



FALL 2015  
INTRODUCTION TO FICTION – ENVIRONMENTAL GENRE  
ENG104 | MWF 9-950AM | CRN 32000  
260 CONDON HALL

"The facts which loomed so large in the fogs of yesterday, — property, climate, breeding, personal beauty, and the like, have strangely changed their proportions. All that we reckoned settled shakes and rattles; and literatures, cities, climates, religions, leave their foundations, and dance before our eyes."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Circles* (1841)

Instructor: C. Parker Krieg

Email: [krieg@uoregon.edu](mailto:krieg@uoregon.edu)

Office/Hours: PLC102, MW 10am-Noon (or by appointment)

Phone Number: (541) 346-3517

Required Texts:

Texts must be brought to class every meeting for full participation.

*Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton

*Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn

*Archipelago* by Monique Roffey

*Wild* by Cheryl Strayed

## Course Description

This course offers an introduction to contemporary literature through the interpretive and analytic lens of the environmental humanities. Throughout the quarter, we will be studying how narratives shape our ideas about society and the environment. What is our environment? As we look around in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we find it populated with various “natures,” both artificial and wild, and sometimes even feral or “out of control.” Environmental justice advocates point to the economic, racial, and gender inequalities that limit equal participation in decisions that affect all of our lives. However, meaning itself is also at stake. As anthropogenic climate change leaves no part of the planet untouched, Nature loses that sense of metaphysical and transcendent “otherness” that held our imaginations for centuries. At the same time, we find our private worlds overflowing with non-humans (animals), materials (petroleum and “energy”), and technologies of consumption, which seem much more intimate, yet evade our grasp. Narratives help us to recognize and think beyond the coordinates of the present, beyond our own experiences, and focus our attention on the ways that our lives are bound up with others.

This course focuses on the novel, one of the most dynamic and flexible forms of narrative social representation. Hannah Arendt called the novel, “the only entirely social form of art,” in that it rose to prominence with the spread of printing and the modern public sphere. Pragmatist Richard Rorty describes the novel as the “characteristic genre of democracy,” because it allows readers to imagine the lives and situations of people other than ourselves. The novel is unique in its capacity to relate multiple scales of experience and knowledge simultaneously, from the interior lives of individuals to the larger cultural, historical, institutional—and now, *environmental*—contexts in which we find ourselves. We will explore the novel through different genres: techno-thriller, speculative fiction, literary fiction, and literary memoir. We will compare how these texts narratively construct the relation between the individual, society, and the natural environment. Even if we read novels for individual pleasure it is still an intensely social activity. Novels foster our ability to think critically across multiple frames of reference. By studying them, we become better analysts and producers of our own culture.

This course satisfies credit toward the Arts & Letters category general education requirement. However, these credits do not count toward the English major.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, or historical contexts;
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgement and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

## Grading Breakdown

10%	Reading Quizzes (1 per week, random)
25%	Intertext Analysis Paper (2 total, 2-3 pages each)
20%	Mid-Term Exam
20%	Close Reading Essay (3-4 pages)
25%	Literary Analysis Essay (5 pages)

## Assignments & Grading

**Reading Quizzes 10%:** Each week there will be one random quiz for the first ten minutes of class. Quizzes are a way for you to practice the skills of literary analysis, as well as prepare for mid-term exams and essays. These are also a way for me to check reading comprehension and identify areas of the course material that need more attention in class. Quizzes cannot be made up and I will drop the lowest score at the end of the quarter.

**Mid-Term 20%** Exams will be based on course readings, key concepts, and class discussions. They will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. I will offer make-up exams only in the case of documented emergency.

**Intertext Analysis Papers (2) 25%:** For the last two novels, you will write a 2-3 page analysis that explains your understanding of the primary text through one of the intertexts. These intertexts may have significance for the plot, themes, or formal characteristics of the novel.

**Close Reading Essay 20%:** This 3-4 page essay is a response to a prompt. You will identify and explain the significance of 2 passages from one of the texts to our understanding of the novel. You will then be asked to build on your close reading to make a claim about how the novel addresses the larger themes in the class. Prompts will be distributed.

