

Northwest Coastal Stories

CHID 480D, Fall 2013
MW 2:30-4:20, MEB 250

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/847201>

Instructor

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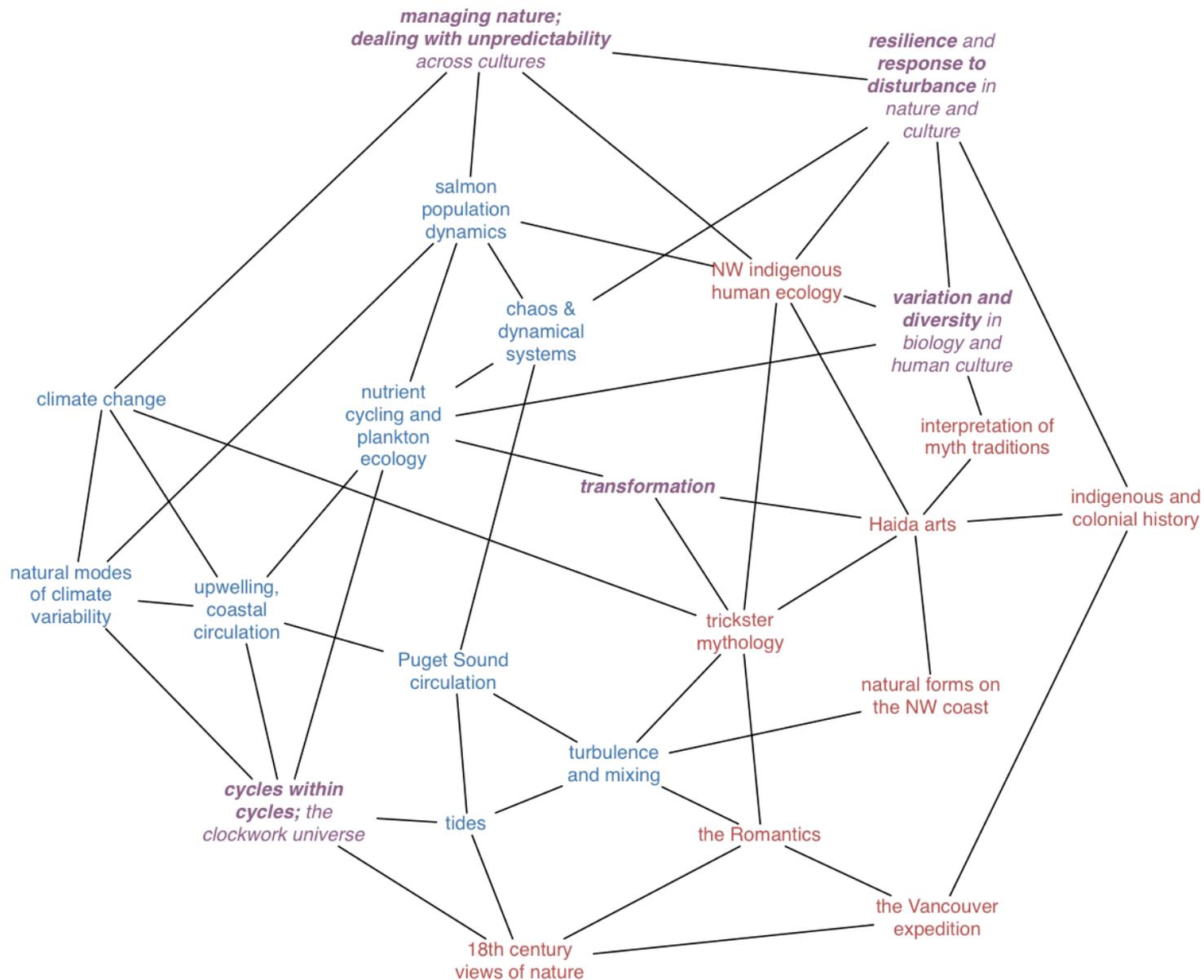
office: Wallace Hall 147 (ACC on campus maps; second floor)

office hours: by appointment. Don't be shy!

Overview

This course explores the human and natural history of Pacific Northwest coastal waters. The format will be highly decentralized—more like a set of interlocking independent studies than a traditional course, with lots of room for students to follow their own interests in their reading, writing, and interaction. The purpose of the course is to help students get better at *exploring with intention*.

Two remarkable texts provided the starting point for this course: Jonathan Raban's travelogue *Passage to Juneau*, and Robert Bringhurst's translation of and commentary on classical Haida mythology, *A Story as Sharp as a Knife*. These texts, and the pathways they open onto, span chaos theory and the circulation of Puget Sound; coastal ecology and Northwest First Nations art; trickster figures and climate change; the Vancouver expedition and the Romantic Sublime. One unifying theme is the question of how we react (in science, in literary criticism, in life) when we reach the limits of our knowledge and control. How do we, and how did the indigenous cultures on this coast, deal with natural unpredictability and all the dangers that result—from navigating a turbulent channel to managing a salmon fishery?



In-class activities: a starter list

Check-in

We'll do this every class, going around the room with a simple prompt, e.g.

