from our field experiences for material.

Our fifth assignment served as a type of capstone project for the course and provided the substance for our last class meeting: we asked our students to each compile an anthology of any ten items related to a bird species of their choosing and to introduce the collection with a well-written preface. This assignment allowed students the opportunity to select any bird at all (the first part of the semester was limited to birds we could actually observe in the wild while the reading assignments limited the species our students could choose from for their analyses). Our students did not disappoint us; notable choices included the Emperor Penguin, Brown Pelican, Flamingo, Japanese Crane, Mandarin Duck, Wild Turkey, Macaw, Great Horned Owl, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Kookaburra, and Canary. The assignment also asked our students to combine the various approaches to "literary ornithology" in one assignment (systematic study, literary and cultural analysis, and creative thinking); the most interesting anthologies contained scientific articles as well as poems, children's books, cartoons, reproductions of paintings, song lyrics, advertisements, and in one case origami.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The goal of "Literary Ornithology" was to approach one interesting and easily accessible subject from a number of diverse academic perspectives and learning styles. Like all honors courses at Marshall, our seminar introduced students to new materials and new experiences, offering a greater awareness of and appreciation for the connections between academic disciplines, in this case the natural sciences and the humanities. We were also able to explore the mechanics of different genres and the creative impulses of different fields

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(literature, film, art, marketing). This process, in turn, enabled us to demonstrate easily how writing differs from one academic discipline to another and how writing successfully about the same material differs dramatically from audience to audience.

In addition to receiving repeated coverage in Marshall University's *Honors Newsletter*, the course attracted the attention of journalist Scott Shalaway, who described the students' excitement for the seminar in his syndicated newspaper column "The Wild Side." The discussion list for the more recent semester is still active, with occasional enthusiastic reports of a new sighting or bird-watching experience. The success of the course was due first and foremost to our students, who exceeded our expectations in their class work, and next to the benefits of a team-taught seminar that by its nature invites students to work productively in small groups and to assume leadership roles. The field experiences at the beginning of the semester put all of us, in a very real sense, on the same playing field; after all, any one of us—student or teacher—could be the first to spot a bird out in the field. The most successful moments of our seminar were those when the lines between students and teachers were naturally blurred as we helped one another focus binoculars, shared rain gear, and took turns driving the pontoon boats. These shared experiences resonated beautifully in the classroom as we continued to work together to make exciting discoveries about birds in our texts and cultural artifacts.

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APPENDIX A

AVIAN I.Q. POWERPOINT SLIDE SHOW

I. Common Birds We See Every Day

Chances are that you will recognize all of these—they are listed in order of expected familiarity, from the most recognized to the least.

→ *Keep track of how many you recognize.*

- 1 Rock Dove (Pigeon)
- 2 American Robin
- 3 House Sparrow
- 4 European Starling
- 5 Mourning Dove
- 6 Cardinal
- 7 Blue Jay
- 8 American Crow
- 9 Mallard
- 10 Canada Goose

→ *How did we do? Did anyone get all 10? Which species were unfamiliar?*

II. Birds Most of Us Recognize

→ *I'll bet all of you can identify the birds pictured in these slides.*

- 11 Mockingbird
- 12 Eastern Bluebird
- 13 Ruby-Throated Hummingbird
- 14 Turkey Vulture
- 15 American Bald Eagle
- 16 American White Pelican
- 17 Brown Pelican

III. Birds We are Likely to See in the Coming Weeks

→ *See if you can identify any of these slides:*

[likely at Ritter Park/Four Pole Creek]

- 18 Nuthatch
- 19 Black-Capped Chickadee
- 20 Tufted Titmouse
- 21 Catbird
- 22 Common Grackle
- 23 Boat-Tailed Grackle
- 24 Downy Woodpecker
- 25 Red-bellied Woodpecker
- 26 Pileated Woodpecker
- 27 Northern Flicker

- 28 House Finch
- 29 Purple Finch

[[likely at Beech Fork]

- 30 Goldfinch
- 31 Belted Kingfisher
- 32 American Coot
- 33 Great Blue Heron
- 34 Osprey

[[likely at Green Bottom]

- 35 Barn Swallow
- 36 Red-winged Blackbird
- 37 Killdeer
- 39 Red-Tailed Hawk
- 40 American Kestrel

IV. Birds in Popular Culture

→ *Chances are that you will easily recognize the birds on these slides:*

- 41 Big Bird (Sesame Street)
- 42 Donald Duck (Disney)
- 43 Daffy Duck (Warner Brothers)
- 44 Tweety Bird
- 45 Foghorn Leghorn
- 46 Road Runner
- 47 Penguin from Batman

V. Birds in Marketing Campaigns

→ *And I'm certain you can tell me who these characters are:*

- 48 Sonny (Cocoa Puffs/General Mills)
- 49 Toucan Sam (Fruit Loops/Kelloggs)
- 50 Aflac Duck

