

EN2D0-30 Literature, Environment, Ecology

22/23

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Nicholas Lawrence

Credit value

30

Module duration

20 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

EN2D0-30 Literature, Environment, Ecology

The premise of the module is twofold. First, given the scale and urgency of environmental breakdown in the twenty-first century, ecology – as a way of seeing and reading the world – should change how we study literature. Second, a materialist world ecology offers the most useful way of re-orienting literary study today, since it is (by definition) comparative and global in scope, while remaining attentive to the material and relational particulars of local environments, including textual ones.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

Because ecocriticism and the environmental humanities are among our fastest developing disciplines, the module aims to provide both a partial introduction to their history and an updated report from the field. Our emphasis will be on theoretical contexts for reading in environmental terms, with a special interest in innovative forms of imaginative, critical and activist practice. Topics to be covered include nature/society dualisms, the natural history of capitalism,

postcolonial critiques of 'wilderness,' environmental questions of race and sexuality, waste, cli-fi and dystopia, the Anthropocene/Capitalocene debates, ecological crisis and environmental activism. Throughout, we will examine literary and cultural production in relation to questions of environmental impact, models of ecological thinking and the implications of revising conventional ways of articulating human with extra-human nature. Our approach will be a combination of close and creative reading with attention to cultural and historical context, cross-national comparative study and variations in genre, methodology and medium.

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.

Term 1

Week 1: Introduction

Ursula Heise, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism," *PMLA* 121.2 (2006): 503-16 [pdf]

Jason W. Moore, "Wall Street is a Way of Organizing Nature," *Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action* 12 (May 2012): 39-53 [pdf]

David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth," New York (2017)

Week 2: The End of Nature: Literary Studies in the Age of the Capitalocene

Bill McKibben, "The End of Nature," *The End of Nature* (Doubleday): 47-91 [pdf]

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Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "The Meaning of the Anthropocene," *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene* (Pelican 2018) [epub]

Roy Scranton, "Coming Home," *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (City Lights, 2015) [epub]

Week 3: Enclosure/Escape/Scape

John Clare, "Journey Out of Essex" and "Poems Written in Epping Forest and Northampton Asylum" from *Major Works of John Clare* (Oxford World's Classics)*

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Raymond Williams, "Country and City" and "The Green Language" from *The Country and the City* (Chatto and Windus) [pdf]

Iain Sinclair, from *Edge of the Orison: In the Traces of John Clare's 'Journey Out of Essex'* (Penguin) [epub]

Week 4: Eco-praxis I

Henry D. Thoreau, "Walking" and "Slavery in Massachusetts"
[<https://www.walden.org/collection/essays/>]

+

Bill McKibben, "What Would Thoreau Do?" *New York Review of Books*, June 19, 2014 [pdf]

Raja Shehadeh, "Palestinian Walks" [pdf]

Week 5: Colonial World-Ecology

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Dover Thrift)*

+

Anne McClintock, from *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (Routledge) [pdf]

Week 6: Reading week

Week 7: American Environmentalism

Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford)*

+

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (Norton) [pdf]

Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 71-84 [pdf]

Week 8: The Carson Watershed

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Penguin Modern Classics)*

+

Rob Nixon, "Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor," from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard UP) [pdf]

Week 9: Narrating the Capitalocene I

Richard Powers, *Gain* (Picador)*

+

Sandra Steingraber, from *Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment* (Da Capo) [pdf]

Week 10: Trash

Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (Jonathan Cape)

+

Tim Cooper, "Recycling Modernity: Waste and Environmental History," *History Compass* 8/9 (2010): 1114–1125

Term 2

Week 1: Anthropocene Futures

Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago) (e-book via Warwick library)

+

Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis" (www.jasonmoore.com/essays.html) [pdf]

Andreas Malm, "Introduction: Theory for the Warming Condition," *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (Verso 2018)

Week 2: Postcolonial World-Ecology I

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (U of Wesleyan P) [pdf]