“what I did last week”

“what I'd like to do in class today”

“what I'm wondering about”

“a book/article/poem I want people to get excited about and read with me”

Professor's choice

About 1/4 of the time, I'll tell you what to read and do. Read and do it. Other than that....

Book club

Get a few folks together and coordinate your reading for a few weeks (or shorter or longer). Use class time to discuss. Decide how much of the discussion it's useful to write down, either as you go or at the end. Decide if you want to elect a moderator.

Study group

Like the book club, but instead of duplicating reading effort, delegate. Pick a few texts you're all interested in, and have each person pick one to read carefully and teach/report on to the others. Works best if everyone at least skims everything. You could break up the chapters of a long book this way.

Speed dating

Quick, what are you working on? Do we have common ground we could work on together?

Writers' workshop

Read each others' drafts and give feedback. Or, read a bit of your recent writing aloud and get instant feedback.

Symposium, a.k.a. This American Life

This week we choose a theme, and invite everyone to bring a variety of stories on that theme.

Annotated bibliography

Over the quarter we should assemble a common list of things we've read, or simply that sound interesting. Sources should be listed with a few lines of description and maybe some hashtags (keywords), so that your entries are usable by classmates in search of something to read. This bibliography will need maintenance and editing—help out.

Requirements

I retain the right to add more structure at the halfway point, but I'd rather not.

1) **Put in at least 10 hours of effort per week, class time included.**

2) Before class: Check the online calendar.

Prepare a short response to the day's check-in prompt, if one is specified.

When reading is assigned (about 1/4 of the time), read it—and then reread it, until you have questions.

3) In class: Show up, and use the time well.

Don't be passive: have opinions and preferences, suggest activities and directions.

4) At least four **in-person conferences** with Neil over the quarter.

All of my feedback will be by voice, not written or via grades.

Written assignments:

5) **Keep a log of what you read and think about.** Update it at least weekly. 1–10 pages per week: you decide how detailed you want it to be. More is not necessarily better.

Three format options: a regular document that lives on the course website
 a discussion board thread on the course website
 a Tumblr or other external blog, linked from the course website

6) Write a **letter to your super-busy November self** (due 10/9), laying out your ideas and intentions for the quarter.

– What ideas or skills do you want to work on? What are some questions in your mind now that you might lose track of later?

– What kind of effort or structure do you need to commit to make an intellectual exploration feel satisfying in retrospect? Put it down on paper now to help yourself keep it in mind when the quarter gets busy later.

7) Write a **final letter to your ten-years-from-now self** as a summing up (due 12/4).

– What do you want to hang onto from what you did this quarter?

Grading

Effort, self-graded. That's it. Don't sweat it, just put in good-faith effort and do the required stuff above. Here's a scale to follow:

2.0 = major chunks missing

3.0 = barely adequate

3.8 = excellent

4.0 = personal best

What counts as effort? Reading, writing, talking, thinking, listening, experimenting, interviewing, building, helping. Helping is especially good. So is going outside of your comfort zone.

If you want NW credit, then at least 1/3 of your work should be centrally concerned with science or the non-human world. If you want W credit, then write at least 10 pages over the quarter that get revised in depth.

Course calendar so far

	<p>W 9/25 intro speed dating</p>
<p>M 9/30 read for class: Raban, "Sailing into the Sublime" check-in: a question prompted by the reading</p>	<p>W 10/2 check-in: a book or article you're excited about that you'd like to get some classmates to read with you lecture: A tour of the ocean <i>coming up: conference 1 with Neil, either 10/4, 10/8, or by appointment.</i></p>
<p>M 10/7 read for class: Bringhurst, A Story as Sharp as a Knife, ch. 1, "Goose Food" and ch. 3 excerpt lecture and discussion: transformation and instability in mythology and ecology</p>	<p>W 10/9 first letter to self due (either post or email to Neil) check-in: what have you been reading? speed dating, round 2. Come with ideas for discussion/reading groups. Everyone should leave class with a specific plan for at least the next two weeks (in addition to your big-picture plan for the quarter).</p>
<p>M 10/14 no class—meet on your own</p>	<p>W 10/16 no class—meet on your own</p>
<p>M 10/21 read for class: Snyder, "The Incredible Survival of Coyote"; Bringhurst, A Story as Sharp as a Knife ch. 11, 13, 14 lecture and discussion: trickster mythology</p>	<p>W 10/23 discussion: trickster ecology, trickster anthropology, ... <i>coming up: conference 2 with Neil, either 10/25, 10/29, or by appointment.</i></p>
<p>M 10/28 read for class: *** lecture and discussion: potlatch economics</p>	<p>W 10/30</p>
<p>M 11/4</p>	<p>W 11/6</p>
<p>M 11/11 no class—Veteran's Day</p>	<p>W 11/13 <i>coming up: conference 3 with Neil, either 11/15, 11/19, or by appointment.</i></p>
<p>M 11/18 symposium: perspectives on climate change</p>	<p>W 11/20</p>
<p>M 11/25</p>	<p>W 11/27</p>
<p>M 12/2 final presentations (format TBD)</p>	<p>W 12/4 final presentations (format TBD) <i>coming up: conference 4 with Neil, either 12/6, 12/12, or by appointment.</i> final letter to self due</p>