

ENG531 Seminar in Ecocriticism & Eco-poetics  
Monday & Thursday 15:00-16:15 A109  
Spring Semester 2018/2019  
Department of English, UCY

Office Hours:  
Monday 14:00-15:00 & 16:30-17:30  
Thursday 10:00-12:00

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### Course Summary

This course introduces students to two of the most recent discourses of literary theory and criticism: ecocriticism and eco-poetics. Both terms emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century and are still subject to conceptual transformation and evolution. They have developed from the earlier critical category of 'green writing', which subsumed environmentally-oriented literature and art from its modern origins in the (Romantic) eighteenth-century reaction to urbanisation and industrialisation. The main focus is on Anglophone literature, especially poetry, and the recent critical theorisations of eco-poetics and ecocriticism that go beyond 'green writing' to encompass and explore questions of non-human entities and rights, ecocritical concepts of the human, the 'oikos', the animal-human-vegetal-mineral world, sustainable futures, ecological disasters, gender and economic inequalities, post- and neo-colonialisms, and intercultural relations. This is a comparative, multidisciplinary course that includes texts, images, theories and narratives from different media and discourses.

### Primary Texts

Astley, Neil, ed, *Earth Shattering: Eco-poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 2007)

Coupe, Lawrence, ed, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (Routledge, 2008) [optional]

Course Reader, available from local bookshop

Vonnegut, Kurt, *Cat's Cradle* (1963; Penguin, 2008)

### Course Aims:

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Understand the emergence of ecocriticism and eco-poetics.
2. Appreciate the shifting ideological framework of ecocriticism and eco-poetics.
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skill in discussion of primary texts.
4. Show critical understanding of the variety and polysemy of contemporary ecocritical/eco-poetic work.
5. Develop a recognizable ecocritical and eco-poetic discourse of their own through critical and creative work.

## Program of Sessions

### Week One: Introductory

Monday (14/01/19): Introduction to Course; Terms, Concepts, Literary History

Thursday (17/01/19): Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Seventh Walk', from *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* [1776-1778]

### Week Two: Nature & Walking

Monday (21/01/19): Henry David Thoreau, from 'Walking', in *Essays and Other Writings* [1862]

Thursday (24/01/19): William Wordsworth, from *The Prelude*, Books I & II [1805]

### Week Three: Habitation

Monday (28/01/19): Martin Heidegger, from 'Poetically Man Dwells', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* [1951]

Thursday (31/01/19): Oliver Goldsmith, from 'The Deserted Village' [1770]

### Week Four: Imagination

Monday (04/02/19): Lawrence Buell, from 'Space, Place, and Imagination from Local to Global', *The Future of Environmental Criticism* [2005]

Thursday (07/02/19): Gary Snyder, 'Mother Earth: Her Whales' [1974]

### Week Five: Otherness

Monday (11/02/19): D.H. Lawrence, from 'Pan in America', in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence* [1926]

Thursday (14/02/19): D.H. Lawrence, 'Snake'; Sylvia Plath, 'Pheasant'

### Week Six: Beyond the Human-Animal

Monday (18/02/19): Kate Soper, from *What is Nature?* [1995]

Thursday (21/02/19): Charlotte Mew, 'The Trees are Down'; W.S. Merwin, 'Witness' & 'Place'

### Week Seven: From Human to Mineral: The Meshwork

Monday (25/02/19): Tim Ingold, from *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* [2011]

Thursday (28/02/19): Joy Harjo, 'Remember', Alice Oswald, 'Song of a Stone', Pablo Neruda, 'Oh Earth, Wait For Me'

### Week Eight: Praxis & Poiesis

Monday (04/03/19): Joseph Beuys, 'Coyote: I like America and America Likes Me' ['action', 1974; described by Caroline Tisdall in N. Astley, ed, *Earth Shattering*]

Thursday (07/03/19): Oodgeroo, 'Time is Running Out'; Ken Saro-Wiwa, 'Ogoni! Ogoni!'

### Week Nine: Eco-poetics & Cinema: Experimental/Poetic Documentary Films

Monday (11/03/19): **PUBLIC HOLIDAY – NO CLASS [Poetic/Experimental Doc Viewing]**

Thursday (14/03/19): Group presentation & seminar discussion on Eco-poetic cinema (aesthetics & politics; affect & ethics, and themes or issues specific to each film)

### Week Ten: End-of-the World & End-of-Humanity

Monday (18/03/19): Lord Byron, 'Darkness' [1816]; Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* [1963]

Thursday (21/03/19): Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* [1963]

### Week Eleven: Ecocritical Biopics

Monday (25/03/19) **NO CLASS – PUBLIC HOLIDAY [Biopic Film Viewing]**

Thursday (28/03/19): Group presentation & seminar discussion on issues of three biopic films (*Dare to be Wild*, *Bhopal Express*; *Silkwood*)

### Week Twelve: Ecocritical Mythopoetics & Fiction Films

Monday (01/04/19): **NO CLASS – PUBLIC HOLIDAY [Fiction Film Viewing]**

Thursday (04/04/19): Group presentation & seminar discussion on indigenous cultures, gender and myth/religion in fiction films (*Whale Rider*; *Wonder Woman*)

### Week Thirteen: End of Humanity (continued)

Monday (08/04/19): Mary Shelley, from *The Last Man* [1826] (excerpt); Charles Bukowski, 'Dinosauria, we'

Thursday (11/04/19): Creative Critical Project Presentations

### Week Fourteen:

Monday (15/04/19): Creative Critical Project Presentations

Thursday (18/04/19): Creative Critical Project Presentations

Note: It is the student's responsibility to request handouts or obtain notes from missed classes. Seminars require student participation; you may be asked to work alone, in pairs or in small groups.

