

English 2316. Literature and the Environment.

Dr. Terrell Dixon.

This section of Literature and the Environment looks at how we humans respond to the natural environment in three distinct settings. We begin on familiar ground: Houston parks and open space. (This segment will require some field study at a Houston place of your choice). The text for this third of the course is City Wilds: Stories and Essays about Urban Nature , ed. Terrell F. Dixon.

From busy, urban Houston, we move to the best-seller book and movie, Into the Wild, by John Krakauer. This story—which some of you will already know—features a recent college honors graduate from Emory Christopher McCandless. He gives away his trust fund, destroys his credit cards, travels the country, and then goes to live on his own—hunting for his own food—in the wilds of Alaska. The book and the movie are different, but both are extremely popular and offer insights into how we Americans view the wild.

The third portion of the class will examine America's most contentious wilderness battle, the long and embittered and ongoing fight for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This far northern place, often called America's "last great wilderness," is also believed to be rich in oil. For over half a century, the country has fought over its future. Environmentalists treasure the Porcupine Caribou herd; others emphasize the nation's need for oil. The battle for this place offers fascinating insights into how we Americans (and Houstonians especially) see the natural world. The text for this section of this course will take shape from a variety of selected reading assignments from the internet.

Course texts include:

City Wilds, ed. Terrell F. Dixon

Into the Wild, Jon Krakauer

Internet sources on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Writing Assignments: In addition to some smaller writing assignments as we proceed, there will be three papers of approximately 1,000 plus words each.