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Edouard Glissant, "Introductions," "Dispossession," "The Caribbean Experience," "Natural Poetics, Forced Poetics," Cross-Cultural Poetics," from *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (U of Virginia P) [pdf]

Kamau Brathwaite, from *History of the Voice: Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (New Beacon P) [pdf]

Week 3: Weather Systems I

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones* (Bloomsbury 2017)

+

Clyde Woods, "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?: Katrina, Trap Economics, and the Rebirth of the Blues," *American Quarterly* [handout]

Week 4: Postcolonial World-Ecology II

Alexis Wright, *The Swan Book* (Constable, 2015)*

+

Carl Cassegård and Håkan Thörn, "Toward a postapocalyptic environmentalism? Responses to loss and visions of the future in climate activism," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* (2018): 1-18 [pdf]

Week 5: Narrating the Capitalocene II

Han Kang, *The Vegetarian*, trans. Deborah Smith (Portobello 2015)

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Raj Patel, Introduction, Chapters 2, 8-9 and Conclusion from *Stuffed and Starved* (Portobello 2007)

Week 6: Reading week

Week 7: Weather Systems II

Ben Lerner, *10:04* (Granta 2015)

+

Ashley Dawson, "Introduction: Extreme City," "Chapter 2: Environmental Blowback," "Chapter 5: Climate Apartheid," "Conclusion: Urban Futures," from *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (Verso 2018)

Week 8: Blockadia

Dakota pipeline videos (Youtube)

Naomi Klein, "Introduction" and "Blockadia: The New Climate Warriors," *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Knopf)

+

Imre Szeman, "Introduction: Pipeline Politics," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116.2, (April 2017): 402-407

Week 9: Eco-praxis II

W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (Vintage)*

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Rebecca Solnit, "The Mind at Three Miles an Hour," *Wanderlust* (Vintage) [pdf]

Jenny Odell, "Surviving Usefulness" and "Restoring the Grounds for Thought," *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* (Melville House, 2019) [epub]

Week 10: Out of the ruins

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Post-Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton) [epub]

Learning outcomes

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

- Acquire knowledge of key theoretical and literary concepts and of relevant critical contexts within which to situate the set texts
- Develop analytical and critical skills through close reading, discussion of and responses to set texts
- Adjust to scholarly standards and protocols of academic presentation at honours level
- Explore methodologies for reading texts within the context of environmental and ecological concerns
- Demonstrate a broad knowledge of selected texts and concepts relating to ecocritical approaches
- Indicate awareness of various critical, analytical and creative methodologies relating to the course content
- Exhibit an effective command of written English together with a wide-ranging and accurate vocabulary
- Show command of the protocols of textual analysis and critical argument
- Conduct independent research through self-generated questions

Indicative reading list

Set texts for purchase

John Clare, *Major Works of John Clare* (Oxford World's Classics)

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Dover Thrift)

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Penguin Modern Classics)

Richard Powers, *Gain* (Picador)

Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (Jonathan Cape)

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones* (Bloomsbury)

Alexis Wright, *The Swan Book* (Constable)

Han Kang, *The Vegetarian* (Portobello 2015)

Ben Lerner, *10:04* (Granta 2015)

W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (Vintage)

All primary texts are available for easy purchase; secondary texts to be provided as PDF files or via online library access. Please see syllabus for illustrative bibliography.

Subject specific skills

No subject specific skills defined for this module.

Transferable skills

Exhibit an effective command of written English together with a wide-ranging and accurate vocabulary

Conduct independent research through self-generated questions

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour 30 minutes (9%)
Private study	273 hours (91%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Up to two optional field trips undertaken as a class.

Research & reading.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Report	20%	
Independent field trip report		
Assessed essay 2	40%	
3,000 word essay		
Assessed essay 1	40%	
3,000 word essay		

Feedback on assessment

Written comments; opportunity for further oral feedback during office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 2 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 2 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 2 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- Year 2 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature