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***ENVIRONMENT, ECOCRITICISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF BEING GLOBAL***

Welcome to HCOL 185 I

**Class meeting time:** MW 12:00 pm – 12: 50 pm Room 16**Professor****Maria Alessandra Woolson**

Waterman 542

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**Office hours:** MW 13:10 – 14:10 or by appointment**1. COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Ecocriticism is understood as a literary perspective that is concerned with how humans relate to their environment. Originated in the Anglophone tradition of late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the vast majority of ecocritical work of the past thirty years focused on what is widely known as *nature writing* and works that embody a *return to the land* spirit. This course will explore the interdisciplinary landscape of “ecocriticism” as an emerging field in the environmental humanities and address how Latin American representation engages with environmental issues as *eco-social*. We will focus on this Global South perspective that raises questions of environmental justice and social equity alongside other commonly addressed ecological concerns. The context is a globalized world within which we will examine some of today’s most relevant problems, including transformations of land, culture, and their impacts on community. Case studies from Amazonia, Northern Mexico and Easter Island will enable observations of how some of these issues manifest in specific time and scale. Students will analyze and experience a plurality of voices, including exposure to indigenous epistemologies and to Western colonial roots. The course brings together matters of representation and environmental ethics, and treats ecocriticism as an open question to facilitate cross-disciplinary dialogue. Thematically, first half (2<sup>nd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> week) will identify some of the grand socio-environmental challenges faced by Latin America through which students will learn to connect local problems to broader transnational dynamics. This half will also include a brief survey of theoretical movements in the ecocritical tradition of the 90s, including debates over realism and representations. In the second half (7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> week) of the course, we will move to consider a more inclusive and responsive avant-garde proposition for today’s socio-environmental discussions that will be identified as a sustainability approach.

## 2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Prime course objectives are to develop critical and reflexive capacities and the skills for analyzing literature, culture and society of a region (i.e. Latin America) in a global context. The analytical perspective will emphasize the importance of tracking interrelations at local, regional and international levels.

Another goal is for students to demonstrate a working knowledge of ecocritical and postcolonial theoretical trends to analyze and describe how the aesthetics of representation convey unique opportunities for environmental and historical interpretations.

The course promotes global consciousness and ethical awareness surrounding questions of social responsibility. It is also expected to encourage an understanding of the existence and impact of asymmetrical power relationships (global, national, local, and personal) from both a Western and a non-Western perspective.

## 3. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, the student will be expected to:

- (1) identify many of the values, behavioral norms, and traditions of the Hispanic and indigenous people that emerge from artistic works and non-fictional texts;
- (2) demonstrate an understanding of the possibility of multiple epistemologies, cultural contexts, and cosmologies by analyzing different discourses about sustainability and the role of humans on the planet.
- (3) demonstrate critical knowledge of struggles and negotiations of indigenous and non-indigenous populations with modernity for sustaining their lives and identity;
- (4) analyze, discuss and write critically about cultural differences and the interdependence between a global economy and the sustainability of both biodiversity and culture.

## 4. PROPOSED ASSIGNMENTS AND F. METHODS OF EVALUATION:

- a. **Exams:** There will be two exams over the course of the semester, one in class and one “take home”. Tests will require analysis and syntheses of the material covered and are designed towards the building of writing and analytical skills for subsequent class work.
- b. **Essays: review, response and blog:** Each student will be responsible for writing two essays of no more than two pages -a response and a review- and one blog entry. The different registers of communication for each paper require a different approach to writing and gathering (researching) information.

**Review:** a review is an 1-2 page “essay” meant to describe (informational) and convey to the reader the primary ideas and arguments (interpretative) of an artistic or literary piece. The goal of the review is to remain as true to the artists ideas or intentions from a particular perspective.

**Response:** a response is a 2-page “essay” that offers an opportunity for interpretative or argumentative writing. This essay will respond to a viewing (film), a guest talk or artistic installations/interventions other than written text and offers an opportunity for conveying a synthesis that responds to a more subjective point of view.

**Blog:** the blog is meant as a review and synthesis of journalistic information from Hispanic media that highlights a particular issue, which students will share with their peers to stimulate class discussion. Writing a blog entry for other students to respond involves the following:

1. Selecting a topic that connects to class materials (which enables a better context for the comments and responses)
2. Learning to read and extract information from Hispanic press in translation
3. Write a short critical essay that is informative and interpretative
4. Editing the essay following the professor’s review and posting it online to elicit comments and responses from other classmates.

