

## **ENG 230 Intro to Environmental Literature**

**Professor Stephanie LeMenager**  
457 PLC

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**Office Hours: M 11-12; W 12-2**

**Goals of Course:** This course explores how literature, film and other media generate environmental emotions, ethics, and action. We will begin with the climate change crisis that has dominated contemporary environmentalism in the past decade and end the course by going back to the concept of Nature, as it has been elaborated in Western culture since the classical period and especially in the work of American Romantics such as Henry Thoreau. Along the way, various literary and filmic genres will remind us of how story-forms, words, image, and hybrid media (eg. cartoons) enable environmentalist points of view, relationships between our species and others, new forms of environmental action, and the envisioning of planetary futures. The course asks students to participate directly in the making of “environmental literature” by creating their own media for class discussion.

### **Texts:**

Henry David Thoreau, **Walden; or, Life in the Woods (1854)**  
J.M. Coetzee, **The Lives of Animals (1999)**  
Patricia Smith, **Blood Dazzler (2008)**  
Wu Ming-Yi, **Man with the Compound Eyes (2014)**  
Grady Klein and Yoram Bauman, **The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change (2014)**

**Other Readings in Schedule Are Posted on Blackboard**

### **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, blog entries and in-class presentations on 2/11 and 3/11.

**Midterm Exam (25%):** An in-class exam that asks students to demonstrate understanding of course readings and basic concepts. Students should study by reviewing course readings and notes from class discussion. **Date: 2/2**

**Two short papers (40%--in other words, 20% each):** These two 3-5 pp. short papers are designed to sharpen your skills in creating concise, well-written arguments backed up by convincing evidence. You will be expected to post the thesis statement (argument) of each paper on our Blackboard discussion board the night before turning in the papers. Paper topics to be distributed.

**Final Exam (25%):** 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. **Study should include reviewing all readings and class notes.**

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.

### **Learning Outcomes for ENG 230:**

Students will sharpen skills as critical thinkers, writers, and public speakers.

Students will analyze environmental rhetoric and use their analyses to develop more persuasive argumentation regarding topics and issues of their choosing.

Students will write two short original essays utilizing skills in effective argumentation, close reading, and research.

Students will present their research to the class to develop oral presentation skills.

### **Course Schedule:**

1/5

Course Introduction

1/7

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

Watch film in class.

1/12

*Chasing Ice*

Finish film and discuss in class.

1/14

Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler* (2008)

### **1/19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Holiday**

1/21

*Blood Dazzler* (cont'd)

Excerpts from *Trouble the Water* (dirs.. Carl Deal, Tia Lessen, 2008)

1/26

Grady Klein and Yoram Bauman, *The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change* (2014)

1/28

*The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change* (2014)

2/2

**In-class midterm exam.**

2/4

Wu Ming-Yi, *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (2014)

2/9

*The Man with the Compound Eyes* (2014)

2/11

**Class Debate.** Each student presents 3-minute argument for which form (film, poetry, speculative fiction, cartoon) proves most convincing in developing interest in the topic of global climate change.

For debate, review the *New York Times* Forum “Will Fiction Influence How We React to Climate Change?,” posted on **Blackboard**.

***Paper #1 due in class.***

2/16

J.M. Coatzee, “The Philosophers and the Animals,” in *The Lives of Animals* (1999)

Excerpts from Aristotle, René Descartes, Jeremy Bentham on **Blackboard**

2/18

Coatzee, “The Poets and the Animals,” from *The Lives of Animals*

Excerpts from Rainer Maria Rilke, Ted Hughes, Les Murray on **Blackboard**

2/23

In-class discussion of *Blackfish* (dir. Gabriela Cowperthwaite, 2014), animal rights and media

Excerpts of *Blackfish* shown in class.

2/25

Michael Pollan, “The Intelligent Plant” (2013) on **Blackboard**

Sy Montgomery, “Deep Intellect: Inside the Mind of an Octopus” (2011) on

**Blackboard**

***Paper #2 due in class.***

3/2

Henry David Thoreau, “Where I Lived, What I Lived For,” and “Conclusion” from *Walden* (1854)

Raymond Williams, “Nature” (1976) on **Blackboard**

3/4

Thoreau, “Brute Neighbors” and “Higher Laws,” from *Walden*

3/9

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

3/11

**Concluding class roundtable.**

3-minute student presentations: *Walden 5.0. What Is My Walden?*