APPENDIX B

SYLLABUS FOR HONORS 482: LITERARY ORNITHOLOGY

Week 1

Intro to course

Basic bird topography-terminology

Testing your "Avian IQ"

Walt Whitman's "The Dalliance of the Eagles"

Richard Wilbur's "The Writer"

Overview of assignments

Selecting a field guide: Photos vs. Drawings

→ *In-class writing: What is your most interesting experience with birds? (It can be practical, literary, cinematographic, etc.)*

Week 2

From the medieval to the modern: enduring themes in bird stories

→ *Read for today:*

Chaucer's "The Manciple's Tale" (handout)

Robert Olen Butler's "Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot" (anthology)

Discussion of field guide choices

Introduction to Field Study Project

Binocular training: Cardinals vs. Tanagers

Bird-watching around campus

→ *Due today: a one-page explanation of why you chose the field guide you've chosen.*

(Sign up for presentations this week by e-mail.

Week 3

Field Visit—Ritter Park: Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Chickadees

The basics of a city park habitat

→ *Read for today:*

Emily Dickinson "Poem 1463" (handout)

Paul Hamilton Payne's "The Mocking-Bird" (handout)

"The Three Ravens" (popular ballad) (handout)

"The Twa Corbies" (popular ballad) (handout)

→ *Meet behind Corbly Hall at 4 p.m.; be at North Blvd. & 2nd Street by 4:20 p.m.; briefly discuss poems around 5:40 (meet at bridge at North Blvd. & 2nd Street); leave for campus at 6 p.m.*

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First official day of Campus Field Study—Wednesday, Sept. 6

→ *Due today: Site description for Campus Field Study.*

→ *By Friday, Sept. 8, email your one-page reflection on the field visit to our class list.*

Week 4

Field Visit—Beech Fork Lake: Herons, Ducks, Vultures
The features of a public recreation area habitat

→ *Read for today:*

Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron" (handout)

William Cullen Bryant's "To a Waterfowl" (handout)

→ Meet behind Corbly Hall at 4 p.m.; be at Beech Fork Marina by 4:20 p.m.; pontoon boats depart at 4:30 p.m.; pull boats alongside and discuss texts at second birding site; back on shore by 6 p.m.

→ *By Friday, Sept. 15, e-mail your one-page reflection on the field visit to our class list.*

Week 5

Field Visit—Green Bottom Wetlands: Swallows, Blackbirds, Hawks
The features of a wetlands mitigation habitat

→ *Read for today:*

Robert Penn Warren's "Evening Hawk"

Elizabeth Bishop's "Sandpiper"

→ Meet behind Corbly Hall at 4 p.m.; be at Green Bottom by 4:30, general orientation to area; explore hidden banks by canoe in groups of four; meet at observation deck to discuss texts and share experiences at 5:40; leave for campus at 6 p.m.

Last day of Campus Field Study—Wednesday, Sept. 20

→ *By Friday, Sept. 22, email your one-page reflection on the field visit to our class list.*

Week 6

The Middle Ages: Birds as reflections of faith

→ *Read for today:*

"The Phoenix" (Old English, transl.) (handout)

Sections of "The Owl and the Nighthale" (Middle English, transl.) (handout)

Catch up discussing reading assignments from field visit days: we will likely devote some time to Jewett's "A White Heron" today.

LITERARY ORNITHOLOGY

Due today: draft of Campus Field Study
Draft workshop for Campus Field Study
Creative Writing exercise (in class)

Week 7

Romanticism: Birds and journeys of the mind

→ *Read for today:*

Samuel T. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (handout)

"The Nightingale" (handout)

John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" (handout)

Percy B. Shelley's "To a Skylark" (handout)

Due today: Campus Field Study

Share Field Study findings with the class, draw general conclusions

Creative Writing exercise (in class)

Week 8

Class Presentations on Literature

Birds in Pre-Modernist poems

→ *Read for today:*

Gerard Manley Hopkins' "The Windhover"

"The Caged Skylark"

"The Sea and the Skylark"

Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush"

Edward Thomas' "The Owl"

and texts selected by classmates for their presentations

Week 9

Class Presentations on Literature (con't)

Birds in 20th century poetry

→ *Read for today:*

W. B. Yeats' "The Wild Swans at Coole"

"Leda and the Swan"

Robert Frost's "The Ovenbird"

Eamon Grennan's "On a Cape May Warbler Who Flew Against My Window"

and texts selected by classmates for their presentations

Week 10

→ *Read for today:*

Howard Norman's *The Bird Artist*

Discuss Norman's novel

Creative Writing exercise (in class)

Week 11

Music and Art Presentations

Creative Writing exercise (in class)

Week 12

Popular Culture Presentations

Creative Writing exercise (in class)

Week 13

Creative Writing Workshop

Week 14

Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

Creative Writing Due

Poetry/Fiction Reading

Week 16

Anthology Due

Anthology roundtable

Course wrap-up

Evaluations