The process includes:

1. Students will confirm the topic of choice to be researched by the Friday before it is due.
2. Students will write the blog as a final essay and send it to the professor over the weekend.
3. On Monday in class, the professor will provide comments or corrections, as necessary
4. Students must be ready to include corrections and post the blog online by 9:00 pm.
5. This will give ample time to other students to respond by Wednesday before class.

- c. **Mini-presentation/ leading discussion:** 1. mini-presentations will be opportunities for the student to convey information or ideas by means of verbal or/and visual communicative skills. This will be a 3-5 minute presentation done on Wednesdays, by the students that wrote the blogs and will entail a brief synthesis of the “what and why” of the choice, finishing with a question or statement to open up discussion. Leading discussion is a communicative group exercise meant to develop listening, conversational and leadership-building skills that will be carried out during the latter part of the semester after the blog exercises are over.
- d. **Final project:** this is a research-based project with three objectives. First, to conduct research on a Latin American topic of eco-social relevance using available resources. Second, to interconnect the topic chosen by one student with those of other students through a group exercise that integrates individual research into a collective effort. Third, to acquire a “collective voice” or cohesive integration among the various individual interests in the working group for reporting research outcomes. Reporting research outcomes will include: 1. a group presentation, and 2. a collaborative research paper.

**1. Group presentation:** students will design the format for sharing research conclusions to the rest of the class, although the use of visual or audiovisual components is suggested. Students will be assessed for their efficacy in communication, for eliciting the audience’s input and for how individual work connects to that of other members.

**2. Collaborative Paper:** the final paper will be a multi-authored research paper developed by the group. Each student will be responsible for his or her individual contribution. The group will collectively identify a thread that will connect and integrate individual work. All students are expected to contribute equitably.

- e. **Film viewing:** Films and documentaries will be scheduled for viewing outside of class time and discussed in class. Most of them are available online.
- f. **Participation:** Active participation in this class includes volunteering answers, staying on task in group work, and respecting the classroom environment rules. In order to participate actively and purposefully each day in class, students need to be prepared. Class participation

will be evaluated based on preparedness, attendance, and the student's meaningful contribution to the class.

**g. Grading and Evaluation Components**

a. Exams	30
b. Leading discussion/mini-presentation/class participation	20
c. Review, response, blog	25
d. Final project (presentation/paper)	25

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89.9
A 93-96	B 83-86.9
A- 90-92	B- 80-82.9
C+ 77-79.9	D+ 67-69.9
C 73-76.9	D 63-66.9
C- 70-72.9	F 0-62.9

**5. COURSE CONTENT:**

Primary readings will include full texts and abbreviated selections of fictional authors Luis Sepúlveda (novel), Anacristina Rossi (novel), Mario Vargas Llosa (one selected chapter/novel), Isabel Allende (one short story), Omero Aridjis (poetry), Juan Carlos Galeano (poetry); art work by Helen Escobedo (installations), Nicolás García Uriburu and Nele Acevedo (interventions); and selected narrative expressions from indigenous communities. Secondary readings will include critics Lawrence Buell, Philippe Descola, Enrique Leff, Diana Luque-Agraz and Walter Mignolo, among others. Film documentaries: *Southern Cross* and *The Pearl Button* by Patricio Guzmán, films *Even the rain* by Icíar Bollaín and *Sleep Dealer* by Alex Rivera.

**6. COURSE MATERIALS**

**Texts:** We will read entire works and selected fragments from publications listed below (titles in Spanish will be obtained in translation):

- **Literary texts to be purchased:**

Sepúlveda, Luis. *The Old Man who Read Love Stories*. 1994. (Short Novel)

Vargas Llosa, Mario. *The Dream of the Celt*. 2012. (we will only read one of three sections)

Rossi, Anacristina. *The Mad Woman of Gandoca*. San José Costa Rica: Legado, 2009. (Short Novel)

- **Other Literary Material** (to provided in translation by professor)

Allende, Isabel. *Cuentos de Eva Luna*. (Short stories)

Aridjis, Homero. *Los poemas solares*. (poetry selections)

Galeano, Juan Carlos. *Amazonia*. Bogotá: Casa de Poesía Silva, 2003. Print. (poetry selections)

