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## **ENGL/ENV M30**

### **Introduction to Environment and Cultures**

**Class Meetings: TTh 9:30-10:45,  
LaKretz 110**

#### **Description:**

Environmental issues are often envisioned as mainly questions of science, technology, and policy. The environmental humanities approach environmental problems instead as predominantly issues of cultures, histories, social structures, and values. This course will introduce you to the major concepts, narratives, and images that have shaped environmentalist thought in the United States since the 1960s and compare them to environmental thought, writing, and activism in other parts of the world. How do environmental problems such as pollution, soil erosion, deforestation, biodiversity loss or global warming change when they are seen through the lens of different histories, memories, languages, and cultures? How do particular media, storytelling templates, and images shape our thinking about such issues? How can we change existing stories and images? How do we best engage when fundamental differences in the framing of a particular ecological problem emerge?

We will explore these questions through a wide range of textual and visual works from environmental scholarship, nonfiction, and journalism to graphic novels, films, and videos. The course will also introduce you to the way in which humanists and social scientists in anthropology, geography, history, literary studies, and philosophy (among other disciplines) have engaged with environmental issues. We will explore how concepts such as pastoral, wilderness, toxicity, environmental justice, biodiversity and conservation, trash, and climate change, and the Anthropocene have shaped how different communities think about environmental issues, and how we might think about them differently.

As a student in this class, you'll gain familiarity with dominant concepts, stories, and images of environmentalism and how they have been criticized and revised across cultural boundaries. You'll learn how to identify and evaluate such concepts, stories, and images in various kinds of fictional and nonfictional texts and artworks, and you'll start to create your own. In the process, you'll also learn how to engage with the complex relationships between environmental degradation and issues of justice, social and economic inequality, ethnicity, racism, gender, and nationality.

#### **Sections:**

1A and 1E: Alex Shassetz | [bshassetz@ucla.edu](mailto:bshassetz@ucla.edu)  
1B and 1F: Katarina Yuan | [kyuan3@ucla.edu](mailto:kyuan3@ucla.edu)  
1C and 1D: Matthew Swanson | [mcs swanson@ucla.edu](mailto:mcs swanson@ucla.edu)  
1G and 1H: Katherine Hernandez | [kvichernandez@ucla.edu](mailto:kvichernandez@ucla.edu)

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students who complete the entire course can expect to have achieved the following:

- Your own learning goal #1:
- Your own learning goal #2:
- Working definitions of key concepts for the environmental sciences: ecosystem, ecology, biodiversity, charismatic megafauna, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and the Anthropocene
- Working definitions of key concepts for the environmental humanities: nature, wilderness, environmental racism, environmental justice, multispecies ethics, indigenous knowledge (aka traditional ecological knowledge/TEK), and ecotopia
- Ability to identify and evaluate literary and artistic forms that appear in environmental discourse, including the pastoral, the sublime, elegy, apocalypse, and utopia
- Familiarity with the major ideas of U.S. environmentalism and how those ideas have been adapted as well as criticized by diverse communities in and beyond the U.S.
- Recognition of different environmental movements—from wilderness protection to environmental justice—and the problems, ideas, and stories that have defined them
- Recognition of the complex relationships between environmental change and cultural differences as well as social structures of inequality, privilege, and justice
- Development of your own environmental culture toolkit to include honed skills in multimedia storytelling, analytical writing, and collaborative research and writing

### Course Materials:

Most of the readings and visual materials for the class will be available via our CCLE course website. Please buy the following two books:

1. **John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)**
2. **Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962/2012: 50th anniversary edition)**

You can buy the books at the UCLA Bookstore or from online sources. The syllabus and assignments are all available on the CCLE website as well, and all changes will be posted there. Please visit the website regularly to make sure you're aware of all assignments, schedule changes, hand-outs and announcements. I will also post lecture powerpoints on the website.

### Course Requirements:

1. Regular **attendance** at lectures.  
Regular attendance in section: section will be as good as your contributions to it.

Keep up with the **readings**. Please note that you're responsible for submitting assignments and attaining the learning goals of each week's classes, regardless of whether you've attended lecture and section or not. As a matter of courtesy, it'd be good to let me and your TA know in advance those dates when you have to miss a class. If a major emergency prevents you from attending class or fulfilling assignments for a whole week or more, please let us know right away. We're happy to help you in what we know are difficult times for all of us.