**Literary Analysis Essay 25%:** This is a 5 page essay that makes an interpretive argument that compares how two of the novels we have read address a similar concept. Your argumentative claims should be supported by close readings of passages. Terms should be clear, well-defined, and serve to further your argument. All quotes, paraphrases, and summaries should be cited in text and on the works cited page. Prompts will be distributed.

## Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please consult the *Student Conduct Code* on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. In cases where academic misconduct has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is the standard practice of the English department. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

## Attendance

Attendance is required. You may miss the equivalent of one week of class meetings for any reason – I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Additional absences will each lower your course grade by 1/3 of a letter. For example, the first additional absence after one week of absences will reduce a B- to a C+, the second additional absence will reduce a B- to a C, and so on. Please notify me ahead of time if you must miss class, will be late, or leave class early. You are responsible for anything you miss if you are not in class. Any absence after two full weeks of missed class *may* result in course failure. Any absence after three full weeks of missed class *will* result in course failure.

## Late Work

All assigned work is due at the beginning of class. If you must miss class, turn in your work before our class meeting to receive credit. Late work will drop a full letter grade for each calendar day it is late. If, for any reason, you have a problem meeting the deadline it is your responsibility to contact me in advance of the deadline to work out other arrangements. This does NOT include sending an email the night before the essay is due.

## Grading and Expectations

"Introductory" and "100-level" does not mean "easy." You will be held to English department standards in terms of your in-class participation, your display of course mastery on exams and quizzes, and the structure, argument, grammar, and mechanics of your writing. The reading and written work for this course may be heavy at times.

## Access

If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to classroom activities. You may wish to contact the Accessible Education Center (146 Oregon Hall):

[uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu)

## Technology

This is a small, discussion-based class. As such, **cell phones** are highly disruptive. The ringer must be turned off *before* the start of class. You may not text, answer or make calls in the writing classroom. Since this is not a lecture course, **personal computers** are not necessary for note-taking and should not be used during class time. Unless approved by me.

## Schedule of Assignments

Week 1: Genre: Science Fiction/Techno-Thriller

Mon 9/28: Introduction to English 104

Wed 9/30: Jurassic Park (Introduction – p51)

Fri 10/2: Jurassic Park (52-110)

Week 2: Periodization—Anthropocene and De-Extinction

Mon 10/5: Jurassic Park (111-177)

Wed 10/7: Jurassic Park (181-227)

Fri 10/9: Jurassic Park (228-268)

Week 3: Political Allegories—Chaos and Control

Monday 10/12: Jurassic Park (271-314)

Wed 10/14: Jurassic Park (317-364)

Fri 10/16: Jurassic Park (367-399); Close Reading Essay Due

Week 4: Genre: Speculative Fiction

Mon 10/19: Ishmael (3-46)

Wed 10/21: Ishmael (49-91)

Fri 10/23: Ishmael (95-148)

Week 5: Scales of “Culture”

Mon 10/26: Ishmael (151-207)

Wed 10/28: Ishmael (211-263)

Fri 10/30: Midterm Exam

Week 6: Genre: Literary Fiction—Postcolonial Caribbean

Mon 11/2: Archipelago (3-67)

Wed 11/4: Archipelago (69-119)

Fri 11/6: Archipelago (121-203)

Week 7: “Cli-Fi”

Mon 11/9: Archipelago (207-277)

Wed 11/11: Archipelago (279-319)

Fri 11/13: Archipelago (323-358)

Week 8: Genre: Literary Memoir

Mon 11/16: Wild (3-44)

Wed 11/18: Wild (47-101)

Fri 11/20: Wild (102-154); Intertext Paper I Due

Week 9: American Journeys—Thoreau to Strayed

Mon 11/23: Wild (155-205)

Wed 11/25: Wild (206-261)

Fri 11/27: Cancelled Thanksgiving

Week 10: Perseverance

Mon 11/30: Wild (262-299);

Wed 12/2: Wild (300-311)

Fri 12/4: Discussion; Intertext Paper II due

Week 11:

Literary Analysis Essay Due