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Parra, Nicanor. *Poesía política*. Santiago: Bruguera. 1983. Print. (poetry selections)

- Paz, Octavio. "The search for the Present." The Nobel Prizes. 1990. Nobelprize.org. (Essay)
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. (Selections)
- Tuki, Maria Paté et al. *A'Amu o Rapa Nui/ Relatos de Isla de Pascua*. Chile. 1986. (Short stories)

## 7. OTHER

**Absences.** More than four (3) unexcused absences will lower your participation grade.

Unexcused absences may include light illness, faulty alarm clocks, delayed flights, concerts or birthday parties, etc.

*Official excuses may consist of: a. religious holidays; b. UVM-sponsored events (during the first 2 weeks of classes, you should submit a letter to your instructor, on UVM letterhead and signed by your supervisor or coach, with the dates and reasons for your absences); c. Dean's excuse (contact your Dean's Office if you have a serious reason to miss classes or tests and they will email your instructor)*

### **Academic integrity**

It is plagiarism to present another's ideas or words as your own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and can result in a failing grade or worse. For a full explanation of UVM's policy on academic integrity, please see:

<https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

### **Student learning accommodations**

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact SAS, the office of Student Accessibility Services on campus, which can be found at the Center for Academic Success:

[www.uvm.edu/access](http://www.uvm.edu/access).

*If you have a note from SAS, or if you have any other issues which may affect your performance or needs in this class, please speak to me about your needs within the first two weeks. This will greatly help me enhance your class experience and allow you to maximize your learning in the class.*

### **Religious holidays**

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please *submit the dates of your absence in writing by the end of the second full week of classes*. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.

### **Key administrative information**

Add/drop, pass/no pass, audit deadline: September 12, 2016

Last day to withdraw: October 31, 2016

**HCOL 185 I, fall 2016**  
**ASSIGNMENT . . . /ACTIVITY CALENDAR . . .**

	M	TU	W	TH	F
<b>1</b>	8/29	8/31		9/2	
				<u>Last day to add without instructor permission</u>	
<b>2</b>	9/5 <b>No class</b>	9/7 <b>BLOG 1</b> Theme: Nature writing		9/9	
<b>3</b>	9/12  <u>Add/drop, Pass/no pass, Audit deadline</u>	9/14 <b>BLOG 2</b> Theme: Social Nature/otherness		9/16 <b>RESPONSE DUE</b>	
<b>4</b>	9/19	9/21 <b>BLOG 3</b> Theme: Water/Oceans		9/23	
<b>5</b>	9/26	9/28 <b>BLOG 4</b> Theme: Social Nature/extraction		9/30 <b>IN CLASS EXAM I</b>	
<b>6</b>	10/3	10/5 <b>BLOG 5</b> Theme: conflict/ food indigenous and rural communities		10/7	
<b>7</b>	10/10	10/12 <b>BLOG 6</b> Theme: Fresh Water		10/14 <b>REVIEWDUE</b>	

8	10/17	10/19 <b>BLOG 7</b> Theme: Conservation	10/21 <b>TAKE HOME EXAM II</b>
9	10/24 <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	10/26 <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	10/28 <b>RETURN TAKE HOME EXAM</b>
10	10/31 <b>Last day to withdraw</b> <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	11/2 <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	11/4 <b>RESEARCH PROPOSAL:</b> TOPIC/GROUP/APPROACH
11	11/7 <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	11/9 <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	11/11 <b>RESEARCH PROPOSAL:</b> ABSTRACT/ TENTATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY
12	11/14 <b>LEAD DISCUSSION</b>	11/16	11/18 <b>RESEARCH PROPOSAL:</b> 2-PAGE DRAFT INCLUDING TITLE/INTRODUCTION/PORPOSED BODY STRUCTURE
13	11/28	11/30 <b>PRESENTATIONS</b>	12/2 <b>PRESENTATIONS</b>
14	12/5 <b>PRESENTATIONS</b> CLASS EVALUATIONS	12/7 <b>PRESENTATIONS</b>	12/9 <b>PRESENTATIONS</b> <b>Final Research Paper is due on the date scheduled for final exam: 12/12</b>

FOR DAILY ASSIGMENTS AND READINGS SEE CALENDAR ON BLACKBOARD