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443 PLC  
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Office Hours: M, 2-4pm; W, 2-3pm

## **Ecocritical Approaches to Race and Ethnicity**

ENGL 660  
Mondays, 9-11:50am  
Winter 2015

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. Ecocritical inquiry takes many forms and is often interdisciplinary. In one emergent tributary of ecocriticism, scholars have engaged thoughtfully with the intersections between Race and Ethnic Studies and environmental literary criticism. These scholars have sought to understand how racial projects articulate with changing cultural constructions of nature. How have representations of nature, land, or the environment communicated particular ideas about race and racial categories? How have Black, Native American, Latina/o and Asian American writers navigated the mutually-constitutive construction of race and nature in their literary and cultural productions?

This course foregrounds scholarship by environmental literary and cultural critics that engages in an informed and extended manner with insights from U.S. Race and Ethnic Studies, including the fields of Asian American Studies, African American Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Native American Studies. This course will focus primarily on secondary sources. We will not be reading and discussing primary texts together as a class. Rather, we will work on identifying the ways scholarly texts mobilize close readings to participate in larger scholarly conversations. This does not mean you will not be working on your close reading skills during this course. Rather, you will select a cultural or literary text on which you will focus throughout the quarter. You are encouraged to think of “text” broadly in this sense and to select a text that fits with your larger academic trajectory. It is required that you meet with me to discuss your chosen text and possible secondary sources by the end of the third week of the quarter.

Your final project, which we will be working on throughout the course, will be a 10-12 page paper based on your chosen focal text. This paper should either a) contribute to a scholarly conversation/debate within ecocriticism’s consideration of Race and Ethnic Studies through a reading of the text or b) contribute to scholarly understandings of the text through an application of an ecocritical approach to race and ethnicity.

One of the academic professionalization skills we will be working on this quarter is identifying and communicating interventions. We will be paying particular attention to the types of interventions scholars make and the rhetorical moves they make to situate themselves in a larger conversation. This is also a technique students will be working on in their own writing and class presentations.

Additionally, the University of Oregon will sponsor a symposium entitled Race and the Anthropocene from May 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The symposium poses an intervention into popular and academic discussions of the anthropocene. It points out that we are not all equally responsible for or equally affected by the human-made changes that mark the anthropocene. Participants will ask whether (or how) the universalizing discourse of

the anthropocene alters the social function and experience of race in history, theory, and day-to-day life. This class will also help prepare you to more fully engage with this symposium. I encourage you all to attend.

## Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate an introductory understanding of environmental literary criticism and critical race theory.
- Engage in and contribute to a scholarly conversation about race and ethnicity within ecocriticism.
- Apply the arguments in scholarly articles to cultural and literary texts.
- Develop and convey arguments about literary criticism and cultural texts clearly and persuasively.
- Undertake original research with assistance from faculty by
  - (a) identifying new scholarly problems or fields or building on existing ones; (b) locating and assessing current scholarly work applicable to a chosen topic/text; (c) framing their own arguments clearly, cogently, and logically, offering convincing evidentiary support for their claims; and (d) explaining how their claims build on, refute, or add to existing scholarly debate and knowledge.

## Required Texts

- You are not required to purchase texts for this class. All readings will be posted to Blackboard. You are required to bring copies of all readings to class, either as a hard copy or as an electronic copy.

## Course Policies

**Preferred First Name:** The University of Oregon has a preferred first name policy. According to this policy, a student or employee's preferred first name will be used in university communications and reporting except where the use of the legal name is required for university purposes. If you have reasons to believe your preferred first name may not be listed correctly in the roster or you do not feel comfortable taking advantage of UO's preferred first name policy, please communicate to me the name you wish to use. The preferred first name policy can be accessed here: <http://policies.uoregon.edu/node/216>

**Accessible Education:** The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if aspects of the instruction or course design results in barriers to your participation. Students are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (AEC) 541-346-1155; <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>). AEC helps provide services including sign language interpreting, computer-based note-taking, classroom relocation, exam modifications, and alternative text conversion. Please request that the Accessible Education Center send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

**Late Work:** All work is to be handed in on time. Late work will not be graded.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to adhere to the University of Oregon's standards of academic integrity. All work should be your own, and all sources should be appropriately acknowledged. Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, duplicate submission, cheating on examinations, and false citations. Please do not hesitate to speak to me if you have any questions about use of sources or citations. It is far better to ask than to unintentionally plagiarize. Please refer to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research

Papers as a citation style-guide. Please read the Academic Misconduct Code in full. It can be accessed at: <http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx>

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and constitutes part of your grade. You may miss one class meeting without penalty. Missing two classes is grounds for failure. Exceptions to this policy may be made for those with adequate excuse and sufficient documentation. Please contact me to discuss. You are responsible for all assigned materials in the class and ensuring that your work is turned in on time.

