

ENGL 185: Literature and the Environment Spring 2016



Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mirja Lobnik
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Office: Language Hall 107
Office Hours: M/W/F 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

Sections

10A – M/W/F 10:45-11:50, Pierce Hall 101
12A – M/W/F 12:00-01:05, Pierce Hall 101

Course Description

How does the study of literature help us understand our relationship with the environment? What is the role of literature in the face of shared planetary concerns such as climate change? Can a literary way of reading the world allow us to imagine alternative modes of living and being? Paying close attention to the ways in which differences in race, gender, and religion shape ecological relationships, this course will turn to writers in English from the United States, the Caribbean, and South Asia in order to examine the connections between culture, identity, and the natural world. We will draw from diverse genres such as the short story, poetry, film, creative non-fiction, and the novel. Topics to be considered include indigenous and diasporic relationships to the land, plantation agriculture, gardening, human and environmental sustainability, and environmental justice. The course is designed to help you hone close reading, listening, and verbal skills and gain confidence in generating questions, formulating responses, and crafting arguments.

Student Learning Outcomes

- *Critical Reading*
 - Consider stylistic and formal qualities of texts (e.g. tropes, diction, syntax, and structure), but also ideology, philosophy, historical context, and material conditions of texts.
 - Engage with both what the author says and how the author says it.
 - Make connections between texts and your own knowledge and experiences.
 - Develop critical ability and vocabulary necessary to “read” cultural texts that include not only literature but also other media such as art and film.
- *Critical Writing*
 - Argument: Craft a purposeful stance on an issue, persuasively organize ideas, and support claims with evidence in order to engage in ongoing intellectual conversations.
 - Process: Plan, draft, revise, edit. Offer and receive feedback on work in progress.
- *Research*: Find and use evidence in support of a stance and in rebuttal to counterarguments using library and other credible resources, and document your sources.
- *Multimodality*: Balance multiple modes of expression thoughtfully and synergistically.

Instructor's Teaching Philosophy

In my courses, I strive to provide you with an overall conceptual framework, while encouraging you to think independently and creatively. I put strong emphasis on dialogue, collaboration, and multimodal pedagogies that integrate different composing modalities such as speech, music, sound, and image, to help you become critical thinkers and effective communicators. One of my main goals as a teacher of literature and composition is to "fine tune your ears" to the oral dimensions of writing that show us not only how texts are structured but also how they are experienced and received.

Staying in Touch

Email is an integral part of class communication. While the syllabus serves as a main guide for class preparation, I will send more detailed explanations or instructions via email. You are therefore required to regularly check your Emory email account for course announcements and updates. Should you rely on an alternate email service, it is your responsibility to forward those Emory emails accordingly. When emailing me, please keep the following guidelines in mind: use an appropriate subject line for your message, always start your message with an appropriate greeting such as "Dear Professor Lobnik" or "Dr. Lobnik," use a professional and respectful tone, sign your name, and proofread your message before sending. I respond to email within 24 hours of receipt. Generally, I do not respond to email over the weekend.

Required Texts (available at the bookstore)

Julia Álvarez, *A Cafecito Story*
Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms*

Required Films (available on Amazon Prime Videos, YouTube, and on reserve in the library)

Food, Inc.
There Once Was An Island
DamNation

Other readings are available as PDFs on Blackboard under "Course Documents." The title of each PDF includes the author's last name and short title of the overall piece, which matches the information listed in the schedule below. Other course materials, including the latest version of the syllabus, detailed assignment prompts, and links to relevant web sites will also be available on Blackboard.

You are expected to bring a copy of the required readings or writing assignment to each class (you may be asked to print out PDF files listed on the syllabus). If you repeatedly come to class without easily accessible readings, I reserve the right to lower your participation grade by 10 points.

Digital Tools

We will be using a number of digital tools to complete work for this course such as Blackboard. In the event I don't specify a particular tool for a particular project, deciding which tool(s) to use and acquiring proficiency with it/them will be your responsibility.

