ENGL 660: Racial Ecologies
Thursdays, 2-4:50pm
Fall 2021

Course Description

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar explores the intersections of environment and race in the United States. We read scholarship that seeks 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 racial projects been produced through or furthered by particular ecological relations? How have Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American writers and artists navigated the mutually-constitutive construction of race and nature in their literary and cultural productions? What are the environmental imaginaries that emerge in the work of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American writers, artists, and activists?

The class centers on a collaborative public humanities project using racial ecologies as a frame to examine social and environmental justice issues in Oregon. We will be actively working on this project during class time.

Why Racial Ecologies? In framing the class around the concept of “racial ecologies,” I follow LeiLani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams in their argument that “race is inextricable from our understandings of ecology, and vice versa. In fact, ideologies that define terms such as nature and landscape also sub tend categories such a self/other, Asian, and white. This perspective allows for a broad definition of ecology, one that includes urban environments and agricultural systems. We consider nature and environment as relational sites for navigating both embodied racial identities and ecological space as place. Our use of the term racial ecologies instead of the more static term environment references these systems that shift and change over time but are always intertwined” (3-4). In using the term racial ecologies, I also signal that I am grounding this course in the tradition of Indigenous, race, and ethnic studies scholarship.

Please note that the assignments, course assessment, reading schedule, and project work plan outlined in this syllabus are a plan, not a certainty. They may be altered as we move through the quarter.

Course Objectives

Course Content
- Define and contextualize the term racial ecologies
- Describe ethnic studies and environmental humanities scholars’ approaches to racial ecologies, including key terms, questions, arguments, and methodologies
- Apply the scholarly framework of racial ecologies to literary and cultural texts and to contemporary and/or historical ecologies, landscapes, or geographies.
**Graduate Level Skills**

- Identify the arguments in scholarly articles and apply those arguments to cultural and literary texts in both written and oral forms.
- Develop and convey arguments about literary criticism and cultural texts clearly and persuasively in both written and oral forms.
- Articulate how to find appropriate primary and secondary sources for an interdisciplinary humanities research project.

**Community-Based Learning**

- Recognize community members/community organizations as legitimate sources of knowledge.
- Develop a non-extractive mutually-beneficial relationship with community members and a community organization.

**Required Texts**

Lauret Savoy, *Trace* (Counterpoint Press 2016)
- Available at UO Bookstore and Knight Library Reserve (requested)

- Available at UO Bookstore and Knight Library (as e-book)

- Available at UO Bookstore and Knight Library Reserve

Craig Santos Perez, *Habitat Threshold* (Books International 2020).
- Available at UO Bookstore and Knight Library Reserve (requested)

- Available at UO Bookstore, Knight Library Reserve, and Knight Library (as e-book)

All other readings will be posted to Canvas.

**DIGITAL AND DATA LIBRARIANS**

In this class, we will be working with a number of collaborators. Below you will find contact information from three of our UO collaborators.

**Library Faculty:** Kate Thornhill, Digital Scholarship Librarian  
**Email:** kmthorn@uoregon.edu  
**Contact for help with:** ESRI StoryMaps, WordPress, Dropbox, Copyright & Licensing, Web Accessibility, Multimedia Editing Tools, Storytelling

**Library Faculty:** Gabriele Hayden, Research Data Management & Reproducibility  
**Email:** ghayden@uoregon.edu  
**Contact for help with:** Data Management

**Library Faculty:** Kathy Stroud, Map/GIS Librarian  
**Email:** kstroud@uoregon.edu  
**Contact for help with:** Data Sources & Citation
Course Assessment

- Attendance and Participation, 20%
  - To receive an A, you should attend class, arrive on time, bring a copy of the readings, 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. You remain focused and fully engage with any work (including group work) assigned during class. Your contributions develop bridges between different class sessions, contributing to a conversation that spans the quarter. *Note: Please speak to me if you miss class due to emergency, illness, caregiving duties, etc.

- Racial Ecologies Project, 80%

In this class, we will be engaged in a collaborative public humanities project researching the racial ecologies of Mt. Hood National Forest. This project was developed in conversation and collaboration with stakeholders in federal agencies and non-governmental organizations working on federal land management and advocacy. Our primary community partner is the organization Bark (https://www.bark-out.org/) which works to shift management priorities on Mt. Hood National Forest. Our work will help them envision and advocate for just futures for the land managed as Mt. Hood National Forest. Our aim is to educate public land managers, public lands advocates, and public lands users about the entangled racial ecologies of U.S. public lands in general and Mt. Hood National Forest in particular.

As part of this project, we will develop ESRI story maps of our racial ecologies research. You are not expected to have any prior experience with ESRI story maps. We will be collaborating with Digital Scholarship Services. This course will include trainings in the necessary digital humanities tools and methods, both in class and via Canvas. We will also be engaging with members of the Bark community (staff, board, volunteers) throughout the course through a guest lecture, an optional field trip, and an opportunity to converse with Bark volunteers, and a presentation at their annual People’s Forest Forum. Your work in this class will have an immediate effect on public lands advocacy.

