

ENVS 195, Spring 2014

Environmental Literature, Arts, & Media

Course director: Prof. Adrian Ivakhiv
Office: Bittersweet Bldg., 153 So. Prospect
Email: aivakhiv@uvm.edu

Class meetings: Tue-Thur 11:30-12:45 pm, Terrill 108

Consultation hours: Mon 2:00-3:00 pm, Wed 10:00-11:30 am
Please call Jaclyn Devino (656-4055) for an appointment

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the environmental humanities exploring the range of values and cultural expressions of the human-nature relationship. We will explore contemporary and historical works of literary, visual, musical, performative, and media arts to see the role the expressive humanities have played in shaping social-cultural attitudes toward nature and the human dilemma of depending on nature as source and sustenance. Through readings, discussion, short response papers, and small group work, students will gain exposure to artists and movements in the environmental arts and literature as well as eco-media studies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) The course exposes students to creative fields related to the environmental humanities, including environmentally themed literature, visual art, music, and film and media production.
- 2) It introduces conceptual and analytical tools useful for understanding contemporary cultural practices through an ecocritical lens. It provides opportunities for students to use these tools in analyses of cultural phenomena and in production of communicative or creative media objects.
- 3) More specifically, the course introduces students to major themes in the fields of environmental communication, ecocriticism, environmental cultural and media studies, ecomusicology, and the eco-arts. These themes are organized around the "REM" triad, which refers to the three dimensions by which cultural objects can be queried "ecocritically": (1) as Representation (images, narratives, metaphors, rhetorics); (2) as Experience (impressions, perceptions, affects, emotions, motivations); and (3) as Materiality (resources, materials, biophysical processes, ecological impacts).
- 4) The course encourages and offers opportunities for students to personally and collectively engage the creative process and produce a work of eco-art, literature, or media to share with the UVM community.

COURSE FORMAT

The course combines lectures, readings, viewings, small groups discussions, student presentations, a public class exhibition, and online activities (in Blackboard).

READING

Required texts:

1. Greg Garrard, Ecocriticism, 2d edition (Routledge, 2012).
2. Linda Weintraub, To Life! Eco-Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet (University of California Press, 2013).
3. Mark Pedelty, Ecomusicology: Rock, Folk, and the Environment (Temple University Press, 2012).
4. Additional readings will be made available electronically through the semester. Please stay up-to-date with these readings by checking the Blackboard course page regularly.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION (20 pts.)

This course is a seminar style course in which reading is central to the learning process. We will spend much of our time examining the readings in depth. You are expected to have read all required readings for a given class before coming to that class. Guidelines and discussion prompts will sometimes be provided.

2. QUIZZES & EXAMS (2 quizzes @ 5 pts. each + 2 take-home exams @ 15 pts. each = 40 pts.)

The two quizzes will be multiple choice and/or short answer format and focused on vocabulary and concepts for the topics of the previous weeks. The mid-term exams will be take-home style with questions handed a week before the due date. All written work should be typed and handed in as a printed paper. Do not send your paper by email or turn in a handwritten paper. Please spell-check and proofread your work, and use inclusive language (i.e. be conscious of your use of gendered pronouns and referents, using "people" or "humankind" instead of "man", "he or she" or "they" instead of simply "he," and so on).

3. GROUP PRESENTATIONS (2 @ 10 pts. each = 20 pts.)

These short visual presentations (Powerpoint or Prezi are recommended) should be well-crafted, well-researched, and aesthetically considered, no longer than 5 minutes, and responding to topics in readings. Excellent responses will show both depth of personal reflection and thoughtful inquiry with accurate representation of authors' ideas and perspectives. The presentations provide an opportunity to explore new ideas and perspectives from class readings and practice sharing them with others. More detailed guidelines will be provided.

4. PERSONAL PROJECT (20 pts.)

Students will work on an individual art, media, or literature piece around common class themes, presenting their work at the Class Eco-Arts Gala, which will take place the week before Thanksgiving (location and exact date/time to be determined). This may be a work of creative art in any medium or genre, including poetry, literary prose, video, music, dance, etc.; the sky is the limit on your imagination. You will need to figure out a way to present your project formally for the public (as in a gallery showing), be present during the Gala to host your work as the artist/writer, and document your work for a short presentation in class. Detailed guidelines will be provided for project design, presentation, and reflective write-up on your creative process and public feedback on your project's effectiveness.