You'll find study questions for many of our texts on the course website. Please be sure to go over the questions for each session *before* you do the reading, since the questions are meant to guide your reading and understanding of the text as well as discussions in lecture and sections.

2. **Production Assignments:** There'll be five moments in the class when you have to produce materials. Assignments 1 and 2 are short essays. With assignment 3, you'll have the option of producing a paper, a 3-minute video or audio, or a web page (details will be posted on the class website). Assignment 4 will be a collaborative project between 3-4 students. Assignment 5 is a take-home final.

Submission of essays: Please submit each essay by going to the CCLE assignment link and uploading your Word document to Turnitin.

If you need an extension for an assignment, please request it at least 24 hours in advance. Late assignments (i.e. those without an extension officially granted by Prof. Heise or your TA) will be downgraded one-third of a grade for each day late.

Reworking of already submitted assignments won't be possible, given the size of the class. Please be sure to start drafting your assignments well before the due date, and feel free to run ideas and drafts by the instructor for feedback before you submit your final draft.

3. A reminder about **grades**: B-range grades are given for work that fulfills the assignment completely and competently; A-range grades for work that significantly exceeds average completion requirements; C-range grades for work that contains significant errors or falls short of fully answering the assignment; D for work that just barely addresses minimum requirements.
4. Pass/No Pass: For a Pass grade, you're required to attend all class sessions and complete all reading assignments, as well as the writing assignments except the take-home final.
5. Your grade will be made up of the following components:

**Participation in section:** 15%

**Assignment 1:** Submit topics and/or questions on readings ahead of lecture | 10%

12 topics A+

11 topics A

10 topics A-

9 topics B+

8 topics B

7 topics B-

6 topics C+

5 topics C

4 topics C-

3 topics D+

2 topics D

1 topic D

0 topics: F

**Assignment 2:** Pastoral and Wilderness— Short Paper | 15%

**Assignment 3:** Environmental Justice Short Paper | 15%

**Assignment 4:** Take-home Midterm: 15%

**Assignment 5:** Species Portrait Short Paper | 15%

**Assignment 6: Take-Home Final: | 15%**

Letter grades will appear as letters and as numbers on your assignments. The numbers will serve us to calculate your overall course grade accurately at the end of the quarter:

A+ = 12

A = 11

A- = 10

B+ = 9

B = 8

B- = 7

C+ = 6

C = 5

C- = 4

D+ = 3

D = 2

D- = 1

F = 0

**Technology Etiquette:**

Digital technologies can be infinitely useful tools for research and writing, but recent studies have shown that handwritten notes produce better understanding and recall. Try out keeping a notebook or notepad during class. It also helps to have physical copies of the books and – if that's possible on your end – print-outs of PDFs.

**E-Mail Etiquette:**

Please feel free to e-mail me with any questions you might have about the course. I'll normally try to answer your questions within 24 hours, and I'll expect that when I contact you, you'll get back to me within the same time span. Please do not expect that e-mails will be answered within a few hours or on the same day.

**Section Participation:**

Great class discussions don't happen on their own, but are created by people who are jointly committed to an exciting and engaging conversation. Good participation involves:

- Joining class sessions prepared, with something to say
- Paying attention, listening well, respecting others and valuing different perspectives
- Speaking when the time is right and helping discussions evolve organically
- Practicing the art of polite disagreement
- Not dominating the discussion or interrupting others
- Raising good questions
- Directing us to the texts so that discussions are always rooted in relevant readings

**CAE Accommodation**

If you are already registered with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE), please request your Letter of Accommodation in the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with the CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the CAE website ([www.cae.ucla.edu](http://www.cae.ucla.edu)), visit the CAE at A255 Murphy Hall, or contact them by phone at (310) 825-1501.

**Academic Integrity:**

You're welcome to use outside sources for your work, but make sure you always acknowledge others' ideas and works. Appropriating someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgment is considered a serious breach of academic ethics. It will result in a failing grade for the assignment and/or the course, and we'll be obligated to report you to the Dean of Students. Visit the Dean of Students website on Academic Integrity: <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html>. If you have any questions about the best way of acknowledging any sources you have used, consult with me, the *MLA Handbook*, or <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Documentation.html>. Go to the link for "MLA."