We will work together to decide on the topics that should be covered and divide the work accordingly. Each student’s work will be assessed individually. You will not be assessed based on your technical expertise. The majority of us will be new to working with ESRI Story Maps. A work plan will be provided that offers scaffolding and proposed deadlines. There is inherent flexibility in project such as this one and there is a certain amount of flexibility that the pandemic requires. An alternative research paper will be provided for students who do not wish to create public scholarship.

TRAINING/PREPAREATION, 15%

- Training in Digital Tools and Methods
- Meetings with Subject Librarians and/or Special Collections Experts
- Meetings with Bark volunteers
- Meetings with Prof. Wald during office hours
- Field trip with Bark (optional)

**RESEARCH, 30%**

- Annotated bibliography (10 sources)
- Primary source identification (5 sources)

**WRITING/PRESENTATION, 35%**

- Rough drafts
- Peer review
- ESRI story map
- People’s Forest Forum presentation

**Reading Schedule**

**Week One**

Th, 9/30: Lauret Savoy’s *Trace*

**Week Two**

Th, 10/7: LeiLani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams’s *Racial Ecologies* (Introduction, Part One, Part Two, Afterword)
Special Guests in Class: LeiLani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams
Read “A People’s History of Mt Hood National Forest”

**Week Three [Meet in DREAM Lab, UO Knight Library]**

Th, 10/14: LeiLani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams’s *Racial Ecologies* (Part Three)
Special Guests in Class: Courtney Rae, Associate Director of Bark

**Week Four [Meet in DREAM Lab, UO Knight Library]**

Th, 10/21: LeiLani Nishime and Kim D. Hester Williams’s *Racial Ecologies* (Parts Four and Five)

**Week Five**

Th, 10/28: Dina Gilio-Whitaker’s *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, From Colonization to Standing Rock* (required 1-52; full book recommended); Craig Santos Perez’s *Habitat Threshold*

**Week Six**

[Move to DREAM Lab @ 3:45pm]
Week Seven [Asynchronous Online – Due to Veteran’s Day]


Week Eight [Meet in the DREAM Lab, 3-5pm]

Th, 11/18: No Reading.

In Class Peer Review and Collaboration with UO Digital Scholarship Services on ESRI Story Map Drafts

Week Nine

Th, 11/25: No Class. No Reading. Revise ESRI Story Maps

Week Ten


Finals Week: Presentation at People’s Forest Forum: Cultural Ecologies

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

**Course Content:** In this class, we are studying literature in its historical and political contexts. This means that we will read about and discuss racial and sexual violence. There are incidents of both in our readings, some of which include explicit language and graphic depictions. If you wish to select another class to take instead of this one, I am happy to meet with you in office hours to help you select a suitable course.*

**Accessible Education:** The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please consult with the Prof. Wald 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 Prof. Wald a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

**Basic Needs:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support. Furthermore, if you are comfortable doing so, please let me know about your situation so I can help point you in the right direction for assistance.
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 the name you wish to use to Prof. Wald and your GE. The preferred first name policy can be accessed here: http://policies.uoregon.edu/node/216

Responding to Bias: You have the right to learn, work, and live in an environment free of discrimination and hate. UO has gathered resources for students, faculty, and staff to report bias incidents or find support following bias incidents here: https://respect.uoregon.edu/

Safe Ride: (541) 346-7433 extension 2. Safe Ride provides free, inclusive, and accessible alternatives to traveling alone at night for UO students, faculty, and staff. It is a schedule-ahead service. Safe Ride is a feminist, ‘for-the-students/by-the-students’ organization and operate out of the Women’s Center in EMU 12F. Safe Ride’s spring hours are Sunday-Thursday, 7pm – midnight, Friday and Saturday, 7pm-2am. For more information: http://pages.uoregon.edu/saferide/

Accommodation for Religious Observances: The university makes reasonable accommodations for students who are unable to attend a class for religious obligations or observance reasons, in accordance with the university discrimination policy which says “Any student who, because of religious beliefs, is unable to attend classes on a particular day shall be excused from attendance requirements and from any examination or other assignment on that day. The student shall make up the examination or other assignment missed because of the absence.” To request accommodations for religious observance, visit the Office of the Registrar's website (https://registrar.uoregon.edu/calendars/religious-observances) and complete and submit to the instructor the “Student Religious Accommodation Request” form prior to the end of the second week of the term.

Sexual Assault Support Services: 541-346-SAFE is 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/) for confidential help.

Teaching and Learning Center: You are encouraged to take advantage of the resources offered by the Teaching and Learning Center. They offer individual and small group tutoring, writing assistance, and a variety of other support programs. http://tlc.uoregon.edu, 541-346-3226, 68 PLC

Technical Requirements: While our classes will be in person, Canvas will still be an important part of our course, and the place to go for course information and engagement outside of class time. Log into canvas.uoregon.edu using your DuckID to access our class. If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, visit the Canvas Support Page. Canvas and Technology Support is also available by phone or live chat at 541-346-4357 or livehelp.uoregon.edu

Mental Health: Life at college can be very complicated. Students often feel overwhelmed or stressed, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationships, or just need help navigating challenges in their life. If you’re facing such challenges, you don’t need to handle them on your own—there’s help and support on campus. As your instructor if I believe you may need additional support, I will express my concerns, the reasons for them, and refer you to resources that might be helpful. It is not my intention to know the details of what might
be bothering you, but simply to let you know I care and that help is available. Getting help is a courageous thing to do—for yourself and those you care about.