### Assessment

There will be three components of assessment:

1. Group presentation (30%) The group will research various aspects of an issue in relation to one or two of the ten films listed in the course filmography. The film(s) will be discussed by the group in relation to *at least* one of the literary works discussed in the seminars and *one* of the theoretical texts. Each member will present a section of their results in critically informed discourse which situates the issue in contemporary culture. **A planning meeting will be arranged between each group and the course instructor in weeks 4-7 of the semester.** Duration of presentation: 5 minutes per student in group. Weeks 6-10.
  
2. Five-day Environmental Engagement & Awareness Diary. 200-300 words per entry/day; Total length: 1000-1500 words (Weighting: 30%). Due Thursday 28 March. You will select one quote (50 words) from five different books (or five different chapters in edited books) listed in the critical bibliography around which to focus your thoughts and observations of your personal lived experience for each of five consecutive days.
  
3. Creative Critical Project (40%). Each student will select at least two literary/artistic works and two critical/theoretical texts to include in their own creative response to a specific issue or set of related issues that will constitute their own ecopoetic, ecocritical project. Each creative project must consist of a literary or visual or multi-media creative work and a 1000 word report (with a list of at least three critical/theoretical works cited) that sets out the critical and theoretical framework of the creative work.

Supervision in tutorial meetings will be available throughout the semester (prior and during the work's preparation). The work will be presented to the seminar group at the end of the teaching semester (Week 13). Each student will have 10 minutes for their presentation.

### Further Reading

Astley, Neil, ed, *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems* (Bloodaxe Books, 2007)

Bate, Jonathan, *The Song of the Earth* (Picador, 2001)

Branch, Michael P. and Slovic, Scott, eds, *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2003)

Buell, Lawrence, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and the Literary Imagination* (Blackwell, 2008)

Carson, Rachel, *Silent Spring* (Penguin, 2000)

Clark, Timothy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (CUP, 2011)

Coupe, Lawrence, ed, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (Routledge, 2008)

- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth and George Handley, eds, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford UP, 2011)
- Garrard, Greg, *Ecocriticism* (Routledge, 2008)
- Gifford, Terry, *Pastoral* (Routledge, 1999)
- Heise, Ursula K., *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford UP, 2008)
- Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (Routledge, 2009)
- Hume, Angela and Osborne, Gillian, eds, *Ecopoetics: Essays in the Field* (2018)
- Hume, Angela and Rahimtoola, Samia, 'Introduction: Queering Ecopoetics', in *ISLE*, Special Issue, *Queer Ecocriticism*, vol. 25, no.1, 2018, pp. 134-149.
- Keller, Lynn, *Recomposing Ecopoetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene* (2018)
- Knickerbocker, Scott, *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2012)
- Lemenager, Stephanie et al, eds, *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2012)
- Pick, Anat and Narraway, Guinevere, eds, *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human* (Berghahn Books, 2013)
- Morton, Timothy, *Ecological Thought* (Harvard UP, 2012)
- Soper, Kate, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1995)

### Course Filmography

Caro, Niki, dir, *Whale Rider* (South Pacific Pictures, ApolloMedia Distribution et al, 2003)

#### **Fiction Film**

Davis Guggenheim, dir, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Lawrence Bender Productions, 2006) **Doc**

De Courcy, Vivienne, dir, *Dare to Be Wild* (Crow's Nest Productions, Treasure Entertainment, Underground Films et al, 2015) **Biopic**

Herzog, Werner, dir, *Lessons of Darkness* (Canal +, Première, Werner Herzog Filmproduktion, 1992) **Poetic/Experimental Doc**

Jenkins, Patty, dir, *Wonder Woman* (Warner Bros, 2017) **Fiction Film**

Malick, Terence, dir, *Voyage of Time* (Sophisticated Films, Plan B Entertainment et al, 2016)

**Poetic/Experimental Doc**

Matthai, Mahesh, dir, *Bhopal Express* (Alive Entertainment, Highlight Films, Kintop Pictures, 1999) **Biopic**

Nichols, Mike, dir, *Silkwood* (ABC Motion Pictures, 1983) **Biopic**

Psihoyos, Louie, dir, *The Cove* (Diamond Docs, Fish Films et al, 2009) **Doc**

Reggio, Godfrey, *Koyaanisqatsi* (IRE Productions, Santa Fe Institute for Regional Education, 1982) **Poetic/Experimental Doc**

Recommended Environmental Film Webliography

<https://filmsfortheearth.org/en/films>

<https://dceff.org/watchnow/>

<http://www.documentarytube.com/environmental>

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/filmedia/films.php#view=thumb>

<http://planetearthherald.com/environmental-art/>

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/>