Additional Required Materials

Laptop Computers: You are required to bring your laptops to class, but keep them closed and/or put away until I ask you to open them. In past classes, laptops have been too much of a distraction for too many students. We will use them for in-class exercises and group activities, but not every day. If you are

in the habit of using your laptop to take notes, you will have to make other arrangements in my class. Students who persist in using their laptops, their smart-phones, or similar devices with internet capabilities without the instructor's authorization will be counted absent.

Microsoft Word and PowerPoint/Prezi: You must compose all written portions of assignments in Microsoft Word, and create the drafts for your audio essay in Microsoft PowerPoint or Prezi.

A flash drive, Dropbox, or another storage device for saving documents.

Course Requirements

- 40% Literary Analyses (2)
- 25% Research Project (Audio Essay)
- 10% Research Project Presentation
- 5% Online Research Presentation
- 5% Online Discussion
- 15% Class Participation

Literary Analyses: You will compose two 4-5 page essays (1000-1250 words) that explore one of the major novels assigned in this course from an ecological perspective. While your focus should be on your own observations, you will be required to use your own research and our class readings and discussions to flesh out the ways in which these texts address the connections between culture, identity, and the natural world. The essay has to be well-structured, advance claims, and present clear arguments in support of those claims. It should demonstrate your ability to apply ecocritical perspectives to the analysis and interpretation of literary texts in the form of a logically ordered written argument. The assignment is designed to help you articulate a thesis, organize your thoughts logically, and learn how to support your ideas with textual evidence and to integrate research findings.

Research Project/Audio Essay: You will compose a 3-minute audio essay that uses literature as a lens to explore larger social issues. It should foreground one of the major novels assigned in this course and draw on your own research and our class readings to discuss the connections between literary perspectives on issues such as food production and consumption, biodiversity loss, and environmental justice, and the real-world manifestations of these issues. The essay should primarily be voiced by you but you may also create sonic scenes with music, sound effects, and/or ambient sounds. You will first write a script and then produce a digital audio file. The assignment will teach you how to use your own voice in ways that add to the meaning of your narrative by means of intonation, tone, vocally produced noises, stresses, pitches, and pauses.

Research Project Presentation: In addition to your audio file, the research project involves an oral presentation of your project. It requires you to use an application such as PowerPoint or Prezi that allows you to include quotations and audio clips as evidence for your claims.

Online Research Presentation: You will present internet research on a particular topic (e.g. human sustainability, environmental justice) once this semester.

Online Discussion: The night before class (before midnight), you will post your comments on the reading (or film) and discussion questions to the "forum" section of that week on Blackboard. In class I will call on different students to present their ideas. Your comments and discussion questions might connect the reading/viewing to other topics we have discussed in class, focus in on a passage, examine a character,

or connect the text to the broader theme of the course.

Participation: The participation component of your grade will ultimately be determined by regular and meaningful contributions to class discussions. In other words: Get involved. Question. Probe. Share relevant ideas and observations. Refer to relevant articles, books, and websites. Offer your own experiences. Make connections between what we are discussing in class and what you hear elsewhere (in other classes, on websites, in news media, etc.). Active, productive participation is worth 15% of your grade, but it will also make the class more interesting and enjoyable. Feel free to ask me how I think you are doing. I expect everyone to contribute to class discussion at least once per class. I realize this is easy for some and harder for others. Progress is taken into consideration when deciding grades.

Oxford College Writing Center

You are required to take assigned essays to the Writing Center. You may do so at any stage in the writing process, but the Writing Center director and I strongly advise you not to wait until the day before the essay is due. You could go for help to get started, to organize and develop your ideas in a rough draft, or to learn to recognize and correct errors in grammar and punctuation in a revised draft. Spring 2016 hours are Sunday-Thursday, 3-11 pm. The center is located on the second floor of the library. To make an appointment, visit: <http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/centers-institutes-programs/writing-center/> When you go to your appointment, make sure that, in addition to your draft, you have a copy of your assignment with you, as well as the book(s) you are using in that assignment. Ask the tutor for assistance on specific issues—s/he is not there (and is not allowed) to proofread your work but to guide you towards a clearer expression of your ideas.