5. EXTRA CREDIT (1 pt. per review)

You may attend extracurricular events and speakers related to environmental literature/arts/media topics or view related videos for extra credit. For each event or video, please clear it with me first and then write up a 1.5 to 2 single-spaced page paper summarizing (a) what the event or video was about (one page), and (b) your critical response to it (one page). You may earn up to 5 points of extra credit with a maximum change to your grade of a half grade (e.g. from a B to a B+).

COURSE POLICIES

ABSENCES

Students are expected to attend all classes, unless you have an excused absence. Attendance will be taken, and unexcused absences will factor into your final grade. (Absences are not excused unless they are personally cleared with the instructor by phone or email.) If you miss a class, please ask another student for assistance in catching up on the material. If you are feeling “under the weather,” please make an effort to come to class and keep up with the course rhythm, even if you don’t feel like talking. We expect you to make it a commitment to attend every class, both for your own personal learning and to contribute to the community of learners in the group.

LATE WORK

All written work should be turned in on time, i.e. at the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due. Late work is subject to penalties, with grades dropping half a letter grade each day your work is late unless you have a medical excuse. If you need an extension due to illness or family emergency, please speak with me personally. I will do my best to read all the assignments soon after they are turned in and try to return them to you within two weeks.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

UVM supports students’ active involvement in their religious/faith communities. Students wishing to be excused from class participation during their religious holidays should submit a documented list of such holidays by the end of the second full week of classes.

COLLABORATION VS. PLAGIARISM

You are encouraged to work with others in the class on your assignments, sharing resources and ideas and helping each other with direction, focus, clarity, and personal support. Please make an effort to get to know your peers. Much of the eco-art movement and similar such initiatives have been built on collaborative networking, and such activity is encouraged.

At the same time, UVM’s commitment to academic honesty will be followed. This means that unless otherwise stated, written assignments should be your own. If you draw on other sources, they should be cited properly to give adequate credit. If you work with other students to prepare for an exam, your written answers should be individually constructed, not copied from each other or shared notes. Work that appears to be plagiarized will be given no credit and students will be asked to meet with the instructor to explain the situation. Plagiarism at UVM is grounds for academic suspension; don’t do it.

GRADING

Grades in this course will be assigned based on the following model:

A- 90-93	A 94-98	A+ 99+
B- 80-82	B 83-86	B+ 87-89
C- 70-72	C 73-76	C+ 77-79
D- 60-62	D 63-67	D+ 67-69
F Below 60		

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS & ACTIVITIES

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Not all readings listed will be required; others may be added. Please consult BlackBoard for up-to-date list of topics and assignments.

WEEK 1

Aug 26: **INTRODUCTION**

Themes: Course Overview. Conceptual frame: "REM" (Representation, Experience, & Materiality).

Materiality = resources, materials, biophysical processes, ecological impacts.

Experience = impressions, sensory perceptions, visceral affects, emotions, motivations.

Representation = signs, images, narratives, metaphors, rhetorics, interpretations.

Aug 28: **ENVIRONMENTALIST POSITIONS & ECOCULTURAL TROPES**

Themes: Environmentalist Positions. Ecocultural Tropes. Trope #1: **Contact** (encounter, journeys, noticing, reality, sensory clarity, the nonhuman Other; the opposite of these=disconnection, pollution, consumerism)

Read: Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, ch. 1 & 2; Thoreau, "Ktaadn" excerpt from *Maine Woods*; Kingsolver, "New Year's Day"; Wright, "Clear night"

WEEK 2

Sept 2: **PASTORAL: THE GREEN WORLD**

Themes: Trope #2: **Pastoral** (classical pastoral, romantic pastoral, American pastoral). Country vs. city. Wordsworth and Thoreau.

Read: Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, ch. 3; Wordsworth, "Michael," "Poems on the Naming of Places," "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"; Thoreau, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"; Oliver, "The Honey Tree"; Oates, "Against nature"

Sept 4: **BEAUTY, VISUALITY, & NATURE**

Themes: Pastoral ecology. Natural beauty. Visualities of nature (beautiful, picturesque, sublime). Is the perception of beauty natural (inherent, biological) or cultural (constructed)?

Read: Cornell, D. "Eliot Anderson: Average Landscapes"; Dissanayake, E. "Komar and Melamid Discover Pleistocene Taste"

WEEK 3

Sept 9: **WILDERNESS, THE SUBLIME, & THE MAGISTERIAL GAZE**

Themes: Trope #3: **Wilderness**. Sublime Nature. The Magisterial Gaze in American landscape painting.

Read: Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, ch. 4; Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness"; Sweeney, G., "'An Indomitable Explorative Enterprise': Inventing National Parks" (read pp. 131-139 and 148-153).