**SCHEDULE: TOPICS AND READINGS****Week 1**

T 4/4      **Introduction: Environment and Cultures in the Anthropocene**  
 Materials:  
 Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, "The Anthropocene"  
 Introductory questionnaire due.

TH 4/6 **Fundamental Concepts:**  
**Nature, Ecology, Ecosystem, Environment, Environmentalism(s), Environmental Justice**  
 Materials:  
 Bill McKibben, "The End of Nature" 47-66 (1989)  
 Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Planting Sweetgrass" (excerpts | 2013)

## Week 2

T 4/11 **Environmentalism and the Idea of Wilderness**  
 Materials:  
 John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)

Th 4/13 **Does Nature Have To Be Wild?**  
 Materials:  
 William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" (1995)

## Week 3

T 4/18 **Environmentalism and Pastoral Nature**  
 Materials:  
 Terry Gifford, "Four Kinds of Pastoral"  
 Michael Pollan, "Naturally": <http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/naturally/>

Th 4/20 **Polluted Pastoral**  
 Materials:  
 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* Chs. 1-3, 6-9, 11-13, 17  
 César Chavez, "Perils of Pesticides" Address (1989)

F 4/21 **Assignment 1 due: Short Paper | Pastoral and Wilderness**

## Week 4

T 4/25 **Nature in the City**  
 Materials:  
 Price, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Nature in LA"  
 LENS.cast: podcast on trees and environmental justice in Los Angeles

TH 4/27 **Environmental Risk and Justice in the City**  
 Laura Pulido, "Environmental Racism"  
 Newspaper coverage of oil drilling in Los Angeles

## Week 5

T 5/2 **Four Kinds of Environmental Justice**  
 Materials:  
 Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie*, Ch.1 (1990)  
 David Schlosberg, *Defining Environmental Justice* (2007; excerpt)

Th 5/4 **The More-Than-Human City: Urban Wildlife and Multispecies Justice**

Materials:

Jennifer Wolch, "Zoöpolis"

Stefan Wanigatunga, [Urban Ark Los Angeles](#) (2018; short documentary)

F 5/5 **Assignment 2 due: Environmental Justice**

## Week 6

T 5/9 **Indigenous Knowledge and the Environment**

Materials:

KCET TV Broadcast Special: "[Tending the Wild](#)"

Kyle Powys Whyte, "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene" (2017)

TH 5/11 **Environmentalism and Colonialism**

Materials:

Ramachandra Guha & Juan Martínez-Alier, "Environmentalism of the Poor" (1998)

Berta Cáceres, "Goldman Environmental Prize Acceptance Speech" (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR1kwx8b0ms>

Assignment 3, take-home midterm, distributed.

## Week 7

T 5/16 **Colonialism, Biodiversity, and the Columbian Exchange**

Materials:

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* Chs. 1, 3, and 5 (1972)

TH 5/18 **Biodiversity Loss and Extinction Stories**

Materials:

Ursula Heise, *Imagining Extinction* Ch.1 (2016)

Ted Chiang, "The Great Silence"

Th 5/19 **Assignment 3 due: Take-home midterm.**

Field Trip to Kaufman Hall: Nesting of the Cliff Swallows

## Week 8

T 5/23 **Biodiversity Loss and Conservation Stories**

Stanford Graphic Novel Project, [Virunga \(2009\)](#)

TH 5/25 **Environmentalism and Climate Change**

Materials:

Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree about Climate Change* Chs. 7 & 10 (2009)

Alexa Weik, "Le Déluge" (2021)

## Week 9

T 5/30 **Climate Change and the Imagination of Disaster**

Materials:

Roland Emmerich, *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004)

Murray and Heumann, "[Reading the Environment in Popular Cinema](#)" (2008)

Th 6/1      **Climate Change and Climate Justice**  
Materials:  
Zacharias Kunuk and Ian Mauro,  
*Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* (documentary; 2011)

F 6/2      **Assignment 4 due.**

**Week 10**

T 6/6      **Environment & Cultures Review**

Th 6/8      **Environment & Cultures Review**  
Assignment 5 (take-home final) distributed

**Finals Week**

Th 6/9      **Assignment 5 (take-home final) due 12:00 noon**