

Creative Nature Essay

Write a 4-5 page paper (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point font size) that creatively engages and explores your relationship with the natural world. While this should be inspired and informed by our various readings throughout this semester -- whichever ones speak to you the most -- you have a lot of freedom here to write a personal/autobiographical essay; tell a story (whether real or fictional) about the past, present, or future; and incorporate images (if you wish). Whatever form your essay takes, you should quote from and react to at least two of the texts we've read this semester.

Due Dates: writing workshop draft by Wed 6/28 (worth 5 pts); final revised draft by Fri 7/7 (30 pts).

Requirements:

- Most important: your work must be your own. Start from your own experiences, feelings, observations, etc., and build upon those for your essay or story. You may be inspired by other writers, and even refer to them (properly, and with an APA-style reference list at the end), but all of your writing should be your own, except for direct quotations from actual sources (our CoN readings) that are clearly documented as such. **Do not use a chatbot, grammar "correction" service, or any other AI tool to generate or rewrite text, even in the drafting stage!**
- Demonstrate something you've learned from this course, whether from our readings, discussions, nature outings, etc.
- Integrate and discuss at least two of our assigned course readings into your discussion, and document all sources in APA format.
- If you incorporate images, make sure you give each of them a title and a source. If you took the photos, give yourself credit. Images do not count toward the page length minimum.

Writing Tips:

- Think about the writing techniques used by our 101 authors we've read this semester. Emulate their best qualities. The Center for Humans and Nature's [Stories and Ideas website](#) is a great example of the various ways one might approach this kind of creative writing (in that case, writing that's focused on the broad topic of "urban nature"). The Roosevelt [Writing Urban Nature](#) project contains examples from real live RU students!
- Reflect on the nature outings you took during weeks 2-4, and consider expanding your writing on that. Or revisit one or more of those spot once more. Or head out on a new adventure to a different place, making observations, taking photos, paying attention to the late spring / early summer weather, wildlife, and fellow humans.
- Don't just mention your chosen required readings in a cursory way. Engage them. Delve into one of more of the points or examples they raise.
- Be detailed! Include as much concrete and sensory-appealing information as you can. It's almost impossible to be too detailed in your writing, especially when it's creative.
- Take chances. There is no strict formula to follow here, and I'm not looking for one kind of thing in particular. Stretch yourself as a writer!

- Have someone else read your first draft when it's finished, a reader whose viewpoint you trust. What do they like? (Build on that.) What don't they get? (Reconsider and rewrite that.) We will have an online writing workshop during Wk5 of the class, so you can get detailed feedback before submitting your final draft.

Referring to other Texts:

Making skillful and clear references to primary texts in our analytic writing is not something we're just born knowing how to do. Like playing a musical instrument, or hitting a baseball, or making a speech, it's a craft that takes practice to do well. Much of your writing work this semester will focus on developing this critically important skill, which is the foundation of all the humanities (the study of the artistic and cultural products of humanity through time).

Such textual references mainly take two forms: paraphrasing an idea or image or story from the book, as in "Smith argues that conservation is an essential . . . "; or quoting a particular passage word for word. In either case, to provide support for your ideas about the text, you need to make reference to it and then discuss that passage -- by analyzing what's going on there and interpreting what it means in and of itself . . . or in relation to the whole. By making these specific references to key passages in the text, you ground your analysis in a "close reading" of the work, rather than simply make broad generalizations about it.

Resources:

- Use [APA](#) format for your in-text (parenthetical) citations and References list.
- Check out this resource on [quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing](#).
- [Using and Documenting Sources](#) is a resource on my faculty website that introduces students to techniques for using and citing sources. Lots of useful tips and examples here, as well as information on using sources ethically (i.e., avoiding plagiarism).
- [Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students](#) provides a broad overview of the ethical guidelines for writing research papers, a full definition of plagiarism, and related Roosevelt University policies. A good thing to print out and review carefully! I hold all students to these ethical/academic standards as well as to the policies set out in the Assignments page of our SUST 101 syllabus.

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