Grading

You must complete every stage of a project in order to receive a satisfactory (C or better) grade on that project. Failure to complete any stage (draft, peer review, etc.) of a project will result in an incomplete project and an unsatisfactory grade (D or F) on that assignment. All assignments must be handed in for a grade in the class.

The grading scale is as follows: A 100-92; A- 91-90; B+ 89-88; B 87-82; B- 81- 80; C+ 79-78; C 77-72; C- 71-70; D+ 69-68, D 67-60, F 59 and below.

Note about Attendance

I expect you to attend every class. If you are a student who is likely to miss many classes or to be tardy on a regular basis, this class will not be a good choice for you. For those students who are eager to engage in critical analysis, to perform independent research, to think creatively, and to share work and collaborate with peers in a workshop setting, this class will most likely be an excellent fit. Successful work will display a strong grasp on readings and concepts explored in class. Also, your community of peers will be invaluable in helping you create and revise your projects in workshops.

I will allow only three absences without penalty, so please plan accordingly. For each absence beyond three, you will lose 2 points off your final grade average. For example, you have a 90 average at the end of term, but you were absent 5 times total. Because of the 2 excessive absences, you would lose 4 points on that average, leading to an 86 for the course.

That said, please talk to me in advance about accommodations for religious holidays/observances.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for contacting a classmate to get the information you missed. "I missed the last class and didn't know what to do" is an unacceptable excuse. I will not bring handouts you missed to the next class. You will also be expected to arrive prepared at the next class. Don't rely solely on the syllabus for work that is due, as the syllabus is subject to change. Make several reliable contacts in the class ASAP.

Surfing the web, emailing, texting, or talking on the phone during class time automatically negates any participation points earned during class that day. Unless cell phones are being used for class work (e.g., recording an oral presentation), they must be turned off during class. Although sometimes unavoidable, arriving to class late is disruptive. Students habitually arriving late to class (more than four late arrivals) will begin to accrue absences (one absence for every two tardies). In the same context, students are to remain for the entire class. Therefore, leaving the class early will count as a late arrival.

Etiquette

As a general rule, everyone in this class should treat everyone else with respect, and all students should follow the student code of conduct. Technology use in-class should be related to what we are doing in class. Set your mobile phone to vibrate. Do not answer your mobile phone unless it appears to be an emergency, e.g., the call is from a child or elder care provider or a parent who would not call during class except in case of emergency. Do not engage with social media or email unless I specifically request that you do so as part of our in-class work.

Writing Format and Resources

Word-process your essays and use the Modern Language Association (MLA) format and conventions for acknowledging sources. Online writing resources include <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/> and <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/1/>

All writing assignments must be typed, double spaced, and in twelve point font. Margins should not be greater than 1" left and right, 1" top and bottom. These should be submitted through Blackboard but, in addition, in some instances, you may need to provide a hard copy. I will let you know when this is the case.

Late Work

No late work will be accepted in this course. You will be responsible for either bringing completed assignments to class, as directed, or uploading them to Blackboard by the specified deadline. Unless you speak to me 48 hours in advance of the deadline and I approve an extension, this rule applies. Failure to meet the given deadline will result in a zero for the assignment.

Note on Student Work

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

Honor Code

<http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/student-services/student-honor-code/>

The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. All work in this course must be entirely your own. The bottom line: don't use someone else's ideas or words without proper citation. (This includes websites like SparkNotes!) I am always happy to discuss with you when something needs

to be acknowledged and properly cited, but it is up to you to see me before your written work is due to ask your questions about documenting sources.

Office of Disability Services (ODS)

<http://www.ods.emory.edu/students/index.html>

ODS will offer qualifying students academic accommodations such as alternative testing, note taking, interpretation, etc. Students must register and request those services. To do so, contact the Office of Disability Services at Emory University or Oxford College.

