

E 379R: Environmental Fiction and Criticism

Spring 2012

T/TH 12:30–2:00 | PAR 302

Unique #35520

sites.la.utexas.edu/envifiction-s12/

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hours: TH 1:45-3:15, W 3:30-5, by appt.

COURSE OVERVIEW & PROMISES

This course starts from the two-fold premise that 1. to understand emerging environmental issues, we must look beyond facts and data to stories and images, and 2. to understand contemporary cultural production, we must analyze texts' environmental imagination. Thus, we'll explore the role of fiction—on page and screen—in creating environmental consciousness in the late 20th and 21st centuries. We'll analyze works from the past 40 years in their many contexts, and will identify how literary scholars practice environmental criticism, or "ecocriticism." In the process, we'll develop our own critical vocabulary for interpreting recent forms of environmental representation.

The divide between the human and the nonhuman continues to inform environmental discourse. With that in mind, we begin with efforts to define "nature," and trace how authors alter its meanings. The following questions motivate our inquiry:

- What formal problems does representing the environment and environmental dilemmas create? Are there more or less successful genres and narrative strategies? How do we define "success"?
- What stance do contemporary authors take toward scientific developments? Toward activism?
- How do environmental thinkers balance the demands for human justice and the welfare of ecosystems and communities?

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Read fiction and criticism analytically and craft probing questions about them.
- Create compelling responses to these questions by conducting research, integrating textual evidence, and positioning your ideas in scholarly debates.
- Approach literary works as forms of environmental inquiry, using major concepts and formal categories (e.g., pastoral, wilderness, magical realism, science fiction, documentary).
- Assess and debate an author's stance toward environmental issues such as risk, sustainability, justice, the human/nonhuman boundary, and technology.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Ordered at the University Co-Op. Please buy these editions if you purchase elsewhere.

Course Packet (also on Blackboard)

Margaret Atwood

Booth, Colomb, & Williams

Ruth Ozeki

Leslie Marmon Silko

Indra Sinha

Oryx and Crake (2003), ISBN 0385721676

The Craft of Research (2008, 3rd ed), 9780226065663

All Over Creation (2004), 0142003891

Ceremony (1977), 0143104918

Animal's People (2007), 141657879X

If you choose to download readings from Blackboard instead of buying the packet , you must print and bring them to class.

You aren't required to buy the films on the syllabus, but you might find it useful to do so. They are:

The Unforeseen, director Laura Dunn (2008)

The Garden, director Scott Kennedy (2008)

Wall-E, director Andrew Stanton (2008)

EVALUATION POLICIES

I calculate your grade on a 1000-point scale that I convert to a letter grade at the end of the term. I use this system so that you can easily see where you stand throughout the semester. The rubric follows.

(Note that UT doesn't recognize the grade of A+.)

A = 940-1000 points

A- = 900-939

B+ = 870-899

B = 840-869

B- = 800-839

C+ = 770-799

C = 740-769

C- = 700-739

D+ = 670-699

D = 640-669

D- = 600-630

F = 0-599

RESPONSIBILITIES

I evaluate your thinking and learning through the activities below. Unless otherwise noted, all reading and written work is due in class on the due date. I'll provide guidelines for the blog, the essays, and research project components at least two weeks before they are due.

ACTIVITY	DUE	POINTS
<p><i>Preparation + Participation</i></p> <p>This is a seminar, and it will thrive when everyone is present and exchanging ideas. I evaluate engaged participation based on your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively reading or watching the texts before class. To read actively: note and define keywords, respond to passages that strike or trouble you, and ask questions of the text. • Bringing readings and completed reading exercises to class. (These are ungraded, but I'll check that you've done them.) • Contributing ideas and questions. Listening to and respecting others. Doing in-class writing. Leading group work. 	<i>Always</i>	250
<p><i>Class Blog</i></p> <p>At least 5 contributions total:</p> <p>3 original posts (250-350 words)</p> <p>2 comments (up to 200 words)</p>	<p><i>Throughout semester.</i></p> <p><i>See schedule below.</i></p>	50
<p><i>2 Short Essays</i></p> <p>Analysis of literary criticism (800-1000 words)</p> <p>Analysis of fictional work (1300-1500 words)</p>	<p>F 2/3</p> <p>M 3/5</p>	<p>100</p> <p>150</p>

