

Ecocritical Theory and Practice

LIT 422 (section 1) – (Fall 2016)

Class Time: Tues./Thurs 12:30-1:50pm in LA 302

Prof. Louise Economides (louise.economides@mso.umt.edu) Office: LA 227

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:30; Wed. 11-12 noon and by appointment

Required Texts:

Zimmerman et al. Environmental Philosophy. 4th Edition.

Glotfelty and Fromm. The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology.

Atwood, Margaret. Oryx and Crake.

DeLillo, Don. White Noise. Viking Edition.

Course Objectives:

During the 1990's, "ecocriticism" emerged as a new field of theory with the general goal of analyzing literary representations of nature, animals and humanity's relationship with the more-than-human world. Scholarship within British and American Romanticism was particularly important to first-wave ecocriticism. Since then, a variety of new approaches have emerged to challenge the ideological investments of first-wave critique. In this survey of the current field of green literary studies, we will cover first-wave as well as second-wave ecocriticism, including deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, queer and postmodern ecologies. Along the way, we will consider links between ecocriticism and earlier theory (such as feminism, marxism and deconstructionism), as well as debates between different schools of eco-critique. We'll also explore whether ecocriticism is a coherent theoretical school, and will use ecocritical frameworks to interpret literary texts.

A holistic issue we'll investigate throughout the course is the role that the arts can play in heightening our awareness of the ecological challenges we face today and in promoting environmental advocacy. Some of the questions we'll address include the root causes of our environmental crisis, whether anthropocentric and/or humanist subjectivity is adequate (or increasingly problematic) in the face of contemporary ecological problems, the viability (and risks) of new concepts of subjectivity issuing from post-humanist theory, the extent to which identity politics (including concepts of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and species) mediate our understanding of environmental debates, and the issue of technology's impact on how we think about "nature" today.

Graded Work Please note:

Papers must be hard copies – I do not accept e-mailed essays (if you are unable to attend class, please put hard copy of essay in my departmental mailbox in LA 133 a.s.a.p). Late papers will be reduced by one grade point for each day after due date (B- becomes C+, for example). No paper will be accepted that is more than two class periods late.

- 1) **Two research papers:** Two essays (8-10 pages) which engage with issues and theories discussed in class. A first draft for essay one is required.

- 2) **Group Presentation:** Working with a group of peers, you will be leading our class discussion on a critical essay and writing an overview of the process (2-3 pages) that generated your presentation. Please see separate assignment sheet which details requirements for presentations.
- 3) **Class Participation and Attendance:** Regular attendance (no more than 3 absences) and active participation are vital to your success in this course. If you miss more than 3 classes this semester, you can expect a maximum grade of “C” for your participation grade (less if you failed to meet participation guidelines listed here). “Active Participation” includes 1) coming to class having carefully read and annotated assigned texts 2) sharing your thoughts about the readings during our class discussions 3) asking focused questions concerning the readings, indicating prior preparation 4) responding to questions posed by your peers and/or instructor 5) actively participating in group work 6) coming to office hours to discuss issues we don’t have time to cover in class.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is a violation of trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/page/1321>.” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper.

Accommodation:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Learning Outcomes:

The following are some of the learning outcomes for this course –

1. Familiarity with the diverse methodologies and focuses of ecocritical theory.
2. Comprehension regarding how various schools of ecocriticism are in conversation with one another and build upon previous schools of critical theory.
3. Creative application of insights from ecocriticism to literary analysis.
4. Understanding how the study of literature creates disciplinary-specific demands upon researchers. Successful mastery of conventions entailed in literary analysis.
5. Capacity to conduct independent research using electronic search engines and other media.
6. Connecting ecocriticism with thinking skills that can be applied to solving ecological problems.
7. Ability to draft and revise written work effectively, using feedback from instructor.

Graduate Increment:

Graduate students taking this course are expected to produce papers commensurate with professional quality literary scholarship. This entails writing longer papers than undergraduates (10-15 pages rather than 8-10 pages), which employ more critical sources (minimum of 5 sources not otherwise discussed in class) and which reflect a higher level of synthesis and/or sophistication than undergraduate papers.

Graduate students must also teach one class which introduces students to material not already covered on the syllabus.

