

# EN963-20 Resource Fictions: Studies in World Literature

**20/21**

**Department**

English and Comparative Literary Studies

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Graeme Macdonald

**Credit value**

20

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

For students taking the World Literature pathway of the MA in English Literature. It will build upon the knowledge gained from other modules in World Literature. For all other students, the module will be a free-standing introduction to the study of Global literature and Eco-literature.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

This module examines the world literature of energy: oil, water, coal, gas, wind, nuclear, etc. It is platformed by recent theories of world literature that explore how literary studies can be reconceived on a global scale. It takes its cue from the suggestion that 'world' literary connections can be realised by identifying nodal relations in form and space between texts and their local and international contexts. Two central corresponding factors underpin the way energy resources - can be perceived as genuinely global cultural phenomena: their multinational connection to economic and political modes of imperialism and their prominence under the rise of environmentalism. 'Worlding' these 'resource fictions' springs them from their immediate national environment and internationalises their outlook. The course will analyse and compare texts from a variety of places

where such resources are marked by abundance and scarcity. It will reveal connecting patterns in form and content; patterns that confirm the usefulness of world literature as a method to map and critique the way in which global resources are unevenly produced, refined, extracted and powerfully exploited on a world scale. It also demonstrates the manner in which local populations affected by these resources can realise a sense of resistance and global solidarity with those in similar situations. In tracking the development of cultural responses to energy production throughout the twentieth century, the course will maintain a focus on the speculative forms of energy futures.

A typical year will concentrate on one or two of these resources and investigate their cultural and literary registrations.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

- Week One: Introduction to 'world' literary approach: Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', Selections from various sources, including Roberto Schwarz, Lucia Boldrini, Pascale Casanova, Nicholas Brown. - Week Two: Introduction to Oil/Wind/Gas/Nuclear as a global resource. Selections from various secondary reading texts (listed below)
- Week Three: 'Drainage!' American Naturalism, American Oil: Upton Sinclair, *Oil!*, USA, 1927 (followed by showing of Paul Thomas Anderson's 2007 film adaptation, *There Will Be Blood*)
- Week Four: Social Realism, Oil, and Island Revolts: Ralph de Boissiere, *Crown Jewel*, Trinidad, 1957 Week Five: 'It's (not and never was) Scotland's Oil!' The UK Oil Shock in Realism and Myth: George Mackay Brown, *Greenvoe*, Scotland, 1972.
- Week Six: Documentary Showing and Discussion (3-4 hrs): *Lessons From Darkness*, Germany/Kuwait, Werner Herzog, 1992; *A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash* Ray McCormack, Switzerland, 2006 (<http://www.oilcrashmovie.com>)
- Week Seven: Shell Shocks and Ogoni Resistance: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Selections from stories and essays, Nigeria, 1985
- Week Eight: Storage: Fantastic Realism and Island heritage, Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, Martinique, 1992
- Week Nine: Oil is our desert God: Abdalrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* (vol 1.), Saudi Arabia, 1985
- Week Ten: Peaks and Posts: Speculative Oil fictions, Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, USA, 2006

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- - Reflect, across a broad international range, on the cultural, political and economic registration of natural and refined resources in fiction, from the early twentieth century to the present. - Relate specific literary and other texts to the material conditions governing the control, distribution and use of energy resources nationally and globally.- Address insightfully the critical and political opportunities available in the use of both a world literary methodology and an ecocritical context.- Develop an essay theme designed to cover one aspect of the course in greater depth, but also, to convey a comparative awareness of some of the wider

literary and historical issues raised.- Develop an introductory research topic on a related area of the course for a qualificatory writing project.

## **Indicative reading list**

OIL: Primary Texts:

Upton Sinclair, Oil (USA, 1927)

Ralph de Boissiere, Crown Jewel (Trinidad, 1952)

George Mackay Brown, Greenvoe (Scotland, 1972)

Patrick Chamoiseau, Texaco (Martinique, 1992)

Ken Saro-Wiwa, Selections from Stories and Essays (Nigeria 1985-)

Abdulahman Munif, Cities of Salt (Saudi Arabia, 1987)

Cormac McCarthy, The Road (USA, 2007)

## **Subject specific skills**

No subject specific skills defined for this module.

## **Transferable skills**

No transferable skills defined for this module.

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## **Study**

### **Study time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (10%)
Private study	180 hours (90%)
Total	200 hours

### **Private study description**

Reading & research

## **Costs**

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## **Assessment**

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

## **Assessment group A1**

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
5,000 word essay	100%	

## **Feedback on assessment**

Tabula & face to face

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## **Availability**

### **Courses**

This module is Optional for:

- Available to all MA students on non-English Literature degree programmes – subject to availability and relevant qualifications.