<p><i>Research-Based Essay</i></p> <p>You'll tackle your project in manageable bits.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project prospectus 2. Bibliographic essay including 5 sources + outline/plan 3. First draft to peer group (~2000 words). Introduction to professor 4. Presentation with recommended readings (5-6 minutes) 5. Final paper (3000-4000 words + works cited) 	<p>M 3/26 TH 4/12 TH 4/19 TH 4/26, T 5/1, TH 5/3 T 5/8</p>	<p>450 total 50 100 -- 50 250</p>
<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>As part of the English department's accreditation process, you must fill out a survey and write a reflection on your career in the major.</p>	<p>T 5/15</p>	<p>Ungraded. Uncounted.</p>

TECH DEVICES

Phones (smart and dumb alike) must be off during class. Laptops are awesome tools. You may use them to take notes, but I'll forbid their use as soon as they become a distraction to you or your seminar-mates. No unrelated web browsing, shopping, facebooking, tweeting, or emailing.

HONOR CODE

I invite discussion and exchange outside of class, but you must abide by the Honor Code which reads:

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

Plagiarizing and claiming credit for others' work have serious consequences. Plagiarizing means using any words or ideas that are not your own without citing them. I encourage you to go through [the library tutorial on plagiarism](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/index.html): www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/index.html.

If you aren't clear on what constitutes dishonorable conduct, please ask me or consult the [Academic Integrity](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php) site: deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

ABSENCES & LATE WORK

Attendance and participation are mandatory. Repeated, unexcused absences will affect your grade. Unless in extreme circumstances, after 3 absences of any kind, your final grade will drop 50 points (out of 1000). After 9 absences, you will not receive credit for the course. Habitual lateness will also negatively impact your grade.

All work must be completed for the class in which it is due. If you're struggling with an assignment, request an extension at least two days before the deadline. For every day that an assignment is late, I reduce your grade by 1/3 (a B+ would become a B). Note that the due dates for the paper draft and presentation are not negotiable.

Special note on religious holy days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of an observed holy day. If you miss a class or an assignment, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS¹C = Course packet and on [Blackboard](https://courses.utexas.edu) (courses.utexas.edu)

F = Film. On reserve in Fine Arts Library

Group screenings of films scheduled for the following dates in the Fine Arts building:

W 1/18, 7pm, *The Unforeseen* (DFA 4.104)M 2/20, 7pm, *The Garden* (DFA 4.110)M 3/5, 7pm, *Wall-E* (DFA 4.110)

The group screenings are optional. If you can't attend, you're responsible for borrowing the film on reserve at the Fine Arts Library or acquiring it by other means to watch on your own.

		READINGS/SCREENINGS	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Whose "Nature"? What Is "Ecocriticism"?			
Week 1	T 1/17	• Beginnings: Whose Nature?	Meet w/ professor this week & next (optional)
	W 1/18	• Screening of <i>The Unforeseen</i> , 7pm, DFA 4.104 (optional)	
	TH 1/19	• <i>The Unforeseen</i> (F, 90 min)	Information sheet
Week 2	T 1/24	• Kate Soper, from <i>What Is Nature?</i> (C)	Reading exercise
	TH 1/26	• William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (C)	Reading exercise
Week 3	T 1/31	• Ursula Heise, "Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies" (handout)	Reading exercise
	TH 2/2	* Visit from Laura Dunn, director of <i>The Unforeseen</i>	Bring questions
	F 2/3	Article Analysis due (5pm, PAR 228)	
Week 4	T 2/7	• Annie Dillard, from <i>The Pilgrim of Tinker Creek</i> (C) • Dana Phillips, from <i>Truth of Ecology</i> (C)	Reading exercise
	TH 2/9	• <i>Ceremony</i> (preface, 1-129)	Blog 1 (A)
Week 5	T 2/14	• <i>Ceremony</i> (129-244)	
	TH 2/16	• bell hooks, "Touching the Earth" (C) • Evelyn White, "Black Women and Wilderness" (handout)	Reading exercise

¹ I may have to alter the reading schedule, but no more than 10% of the syllabus will change. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out about schedule changes as well as the content of class discussion.

