

ENGLISH 721
Fall 2020
Zoom: Mondays 3:00-5:30

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VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS
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VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTALISMS

The Victorian era witnessed the exponential growth of the central drivers of anthropogenic climate change: colonial expansion and the industrial revolution. This course examines nineteenth-century British and Anglophone writing about nature and the environment from our own current perspective of environmental degradation and ecological collapse. In particular, we will examine the ways in which nineteenth-century writers anticipated some aspects of current ecological thought: the ways they evinced an understanding of “nature” as a cultural construct, and engaged in (explicit and implicit) critiques of industrialization and the environmental effects of colonialism.

Sibling Classes: Prof. Elizabeth Miller, “Energy, Environment, and Victorian Literature” and Prof. Devin Garofalo, “Climate Monsters,” University of North Texas

Books (all *required* reading):

Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (Oxford; ISBN 978-0199538539)

William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (Oxford; ISBN 978-0199539192)

Richard Jefferies, *After London* (Edinburgh University Press; ISBN 978-0486797496)

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Penguin Classics, ISBN 978-0141439556)

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Broadview; ISBN 978-1551111360)

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Broadview; ISBN 978-1551112862)

=> **Please note:** It is important that you acquire these editions so that we are all (literally) on the same page during class discussion. I realize that many of these texts are available for free on line, but when you write and publish on literary texts as a critic you will need to refer to scholarly edited editions, so it’s a good idea to get in the habit now!

Other Texts and Course Materials:

All other readings will be available on the course Blackboard page, in the folder entitled “Readings,” in subfolders organized by date.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Short Critical Paper

Each course participant will write *one* short (6-7 page) response paper during the course of the term. This paper will ask you to reflect on the readings for that week in a critical way, and advance an argument (or at least a few ideas of your own) about the readings. You do not have to “cover” all the readings, but your paper should engage with the week’s primary materials and at least briefly mention one critical text (or more, if you choose). This paper will be due on the **Friday before class at 5:00 p.m.**

30% of Grade

2. Critical Paper Presentation and Response

Each week, one participant will present the short critical paper to the rest of the class and respond to it. (Each class member will thus write one short critical paper and prepare one response presentation over the course of the term.) You will briefly summarize the argument of the critical paper, and discuss how it addresses the ideas of the primary and critical readings for the week as well as the overall themes and ideas of the course as they have been developing. This presentation should be about 10 minutes, and no more than 15 minutes maximum.

10% of Grade

3. Weekly Deep Reading Outline/Summary

Each week (except the weeks in which you write the short critical paper or prepare the response) you will choose one secondary text for your Deep Reading, and prepare a reverse outline and brief summary of that reading. For more details, see the handouts “Grad Seminar Reading Tips & Strategies” and “Critical Article Summary Instructions” on the course Blackboard page. *You should not spend an inordinate amount of time on this assignment!* You should be able to prepare it almost entirely during the course of doing your Deep Reading, by outlining key sentences and notating as you go. The summary at the end should be no more than 2-3 paragraphs, and hopefully you will think of a couple of discussion questions as you read. Your summary will be due, by email to me, **Monday morning at 10:00 a.m.** Your document should be in MS Word or PDF format, and be named “**Authorlastname-Yourlastname**” (e.g. Jones-Smith, where the author of the reading is named Jones and you are named Smith).

10% of Grade

4. Final Assignment

You will have a choice for your final assignment: 1. A Keyword essay of 3-5 pages *plus* a 10-page conference paper (on the same topic) that you will present in our end-of-term conference with our two sibling classes; or 2. A traditional 20-page seminar paper with annotated bibliography. **Due Dates:** Option 1: Keyword essay is due **November 20th at 12:00 noon** (no incompletes or extensions will be granted), and the conference paper will be due to me **November 23rd at 12:00 noon** (the conference itself will be some time in the week after Thanksgiving); Option 2: Seminar paper is due **November 23rd at 12:00 noon**. If you would like to take more time on the seminar paper you may take an incomplete in the course, in which case the paper will be due no later than **January 8th at 12:00 noon**.

50% of Grade

COURSE PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

1. Zoom Best Practices

Please see the “Zoom Best Practices” document that we developed together, available on the course Blackboard page in the “Syllabus and Course Policies” folder.

2. Office Hours

I will be available for Zoom office hours by appointment. Please sign up for a time at the link at the top of the syllabus. If you can't make any of the available times, please email me and we'll set up an alternate time.

3. Course Inclusion Statement

Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, or genetic information will not be tolerated in this class. Classroom culture depends upon mutual respect; such discrimination is antithetical to our academic values.