Sept 11: **WILDERNESS EXPERIENCES**

Read: Muir, "A Windstorm in the Forests," "Hetch Hetchy Valley"; Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain"; Abbey, "The Great American Desert"; Merton, "Rain and the rhinoceros"

Guest instructor: Stephanie Kaza

WEEK 4

Sept 16-18: **APOCALYPSE**

Theme: Trope #4: **Apocalypse** (dystopia, decline, pollution, jeremiad)

Read: Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, ch. 5; Carson, "A fable for tomorrow"; Jeffers, "The Inquisitors," "Passenger Pigeons"; Wagoner, "Elegy for a forest clear-cut by the Weyerhaeuser Company"; T. T. Williams, "The clan of one-breasted women"; Kimiko Hahn, "The calf"

WEEK 5

Sept 23-25: **DWELLING**

Theme: Trope #5: **Dwelling** (home, rootedness, interconnectedness, interdependence)

Read: Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, ch. 6, W. Berry, "Stay Home," "The Pleasures of Eating", "Out of your car, off your horse"; Silko; Ehrlich, "The solace of open spaces"; Momaday, "Sacred and ancestral ground"; hooks, "Touching the earth"; Hogan, "What holds the water, what holds the light"; Didion, "On going home"; Sanders, "On settling down"; Pattiann Rogers, "Knot"; Erdrich; Anzaldua; Melow, "The flora and fauna of Las Vegas"; Smithson, "The monuments of Passaic"; Ginsberg, "A supermarket in California"

WEEK 6

Sept 30-Oct 2: **FILM & ECOMEDIA**

Themes: Depictions of nature in Hollywood, nature documentary, and alternative genres. Recent eco-documentaries.

Read: Bouse, Ivakhiv, Ingram

WEEK 7

Oct 7-9: **ECO-ART 1**

Theme: Art as social practice & public advocacy. Foundations and pioneers of eco-art.

Read: Weintraub, *To Life!* pp. 5-50; Katherine Brooks, "18 Green Artists,"
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/15/environmental-art_n_5585288.html

WEEK 8

Oct 14-16: **ECO-ART 2**

Theme: Case Studies. Student presentations on eco-artists.

Read: Weintraub, *To Life!* Read sections on Ant Farm, Beuys, Haacke, Harrisons, Sonfist, Ukeles, and at least 2 other sections from "Twentieth-century Eco-Art Pioneers" chapters; and your choice of 8 sections from "Twenty-First-Century Eco Art Explorers" chapter. And see Weintraub's web site, <http://lindaweintraub.com/> and esp. <http://lindaweintraub.com/teaching-guides/20th-century-ecoart-pioneers> and <http://lindaweintraub.com/teaching-guides/21st-century-ecoart-explorers>

WEEK 9

Oct 21-23: **ECO-MUSIC 1**

Theme: Acoustic ecology & soundscape studies. Environmentalism in Popular Music.

Read: Wrightson, K. "An introduction to acoustic ecology"; Pedelty, *Ecomusicology*, Introduction, ch. 1 & 2

WEEK 10

Oct 28-30: **ECO-MUSIC 2**

Theme: Case Studies. Student presentations on ecology & music.

Read: Pedelty, Ecomusicology, ch. 3

Project proposals due

WEEK 11

Nov 4-6: **ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS**

Themes:

Read: Garrard, Ecocriticism, ch. 6; Wright, "A blessing"; Whitman, "I think I could turn and live with animals"; Snyder, "Migration of birds, April 1956"; Stewart, "The limits of Trooghft"; Dillard, "Living Like Weasels"; Lawrence, "Snake," "Fish"; Nelson, "The Gifts"; Griffin, "The Hunt"; Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish"; Les Murray, "Presence," "Migratory," "Shoal"; Gretchen Legler, "Wolf"; Catherine Puckett, "Beauty and the beast"; Rothenberg, "Making music with birds and whales"; Plumwood, "Being prey"; LeGuin,

WEEK 12

Nov 11-13: **GLOBAL ECO-FUTURES**

Themes: Whole Earth images. Gaian science and popular culture. Traditions of utopian, dystopian, and ecotopian writing & vision.

Read: Garrard, Ecocriticism, ch. 7; Delillo, from White Noise; Seed & Macy, "Gaia meditations"

WEEK 13

Nov 18-20: **ECO-ARTS GALA**

Exhibition, Project Debrief

Nov 25-27: Thanksgiving week (no classes)

WEEK 14

Dec 2: **COURSE CONCLUSIONS**

Final exam distributed. Due date TBA.