Counseling and Career Services (CCS)

<http://oxford.emory.edu/counseling/>

CCS provides many services at no cost to help address students' personal and career development needs, including personal counseling, career counseling, and psychiatric services. To schedule an appointment, call 770-784-8394.

Changes to the Syllabus

This syllabus—especially the required reading/viewing and assignment schedule—may be modified as the semester progresses to meet course outcomes and address the needs of members of the class.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS/VIEWINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION & KEY CONCEPTS

Week One

- 1/13 Introductions/Review of Syllabus and Requirements
Buell, "Glossary"
- 1/15 "Developing the Environmental Humanities"

Week Two

- 1/18 No Class—Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
- 1/20 Thoreau, excerpt from "Walking"
- 1/22 Owens, "Burning the Shelter"

UNIT 2: AGRICULTURE & SUSTAINABILITY

Week Three

- 1/25 Melendez, "Mujeres de Maíz: Women, Corn, and Free Trade in the Americas"
Online Research Sign up
- 1/27 Pollan, "A Plant's-Eye View of the World"
In-Class Writing & Research: Ecological Identity & News Sources
- 1/29 Álvarez, *A Cafecito Story*

Week Four

- 2/1 Food, Inc.
Online Research Presentations on Food Justice
- 2/3 Visit to Organic Farm
- 2/5 Online Research Presentations on Food Justice

UNIT 3: POSTCOLONIAL ECOLOGIES

Week Five

- 2/8 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Discussion of Literary Analysis #1
- 2/10 Library Information Session (all sections will meet in Room 230)
- 2/12 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*

Week Six

- 2/15 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Online Research Presentations on the Sundarbans
- 2/17 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Online Research Presentations on Biodiversity Loss
- 2/19 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*

Week Seven

- 2/22 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Nixon, "Introduction" to *Slow Violence: Environmentalism of the Poor*
Online Research Presentations on Climate Change
- 2/24 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Informal Research Presentations on *The Hungry Tide*
- 2/26 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*

Week Eight

- 2/29 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
Peer Review
- 3/2 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
- 3/4 *There Once Was An Island*
Due: Literary Analysis #1
Discussion of Literary Analysis #2

Week Nine

No Class—Spring /Recess

UNIT 4: INDIGENOUS CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND

Week Ten

- 3/14 Hogan, *Solar Storms*; Silko, "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination"
- 3/16 Hogan, *Solar Storms*
- 3/18 No class—Instructor travel/conference

Week Eleven

- 3/21 Hogan, *Solar Storms*; Kolodny, "Unearthing Herstory"
- 3/23 Hogan, *Solar Storms*
Online Research Presentations on Indigenous Philosophy
- 3/25 Hogan, *Solar Storms*

Week Twelve

- 3/28 Excerpts from Genesis, 1.1-3.24
"Pima Stories of the Beginning of the World"
White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis"
Hogan, *Solar Storms*
- 3/30 Hogan, *Solar Storms*
Online Research Presentations on Energy Justice
- 4/1 Hogan, *Solar Storms*
Informal Research Presentations on *Solar Storms*

UNIT 5: NATURE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

Week Thirteen

- 4/4 *DamNation*
Peer Review
- 4/6 *Audacity Workshop*
Due: Literary Analysis #2
Discussion of Research Project
- 4/8 Abbey, "Down the River"

Week Fourteen

- 4/11 Abbey, "Down the River"
Due: Research Project Proposal
- 4/13 Underwater sculptures of Jason deCaires Taylor
Komunyakaa, "Dark Waters"
Gonzalez, "Hazardous Cargo"
- 4/15 Abram, "The Ecology of Magic"

Week Fifteen

- 4/18 Kimmerer, "Learning the Grammar of Animacy;" Zepeda, "Birth Witness"
Research Project Presentations
- 4/20 Earthzine, "Indigenous Perspectives in GEOSS: An Interview with Dr. Gregory Cajete"
Research Project Presentations
- 4/22 Kimmerer, "Questions for a Resilient Future"
Research Project Presentations

Week Sixteen

- 4/25 Wrap Up
- 4/27 Due: Research Project