**Participation:** This is a discussion-based seminar. Attendance alone is not adequate. You are expected to come to class prepared, having read the material and engaged critically with it. You should print out and bring any materials distributed on blackboard. Attend class ready to share your thoughts about the readings. I expect you to contribute meaningfully during each session.

**Title IX Policy and Reporting Responsibilities:** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Consequently, all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Students seeking to discuss a situation without talking to a mandatory reporter may call 541-346-SAFE. This 24/7 hotline is staffed by confidential, trained counselors. For confidential help, students may also contact University Health Services (<http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu/>) or Sexual Assault Support Services (<http://sass-lane.org/>).

**Inclement Weather:** In the event of inclement weather, the UO home webpage (<http://www.uoregon.edu/>) will include a banner at the top of the page displaying information about delay, cancellation, or closure decisions for the Eugene campus. Additionally, the UO Alerts blog will be updated with the latest updates and bulletins. Local television and radio stations will also broadcast delay and cancellation information. Classes will not be held if cancelled by the university. If inclement weather makes traveling to campus difficult, I will additionally notify you by email about whether we are holding class. If the weather is bad, check your email for a message from me. Additionally, members of the campus community are expected to use their best judgment in assessing the risk of coming to campus and returning home, based on individual circumstances. Those who believe the road conditions from home are dangerous are urged and even expected to stay there to prevent injury.

**Class Communication:** The primary means of communication outside of class in this course will be through your UO email account. Please check this account regularly. I am also most readily available through email. I will respond much more rapidly to email than to a telephone call. Generally, you can expect an email response from me within two working days.

## Course Assessment

- Attendance and participation, 10%
  - To receive an A, you should attend every class, arrive on time, bring a copy of the article, and contribute thoughtfully to the discussion. Contributing thoughtfully means that you pose questions and provide answers that reflect your careful reading of the material, including directly referencing passages in the reading. In responding to your peers' observations, questions, and interpretations, you engage with the substance of their ideas and model respectful disagreement. In your questions, comments, and critiques, you show a willingness to take intellectual risks. Your contributions develop bridges between different class sessions, contributing to a conversation that spans the quarter.
- Scholarly conversation paper, 15%
  - Explain how two different scholarly articles or chapters from the class are in conversation. **Due to Blackboard prior to the class on Monday, 2/2.** 4-5 pages.
- Application of academic article paper, 15%
  - Place your chosen text for your final project into conversation with one of the scholarly articles/chapters assigned for the course. Address one of the following two questions: How does the text you have chosen for your final paper help you understand the argument in a chapter or article we read for this class? How does a chapter or article from the class deepen/challenge/change your reading of your focal text? Your paper should have a thesis. It should incorporate a close reading of your focal text. **Due to Blackboard before class on Monday, 2/16.** 4-5 pages.
- Annotated bibliography of secondary sources, 10%
  - Your annotated bibliography must contain at least eight sources relevant to your project. These eight sources may not include chapters or articles assigned in class. They may include other relevant chapters from books we read only partially. **Due to Blackboard before class on Monday, 2/9.**
- Final Paper Draft, 10%
  - The goal of the final paper draft is for you to receive feedback from Prof. Wald to improve your final paper. **Due to Blackboard before class on 3/2.** 5-7 pages.
- Final Conference Presentation, 10%
  - You will be giving a 15 minute long conference version of your paper during the final day of class. We will discuss effective presentation strategies in class. **Due in class on Monday, 3/9.**
- Final Paper, 30%
  - The final paper should be 10-12 pages long. **Due to Blackboard by 10:15am on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>.**

## Class Outline and Schedule

**Week One:** Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to Racial Formation

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "The Theory of Racial Formation," *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 105-136.

Priya Kandaswamy, "Gendering Racial Formation," *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 23-43.

Andrea Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 66-90.