Week 6	M 2/20	• Screening of <i>The Garden</i> , 7pm, DFA 4.110 (optional)	
	T 2/21	• <i>The Garden</i> (F, 80 min.)	
	Pollution, Risk, and Justice		
	TH 2/23	• <i>Animal's People</i> (1-132, glossary)	Blog 2 (B)
Week 7	T 2/28	• <i>Animal's People</i> (133-259)	Reading exercise
	TH 3/1	• <i>Animal's People</i> (260-366)	
Week 8	M 3/5	Fiction Analysis due (5pm, PAR 228)	
		• Screening of <i>Wall-E</i> , 7pm, DFA 4.110 (optional)	
	T 3/6	• <i>Wall-E</i> (F, 98 min)	
	Beyond the Human		
	TH 3/8	• <i>All Over Creation</i> (1-107)	(Preliminary ideas for project topic)
Break	T 3/13 to TH 3/15	SPRING BREAK (Keep reading <i>All Over Creation</i>)	
Week 9	T 3/20	• <i>All Over Creation</i> (108-309) • <i>Craft of Research</i> (31-48, 53-54, 63-64)	Project question, using CoR 46-47 as template
	TH 3/22	• <i>All Over Creation</i> (310-420) • <i>Craft of Research</i> (120-26)	Blog 3 (A)
Week 10	M 3/26	Project prospectus due (by 5pm, PAR 228)	
	T 3/27	(Get a jump on <i>Oryx and Crake</i>) * Library Workshop Meet in PCL 1.339 (ground floor, behind map room)	
	TH 3/29	• <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (1-153)	Blog 4 (B)
Week 11	T 4/3	• <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (154-247)	Reading exercise
	TH 4/5	• <i>Oryx and Crake</i> (248-374)	

Research, Writing, Revising: The Final Stretch			
Week 12	T 4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Craft of Research</i> (84-101) • Library Research day Meet in PCL Lobby 	Bring lists of citations, sources, notes, laptop
	TH 4/12	Bibliographic Essay + Plan due (in class)	
Week 13	T 4/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and Writing day • <i>Craft of Research</i> (108-18, 177-202, 232-48) 	Blog 5 (all, writing reflection)
	TH 4/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and Writing day • <i>Craft of Research</i> (203-10) 	First Draft due Intro to professor
Week 14	T 4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Writing Workshop • <i>Craft of Research</i> (139-46, 150-51) 	Peer letters
	TH 4/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations 	
Week 15	T 5/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations 	
	TH 5/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations • Endings 	
Finals	T 5/8	FINAL PAPER DUE (by 5pm, PAR 228)	

My goal is for you to learn, make discoveries, have fun, and produce the best work possible. Please meet with me if you have concerns about your learning or are struggling with an assignment. Also take advantage of....

ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Services

[Undergraduate Writing Center](http://uwc.utexas.edu) (uwc.utexas.edu, FAC 211) offers free, individualized, expert help with writing at any stage of the process. Appointments and walk-ins available.

[Documented Disability Support](http://utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/) (utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/, SSB 4.206) Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Services for Students with Disabilities online or at 471-6259 or 232-2937 (video phone).

- Books on Reserve at PCL

PR 9199.3 A8 O79 2003

Oryx and Crake, Margaret Atwood

PS 3057 N3 B84 1995

The Environmental Imagination : Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture, Lawrence Buell

PR 9080.5 P68 2010

Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment, eds. Elizabeth DeLoughrey & George Handley

QH 81 D56 2007 *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard
 PR 143 G37 2004 *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard
 RC 451.5 N4 H66 1993 *Sisters of the Yam*, bell hooks
 PS 3565 Z45 A795 2003 *All Over Creation*, Ruth Ozeki (also an e-book)
 PS 163 P48 2003 *The Truth of Ecology*, Dana Phillips
 PS 3569 .I44 C4 2006 *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko
 PR 9499.4 S56 A55 2008 *Animal's People*, Indra Sinha
 BD 581 S67 1995 *What Is Nature?: Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human*, Kate Soper

- Films on Reserve at Fine Arts Library

DVD 11079 *The Garden*, Scott Hamilton Kennedy
 DVD 7264 *The Unforeseen*, Laura Dunn
 DVD 7306 *Wall-E*, Andrew Stanton

- Resources for Literary & Film Study

Cambridge History of American Literature (PS 92 .C24, multiple volumes by period and genre)
Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism (BH 39 .C62 1995; through LION)
Film Art: An Introduction, Bordwell & Thompson (PN 1993.5 A1 T45 2003)
[Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism](#) (PN 81 J64 2005; through Library Databases)
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (LB 2369 G53 2009 in PCL Reference & Help Desk)
[MLA Style & Citation Guide, Purdue OWL](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/) (owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/)
Oxford Companion to American Literature (PS 21 .H3 1995)
Oxford Companion to British Literature (PR 19 .O94 2009)
[Oxford English Dictionary Online](#) (through Library Databases)
[Literature Online \(LION\)](#) (through Library Databases)
A Short Guide to Writing about Film, Timothy Corrigan (PN 1995 C66 2010)