

TERM: Spring 2025

COURSE NUMBER & CATEGORY: ENGL 3600: Race, Intersectionality, and Power

COURSE TITLE: Into the Desert

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: T 6:00-9:20 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Rubén Martínez

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS:

This interdisciplinary course encourages students to reflect on the meaning of the desert as it has been conceived in the literatures of ancient Christian monasticism and contemporary contemplative practice; through the art, literature and politics of the American West and Borderlands; and as a site of ecological sublimity, complexity, and precarity. We will explore the varied meanings of the desert in diverse historical and cultural moments and ask what it means not just to imagine but also inhabit the desert today. These inquiries have real implications for what it means to inhabit the world with some sense of meaning and purpose—both in the profound sense of individual spiritual development as well as the pursuit of social and environmental justice. Into the Desert seeks to entwine these threads through close readings across genres as well as through embodied experience: a key class activity is a field trip into the desert itself. The class carries an Interdisciplinary Connections core designation and an Engaged Learning flag.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Knowledge of spiritual and contemplative traditions specific to the desert (including but not limited to early Christian literatures of the desert and their social-historical context).
- Knowledge of historical and contemporary representations of the deserts of the American Southwest and Borderlands and the critical models that engage them.
- Integrative appropriation of the desert and its importance as both a material and spiritual site (fulfilled in part through the engaged learning component of the course).
- Investigation of desert ecologies within the context of climate change.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Gary Nabhan, ed. *The Nature of Desert Nature*

Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land*

Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake*

(In addition to online materials.)

COURSE WORK / EXPECTATIONS

Weekly response papers; personal essay; group research project; final synthesis paper.

CLASS LEVEL RESTRICTION:

Junior/Senior Only

RECOMMENDED/PREREQUISITES:

Select Recommended/Prerequisite Below

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

OLD CURRICULUM

- GENRES (LD)
- HISTORIES (LD)
- AUTHORS (UD)
- CRITICAL/THEORETICAL (UD)
- COMPARATIVE (UD)
- CREATIVE/ARTISTRY

NEW CURRICULUM

- DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (LD)
- HISTORY OF LIT, MEDIA, AND CULTURE (LD)
- READING AND WRITING GENRES (LD)
- THEORY, POWER, AND RHETORIC (LD)
- PRE-1800 (UD)
- CREATIVE ARTISTRY (UD)
- RACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND POWER (UD)
- UPPER-DIVISION ELECTIVE (UD)
- 5000-LEVEL SEMINAR (UD)

CORE ATTRIBUTES:

Engaged Learning Flag

Inter-disciplinary Connections (IINC)