

HCOL 185 I

HONORS COLLEGE SOPHOMORE SEMINAR
University of Vermont

FALL 2017

ENVIRONMENT, ECOCRITICISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF BEING GLOBAL

Welcome to HCOL 185 I

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 20th 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. Although the course focuses centrally on the Latin American region, as an opportunity to engage the professor’s current and past research, work from other world regions will also be addressed for comparative discussions.

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 among various theoretical perspectives in addition to the humanities, including cultural geography, cultural anthropology and political ecology. It is conceived as transdisciplinary, and meant to support multiple student’s backgrounds and experiences through secondary readings and contextual analysis. Thematically, first half (2nd - 6th 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 (7th-11th 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 to build writing and analytical skills for subsequent class work.
- b. **Essays: review, response and blog:** Each student will be responsible for writing two short essays -a response and a review- and one blog entry of no more than two pages each. Each paper will require a different approach to writing and gathering (researching) information.
 1. **Review:** a review is an 1-2 page “essay” meant to describe (informational) and convey (interpretative) to the reader the primary ideas and arguments of an artistic or literary piece. The goal of a review is to remain as objective as possible to the artist’s ideas or intentions.

2. Response: a response is a 2-page “essay” that enable interpretative or argumentative writing. This essay is a synthesis that will respond to a viewing (film), a guest talk or artistic installations/interventions. It is an opportunity to write from a more subjective perspective.

3. Blog Entry: the blog is a review and synthesis of journalistic information from Hispanic media that highlights a particular issue connected to class discussions for the week. It is meant to begin a conversation about class topics prior to class.

Writing a blog entry for other students to respond involves the following steps:

1. Selecting a topic that connects to class materials for the week
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
5. Posting it online to elicit comments and responses from other classmates.

The specific order of those events includes:

1. Confirming the topic of choice to be researched by the Friday before it is due.
2. Writing the blog as an essay and sending it to the professor over the weekend.
3. On Monday in class, the professor will provide comments or corrections, as necessary
4. Editing and posting the blog online by 9:00 pm for students to respond by Wednesday before class.

c. **Mini-presentation/ leading discussion:** 1. mini-presentations is an opportunity for the students who write the week’s blog to share the process of selection/discussion they posted. This will be a 2-minute presentation on the day the Blog responses are due and may include the “what and why” of the topic chosen. Hearing how fellow students connect topics and thought offers exposure to different points of view.

2. 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. It involves opening the day’s discussion.

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 group when 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. 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 then identify a thread to connect and integrate individual works. All students are expected to contribute equitably.

3. Library Liassion for Research of Bibliographic materials:

Laurie Kutner (laurie.kutner@uvm.edu) is the librarian or library liaison that specializes in Environmental Studies *and* Global & Regional Studies, including Latin America. Laurie can work closely with individual students in writing their final projects.

Daisy Benson (daisy.benson@uvm.edu) is the librarian or library liaison that specializes in literary topics that relate to Romance Languages (in this case Spanish although the materials would be in translation).

- 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), Mario Vargas Llosa (one selected chapter/novel), Isabel Allende (short story), Estela González (short story), Leslie Marmon Silko (short stories), Omero Aridjis (poetry), Juan Carlos Galeano (poetry), Bill McKibben (short essay), Gustavo Esteva (short essay); art work by Helen Escobedo (installations), Nicolás García Urriburu and Nele Acevedo (interventions), Chris Jordan (photo-collage), Sebastiao Salgado (photography); and selected narrative expressions from indigenous groups (Rapa Nui, Mapuche, Comcaac Seri). Secondary readings will include critics, John Elder, Philippe Descola, Enrique Leff, Noel Castree, Lawrence Buell, Diana Luque-Agraz and Walter Mignolo, among others. Film documentaries: *Planet Ocean* by Arthus-Bertrand & Pitiot, *The Pearl Button* by Patricio Guzmán, films *Even the rain* by Icíar Bollaín and *Sleep Dealer* by Alex Rivera, and other short films.

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)

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

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

Delanty, Gregg. *So Little Time: Words and Images for a World in Climate Crisis*. (poetry)
 Elder, John. *Picking up the Flute* (one chapter)
 Galeano, Juan Carlos. *Amazonia*. Bogotá: Casa de Poesía Silva, 2003. Print. (poetry selections)
 ---. *Yakumama*. Iquitos: CETA, 2011. Print. (poetry selections)
 Gonzalez, Estela. *Moosnípol and the sea, Arribada*. 2014 (short story, poetry)
 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 three (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 ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on campus: www.uvm.edu/access. *If you have a note from ACCESS, 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 SPAN 001 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 11, 2016
 Last day to withdraw: October 30, 2016

ASSIGNMENT !. ❗ /ACTIVITY CALENDAR ..
FOR DAILY ASSIGNMENTS AND READINGS SEE CALENDAR ON BLACKBOARD

1			Last day to add without instructor permission
2	9/4 No class	9/6	9/8 BLOG 1 Theme: Nature writing
3	9/11 Add/drop, Pass/no pass. Audit deadline	9/13 BLOG 2 Theme: Social Nature/ How we think about Nature	9/15 Lecture at Gund Institute REVIEW DUE
4	9/18	9/20 BLOG 3 Theme: Water/Oceans	9/22
5	9/25	9/27 BLOG 4 Theme: Social Nature/ Resources	9/29 IN CLASS EXAM I
6	10/2	10/4 BLOG 5 Theme: Food/ Indigenous and rural communities	10/6
7	10/9 No class	10/11 BLOG 6 Theme: Conservation	10/13 Lecture by visiting scholar RESPONSE DUE
8	10/16 LEAD DISCUSSION	10/18 BLOG 7 Theme: Fresh Water	10/20 LEAD DISCUSSION
9	10/23 PICK UP TAKE HOME EXAM II LEAD DISCUSSION	10/25 LEAD DISCUSSION	10/27
10	10/30 Last day to withdraw RETURN TAKE HOME EXAM	11/1 RESEARCH PROPOSAL: TOPIC/GROUP LEAD DISCUSSION	11/3 RESEARCH PROPOSAL: APPROACH/ TENTATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY
11	11/6 LEAD DISCUSSION	11/8 LEAD DISCUSSION	11/10 RESEARCH PROPOSAL: ABSTRACT/ BIBLIOGRAPHY
12	11/13 LEAD DISCUSSION	11/15 LEAD DISCUSSION	11/17 RESEARCH PROPOSAL: 2-PAGE DRAFT INCLUDING TITLE/INTRODUCTION/PROPOSED PAPER STRUCTURE
13	11/27 RESEARCH WRITING WORKSHOP	11/29 PRESENTATIONS	12/1 PRESENTATIONS
14	12/4 PRESENTATIONS	12/6 PRESENTATIONS	12/8 PRESENTATIONS CLASS EVALUATIONS

Final Research Paper is due 24 hours after the start-time scheduled for final exam: Email by @ 12:00 on 12/12