In this class we will examine post-1900 texts written predominantly by U.S. writers that explore interactions between humans and nature, including nonhuman animals. Texts will include essays, novels, articles, film, and excerpted chapters from academic works.

We find ourselves in a time of multiple climate crises, questioning how we got here and how to proceed. Part of what we hear, again and again, is that “we” have “lost” a “connection” with “nature.” This class attempts to cleanly pull apart the messy tendrils of who, exactly, “we” are and what we’ve “lost” in our ties to “nature.” In readings by authors of fiction, marine ecologists, public intellectuals, social scientists, and more, we will study how we came to think of ourselves (Homo sapiens) as different from other animals and how that influences our relationship to environmental forces. Words like “resource,” “human being,” “conservation,” “animal,” “ecology,” and “protection” will shift in meaning and weight as narratives of domination and difference unfold. A central question of the class is who and what is anthropos in the time of the Anthropocene?

This course welcomes students of all majors to collaboratively explore big questions about animals and the environment through the lens of literature. You can expect to read work by Elizabeth Kolbert, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Willa Cather, J.M. Coetzee, Rachel Carson, John Steinbeck, Julie Sze, and Sylvia Earl.

Assignments include but are not limited to: weekly responses, term definitions, in-class presentations, leading discussion, an exam, and a final writing project. This is not a lecture course. In order to have the most positive experience, it’s best to have done the reading before class and be prepared to talk about it and to lead discussion on it.

**Main texts you should preferably have in hard copy:**
- *My Ántonia*, Willa Cather (1918)
- *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*, Steinbeck (1951)
- *Weather*, Jenny Offill (2020)
- *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015)

**Percentage Breakdown**
- Participation and Responses: 10% → → → attendance, discussion, and responses
- Presentation One: 10% → → → on the date and reading you choose
- Exam: 25% → → → during class hours
- Presentation Two: 25% → → → during the last few weeks of class
- Paper: 30% → → → due 12/7 by 11am to our course site