GRADED WORK POINT TOTALS

Essay one.....	300
Essay two	350
Group Presentation	200
Participation and Attendance	<u>150</u>
TOTAL:	1000

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

(Subject to changes) – EP=Environmental Philosophy; ER= Ecocritical Reader; M= Moodle. Bold Font= changes from first (paper) syllabus

WEEK ONE: Defining Ecocriticism

Tues. 8/30 Course introduction
Thurs. 9/1 Kroeber, Intro to Ecological Literary Criticism (M);
Glotfelty, Introduction to Ecocriticism Reader (ER)

WEEK TWO: Romantic Roots – Debating the Sublime

Tues. 9/6 Bate, “Toward Green Romanticism”(M); Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness”(M)
Thurs. 9/8 Shelley, “Mont Blanc”(M); Hitt, “Toward an Ecological Sublime” (M)

WEEK THREE: *Deep Ecology*

Tues. 9/13 Devall and Sessions from Deep Ecology (M); Manes, “Nature and Silence” (M)
Thurs. 9/15 Lussier, "Blake's Deep Ecology"(M); Blake, "The Book of Thel" and other poems (M)

WEEK FOUR: Critiques of Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

Tues. 9/20 Ferry, “Think Like a Mountain” (M); Zimmerman, "Ecofascism" (EP)
Thurs. 9/22 Warren, "Introduction" to Ecofeminism and Social Justice (EP); Gaard and Gruen,
"Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice" (EP)

WEEK FIVE: Ecofeminism and Its Critics

Tues. 9/27 Merchant, “Dominion Over Nature” (M);
Thurs. 9/29 Glazebrook, "Eco-logic..."(M); Cuomo, “Considering the Problems of Eco-Feminism” (M);

WEEK SIX: Applied Ecofeminism and Social Ecology

- Tues. 10/4 Wordsworth "Nutting" (M); Shelley, "The Sensitive Plant" (M)
Thurs. 10/6 Bookchin, "What is Social Ecology?" (EP); Luke, from *Ecocritique* (M)

WEEK SEVEN: Social Ecology and Its Critics

- Tues. 10/11 Eckersley, "Diving Evolution" (M)
Thurs. 10/13 Watson, "Against the Megamachine" (EP); **Essay One Due**

WEEK EIGHT: Environmental Racism and Social Justice

- Tues. 10/18 Race Theory and Social Justice: **Bullard, "Environmental Racism..."**(M);
White, "Black Women and the Wilderness" (M): **Presentation Group 1**
Thurs. 10/20 Silko, "Landscape, History and the Pueblo Imagination" (ER); Silko, "Lullaby" (M)

WEEK NINE: Queer Ecologies

- Tues. 10/25 Gaard, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism" (M); Barrington, "Poetry and Prejudice" (M)
Thurs. 10/27 Mortimer-Sandilands, "Melancholy Natures..." (M); **Presentation Group 2**

WEEK TEN: Postmodern Ecology and the "End of Nature"

- Tues. 11/1 Phillips, "Is Nature Necessary?" (ER); **Presentation Group 3**
Thurs. 11/3 McKibben, from *The End of Nature* (M); Morton, from *Ecology Without Nature* (M)

WEEK ELEVEN: Postmodern Ecologies

- Tues. 11/8 ELECTION DAY (NO CLASS)
Thurs. 11/10 DeLillo, White Noise Part One; Deitering, "The Postnatural Novel..." (ER);

WEEK TWELVE: Postmodern Ecologies, Continued

- Tues. 11/15 White Noise Part Two; Rozelle, from Ecosublime (M);
Thurs. 11/17 White Noise Part Three; Heise, from Sense of Place and Sense of Planet (M):
Presentation Group 4

WEEK THIRTEEN: Biotechnology and ecology

- Tues. 11/22 Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (M)
Thurs. 11/24 THANKS GIVING HOLIDAY (NO CLASS)

WEEK FOURTEEN: Biotechnology and ecology, Continued

Tues. 11/29 Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” (M): **Presentation Group 5**

Thurs. 12/1 Atwood, Oryx and Crake

WEEK FIFTEEN: Biotechnology and ecology, Continued

Tues. 12/6 Atwood, Oryx and Crake; Glover, “Human/Nature: Ecological Philosophy ...” (M)

Thurs. 12/8 Atwood, Oryx and Crake; **Essay Two Due**