4. Disturbing/Offensive Language and Concepts

The primary materials we are reading together on occasion use terms, and express ideas, that are considered offensive. I have assigned these texts because I believe both that the value that comes from reading and discussing them warrants their inclusion, and that we can mitigate potential harms by cultivating an environment of mutual care and respect. *The Story of an African Farm*, in particular, contains usages of the “n-word”; I request that we not read this word aloud in class should we need to discuss passages in which it occurs. If at any time you have concerns about our classroom culture, please feel free to talk to me.

READING SCHEDULE

Primary texts (Deep Reading) are in boldface

August 24

Williams, “Ideas of Nature”

Scott, “Industrial Souls: Climate Change, Immorality, and Victorian Anticipations of the Good Anthropocene”

MacDuffie, “Charles Darwin and the Victorian Pre-History of Climate Denial”

Betensky, “Casual Racism in Victorian Literature”

Yusoff, “White Utopia/Black Inferno: Life on a Geologic Spike”

Victorian Literature and Culture “Keywords” essays: Hensley, “Environment”; MacDuffie, “Environment”; Miller, “Ecology”; Taylor, “Anthropocene”; Kreisel, “Sustainability”; Frederickson, “Evolution”

August 31

Ruskin, “The Moral of Landscape”; Intro to *The Crown of Wild Olive*; from *Fiction, Fair and Foul*; from *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*

MacDuffie, “John Ruskin’s Alternative Energy”

Albritton & Albritton Jonsson, “Ruskin in the Anthropocene”

Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture*, Introduction

Yusoff, “Queer Coal: Genealogies in/of the Blood”

September 7

Hardy, *The Woodlanders*

Hardy, poems

Williams, “Wessex and the Border,” from *The Country and the City*

Roth, “The Zoocentric Ecology of Hardy’s Poetic Consciousness”

Rosenberg, “‘Infinitesimal Lives’: Thomas Hardy’s Scale Effects”

Morgan, “Scale as Form: Thomas Hardy’s Rocks and Stars”

September 14

Hardy, *The Woodlanders*

Darwin, selections from *The Descent of Man*

Miller, "Dendrography and Ecological Realism"

Cohen, "Arborealities: The Tactile Ecology of Hardy's *Woodlanders*"

Tait, "(Mis)Reading Hardy: 'Wessex' as Green Imaginary"

September 21

Morris, *News from Nowhere*

Morris, "How We Live and How We Might Live"

Morgan, "How We Might Live: Utopian Ecology in William Morris and Samuel Butler"

Miller, "William Morris, Extraction Capitalism, and the Aesthetics of Surface"

September 28

Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*

Darwin, Spencer, Huxley readings

Taylor, "Mourning Species: *In Memoriam* in an Age of Extinction"

Griffiths, "Spooky Action in Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam A. H. H.*"

Miller, "Composing Decomposition: *In Memoriam* and the Ecocritical Undertaking"

October 5

Jefferies, *After London*

Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* excerpts

Mayer, "A Darker Shade of Green"

Taylor, "The Novel after Nature, Nature after the Novel"

Plotz, "Speculative Naturalism and the Problem of Scale: Richard Jefferies's *After London*, after Darwin"

October 12

Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

Brontë, poems

D'Albertis, "Dark Nature: A Critical Return to Brontë Country"

Kreilkamp, "Petted Things: *Wuthering Heights* and the Animal"

October 19

Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

Gillman, "Remembering Slavery, Again"

Madiski, "Empire and Human Energy"

⇒ We will have a short (one-hour) class this day, plus a joint Zoom class later in the week with our two Sibling Seminars (time and date TBA)

October 26

Stoker, *Dracula*

Taylor, "The Death is the Life: *Dracula*, Fossil Fuels, and the Ecology of Undeath"

Dönmez, "A Gothic Ecocritical Analysis of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*"

November 2

Stoker, *Dracula*

Victorian degeneration readings

Otterberg, "Dark Darwin: (D)Evolutionary Theory and the Logic of Vampirism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*"

November 9

Hopkins, poems

Parham, *Green Man Hopkins* excerpts

Constantini, "'Strokes of havoc': Tree-Felling and the Poetic Tradition of Ecocriticism in Manley Hopkins and Gerard Manley Hopkins"

Day, "Hopkins' Spiritual Ecology in 'Binsey Poplars'"

Williams, "Down the Slant towards the Eye: Hopkins and Ecological Perception"

⇒ Annotated bibliography for seminar paper option due

November 16

Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm*

Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism"

King, "Black Landscapes in Flux"

Cohn, "Darwin's Marriage Plots: Unplotting Courtship in Late Victorian Fiction"

Prystash, "Fertilizing Darwin's Flowers: Feminist Narratives of Evolutionary Botany"