University Health Services help students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. If you need general resources on coping with stress or want to talk with another student who has been in the same place as you, visit the Duck Nest (located in the EMU on the ground floor) and get help from one of the specially trained Peer Wellness Advocates. Find out more at health.uoregon.edu/ducknest.

University Counseling Services (UCS) has a team of dedicated staff members to support you with your concerns, many of whom can provide identity-based support. All clinical services are free and confidential. Find out more at counseling.uoregon.edu or by calling 541-346-3227 (anytime UCS is closed, the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line is available by calling this same number).

*Language borrowed with permission from Prof. Tara Fickle.

**COURSE and UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Covid19 Pandemic:** All students are required to abide by the university’s pandemic strategies and protocols which are updated and outlined here: https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/ You are required to follow all guidelines regarding masking, social distancing, testing and symptom reporting, vaccination, and other safety measures. Please be in touch with Prof. Wald if you have concerns for your own safety or that of your family and household due to the learning conditions of this course.

**Do not come to class if you have a contagious illness (whether or not it is Covid19).** I will work with you if you miss class because you are not feeling well, you have caregiving responsibilities for someone who is not feeling well, and/or you have had a Covid19 exposure. If you have physical or mental health concerns, changes in employment, housing, or responsibilities or face other challenges, insecurities or problems, please seek out health services, counseling services, or see me for further help, resources, or accommodations.

**You must keep your mask on during class.** It is UO policy that drinking and eating in classrooms is not currently allowed. I will provide two breaks during each class period. You are also welcome to step outside to take medication, drink, eat, use the restroom or otherwise take care of your needs at any time you need a break. Students who may have mobility issues that make this guidance challenging should contact me.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to adhere to 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. Please read the Academic Misconduct Code in full. It can be accessed at: http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx

**Politics of Citation:** As Sara Ahmed writes in *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke 2017), “Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow” (17). Citation is a political act. It matters who we cite, and it matters whose knowledge and influence is obscured or erased. In this class, as part of a practice of
academic integrity, I encourage you to consider the ethics and politics of the citations you bring (or not) into your work.

In an article on The Racial Politics of Citation in Inside Higher Ed, Victor Ray asserts, "Inequality is reflected through a veneration of the classics. In the social sciences and humanities, many of these works were written during a period when racial and gender exclusion was simply expected and taken for granted. What counts as canonical is shaped by who had access to existing knowledge and the tools and institutional resources to produce new knowledge. Inequality is reproduced (and whiteness is institutionalized) by citation patterns as earlier periods of overt exclusion are legitimated by an almost ritualistic citation of certain thinkers."

Ray further explains, "The racial politics of citation have real effects. Citations draw our attention to the ideas that supposedly matter, they are a measure of one’s intellectual influence and they shape what we are able to think about a given field. Citations, or a lack thereof, bolster reputations and facilitate or exclude one from subsequent opportunities. Segregated scholarly networks impoverish knowledge and produce what Jennifer C. Mueller, a sociologist at Skidmore College, calls a type of white ignorance about race. Data showing that scholars of color are underrepresented in publications, citation rates or other venues can be explained away as the personal failings of unproductive researchers rather than the result of systematic exclusion. That allows whites to maintain a type of studied ignorance that furthers racial dominance and forecloses potentially valuable avenues of intellectual inquiry. Beyond this, biased citation patterns are simply bad for the accumulation of knowledge."

**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. 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 and Canvas. Please check your UO email account and Canvas regularly. Prof. Wald is more readily available through email than phone call. Generally, you can expect an email response from Prof. Wald within two business days.

**All members of the class (both students and instructor(s)) can expect to:**

1. **Participate and Contribute:** Students are expected to participate by sharing ideas and contributing to the collective learning environment. This entails preparing, following instructions, and engaging respectfully and thoughtfully with others. Together, we will establish more specific participation guidelines and criteria for contributions in our first weeks of the term.

2. **Expect and Respect Diversity:** All classes at the University of Oregon welcome and respect diverse experiences, perspectives, and approaches. What is not welcome are behaviors or contributions that undermine, demean, or marginalize others based on race, ethnicity, gender, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or socioeconomic status. We will value differences and communicate disagreements with respect. We may establish more specific guidelines and protocols to ensure inclusion and equity for all members of our learning community.

3. **Help Everyone Learn:** Our goal is to learn together by learning from one another. As we move forward learning during this challenging time, it is important that we work together and build on our strengths. We are returning with a range of feelings about and comfort with being in person, and this
means we need to be patient with each other, identify ways we can assist others, and be open-minded to receiving help and feedback from others. No one should hesitate to contact me to ask for assistance or offer suggestions that might help us learn better.