**Week Two:** Monday, January 12: Introduction to Environmental Justice Ecocriticism

T.V. Reed, "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism," *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy*, ed. Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 145-162.

Julie Sze, "From Environmental Justice Literature to the Literature of Environmental Justice," *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy*, ed. Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 163-180.

Noel Sturgeon, "The Politics of the Natural in U.S. History and Popular Culture," *Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of the Natural* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 17-49.

**Week Three:** Monday, January 19: MLK Day, No Class.

If you have not already set up an appointment with me to discuss the text you will be writing your final project on, please do so by the end of this week. Since we don't have any class or reading this week, I suggest you begin compiling your annotated bibliography this week.

**Please also note:** Next week we have about double the amount of reading that is assigned other weeks. I advise you to take advantage of the absence of assigned reading in Week Three to start on Week Four's reading.

**Week Four:** Monday, January 26: Slavery, Anti-Slavery, and Nature

Jeffrey Myers, "Introduction," Chapter Two, and Chapter Four, *Converging Stories: Race, Ecology and Environmental Justice in American Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 1-22, 23-48, 87-110.

Ian Frederick Finseth, "Introduction," and Chapter One, "Nature and Antislavery Philosophy," *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1770-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 1-73.

**Week Five:** Monday, February 2: From Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance

**Due Today:** Scholarly Conversation Paper due on Blackboard prior to class.

Paul Outka's *Race and Nature: From Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008). Read: "Introduction," "White Flight," "Migrations," 1-26, 150-200.

**Week Six:** Monday, February 9: The Racial Politics of Pollution

**Due Today:** Annotated bibliography due to Blackboard prior to class.

Sarah Jaquette Ray, "The Poetics of Trash: Immigrant Bodies in the Borderland Wilderness," *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 139-178.

John Gamber, "Introduction," *Positive Pollutions and Cultural Toxins: Waste and Contamination in Contemporary U.S. Ethnic Literatures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2012), 1-24.

Stacy Alaimo, "Invisible Matters: The Sciences of Environmental Justice," *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 61-83.

**Week Seven:** Monday February 16: Asian American Literatures and Ecocriticism

**Due Prior to Class:** Application of academic article paper

Robert T. Hayashi, "Beyond Walden Pond: Asian American Literature and the Limits of Ecocriticism," *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice*, ed. Annie Merrill Ingram, Ian Marshall, Daniel J. Philippon and Adam W. Sweeting (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 58-79.

John Gamber, "Introduction," *Asian American Literature and Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-12.

Another Selection, TBA.

**Week Eight:** Monday, February 23: Latina/o Literary Interventions

**Due Today:** 5 page draft of final paper due to Blackboard prior to class.

Claudia Sadowski-Smith, "Chicano Writing and the Mexican U.S. Border," *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing and the Boundaries of the United States* (Charlotte: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 21-45.

Priscilla Ybarra, "Erasure by U.S. Legislation: Ruiz de Burton's Nineteenth-Century Novels and the Lost Archive of Mexican American Environmental Knowledge," in *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First*

*Century*, ed. Stephanie LeMenager, Ken Hiltner, and Theresa Shewry (New York: Routledge, 2012), 135-147.

Another Selection, TBA.

- You are also encouraged to attend David Vázquez's Works in Progress presentation in the Department of English on Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm and/or his presentation at the Environmental Studies's Brown Bag series on March 19<sup>th</sup> at 12pm. In both talks, Vázquez will be discussing the intersection of ecocriticism and Latina/o Literature.

**Week Nine:** Monday, March 2: Nuancing Native American and African American Ecoliterature

Lee Schweninger, *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008). "The Land Ethic Stereotype: American Indian Wisdom," 16- 35; "Where the Buffalo Roam: Iconoclasts and Romantics," 36-56.

Kimberly N. Ruffin, *Black on Earth: African American Ecoliterary Traditions* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010). Introduction, 1-24; "Animal Nature: Finding Ecotheology," 88-110.

**Week Ten:** Monday, March 9: Final presentations

In Class: Final Presentations

Final papers due to Blackboard no later than scheduled Final Exam at 10:15am on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>.

\*\* Event of Interest: Hands Up & Breathe: A Conversation About Racial Justice and Hip Hop Culture with Jeff Chang and James Peterson, 3-4:30pm, Friday March 13, 2015 Gerlinger Lounge