

ENG 230 Intro to Environmental Literature

Professor Stephanie LeMenager
457 PLC

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Office Hours: Th. 1-4

Goals of Course: This course explores how literature, visual and kinetic media generate environmental emotions, ethics, and action. We will begin with the Nature concept that has dominated Western environmentalism for two hundred years and end with technological innovations meant to resolve ecological and ethical problems—for example, the creation of test-tube meat as a solution to the abuses of the industrial meat industry. Along the way, various literary and filmic genres will remind us of how story-forms, words, image, and hybrid media (eg. the graphic novel) enable specific structures of feeling, relationships between our species and others, new forms of environmental action, and the envisioning of planetary futures.

Texts:

Henry David Thoreau, **Walden; or, Life in the Woods (1854)**
Nick Hayes, **The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (2011)**
Margaret Atwood, **Oryx and Crake (2003)**
J.M. Coetzee, **The Lives of Animals (1999)**
Course Reader

Requirements:

Student attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for the day. Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Thereafter, a medical or other written excuse must be offered as documentation of the absence in order for the grade to remain unaffected. More than three unexcused absences may result in failure of the class. Please review the University policy regarding academic misconduct (at the web site for the Dean of Students, under “Student Conduct and Community Standards: Academic Misconduct”), which will be strictly enforced in this class. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you may fail the entire course, not just the assignment.

Participation (10%): Includes **mandatory** regular attendance, informed discussion by students, end-of-quarter blogging assignment, and leadership within a student team who will present on one course text this quarter.

Midterm Exam (25%): An in-class exam that asks students to demonstrate understanding of course readings and basic concepts. The exam includes an extra credit option that requires students to bring in a favorite quotation and explain its personal resonance. **Date:** 2/6.

Food Memoir (35%): 8 pp. Drawing on course readings and discussion, the food memoir will present each student’s record of him/herself as a consumer of non-human nature, e.g. as an eater. The memoir may treat an experiment in eating differently, for instance attempting to eat as a locavore for three days; it can grow from a log students keep of their daily food consumption for one week; it can describe an exemplary meal that the student has made with self-conscious concern for the sourcing of all food products. In some sense, the paper will include experiential data, giving the student an opportunity to become not

only an analyst but also a writer of environmental literature. *Each paper will be peer-edited before submission to Professor and will be expected to contain no grammatical or spelling errors. 10% of the final grade for this assignment will represent the student's performance as an editor of another student's memoir. **Due 3/6.**

Final Exam (30%): This exam asks students to demonstrate understanding of course readings, close reading skills, and flexible use of theoretical concepts that we have learned throughout the quarter. **Date: 3/17 at 8AM.**

Incompletes will be given for documented medical emergencies only.

Accessible Education

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon and request that the Accessible Education Center send a letter explaining what accommodations may be helpful to you in this course.

Inclement Weather

If inclement weather makes traveling to campus difficult, I will notify you by email and/or voice mail about whether we are holding class. If the weather is bad, check your email for a message from me. Whether or not I decide to hold class, you should use your own judgment about the safety of traveling to campus.

Reading and Topic Schedule:

Week 1

Course Unit #1: Looking for "Nature"

1/7

Andy Goldsworthy, *Rivers and Tides* (dir. Thomas Riedelsheimer, 2001)

1/9

Henry David Thoreau, "Where I Lived, What I Lived For," and "Conclusion" from *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* (1854)

Week 2

1/14

Thoreau, "Brute Neighbors" and "Higher Laws," from *Walden*

1/16

Thoreau, "The Pond in Winter" and "Spring," from *Walden*

Week 3

1/21

Bill McKibben, "The End of Nature" (1989) in READER

Rachel Carson, "Fable for Tomorrow" (1962) in READER

Course Unit #2: Environmental Melancholy

1/23

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1797-8) in READER

Week 4

1/28

Nick Hayes, *The Rime of the Modern Mariner* (2011)

1/30

The Rime of the Modern Mariner

Week 5

2/4

Warren Cariou, "Tar Hands: A Messy Manifesto" (2011) in READER
Film excerpts from *Land of Oil and Water* (dir. Warren Cariou, 2009)

2/6

In-class midterm exam

Week 6

Course Unit #3: Planetary Futures

2/11

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (2003)

2/13

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (2003)

Week 7

2/18

Begin watching *Chasing Ice* (dir. Jeff Orlowski, 2012)

2/20

Finish and discuss *Chasing Ice*

Week 8

Course Unit #3: Ethics, Animals, Food

2/25

J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (1999)

2/27

J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (1999)
Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Panther" in READER
Ted Hughes, "The Jaguar" in READER

Week 9

3/4

Michael Pollan, "The Feedlot: Making Meat" (2006)

Discussion of "test tube" animal products via the arts collective SymbioticA and *In Vitro Meat Cookbook* (forthcoming)

3/6

Roundtable: Student Food Memoir

Week 10

Course Conclusion

3/11

Jonathan Franzen, "My Bird Problem" (2005) in *READER*

3/13

Virtual Section: Blog about Franzen

3/17 Final Exam at 8AM