

Illustrative Syllabus
American Environmental Movements
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COURSE SCOPE

In the twenty-first-century, environmental problems are often imagined to be problems of science, technology, and policy. This course starts from the idea that environmental problems are also problems of culture and history. An introduction to *the environmental humanities*, our course covers some of the ideas, images, and stories that have shaped different forms of environmentalism and environmental science. The focus is U.S. environmental culture since the 1960s, with points of comparisons to other time periods and national contexts.

Through this lens, we'll address several questions: How have cultural ideas of nature and of other creatures taken shape in specific historical moments? How do different communities understand the causes and impacts of current environmental challenges—such as biodiversity loss, pollution, and global warming? How do particular genres and media convey these problems and imagine solutions? And what new environmental stories and images are needed now and in the future? To tackle these questions, we'll examine a wide range of primary material—including popular science, graphic narrative, speculative fiction, lyric poetry, animation art, documentary film, and data visualization—along with research from disciplines such as anthropology, ecology, history, literary studies, and philosophy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Working definitions of key concepts for the environmental sciences: biome, biodiversity, charismatic megafauna, wildlife corridor, greenhouse gas effect, anthropogenic climate change, the Anthropocene, and upcycling
- Working definitions of key concepts for the environmental humanities: toxic discourse, deep ecology, environmental racism, environmental justice, multispecies ethics, indigenous knowledge, and techno-utopianism
- Ability to identify and evaluate literary and artistic forms that appear in environmental discourse, including the pastoral, the sublime, elegy, apocalypse, utopia, and lyric
- 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 phenomena/ challenges and 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 TEXTS

- Materials uploaded to CCLE course website by week assigned
- Lauren Redniss, *Thunder & Lightning: Weather Past, Present, Future* (2015)
- Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler* (2008)
- Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* (1990)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| Overview of requirements | % of Grade |
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| Precept participation | 15% |
| Mini-quizzes for extra credit on overall essay grade for the two essays | 2 points each as extra credit on final exam |
| Final exam | 25% |
| <p><u>Collaborative project environmental storytelling experiments</u> <i>All three will be developed and published on either a website or a team Instagram account created only for this class.</i></p> <p>(1) A day in the life of a California nonhuman animal species</p> <p>(2) Observation diary</p> <p>(3) LA menu of the future</p> <p>(4) Individual reflection letter</p> | 30% |
| <p><u>Two essays</u></p> <p>(1) Environmental narrative analysis (draft and final essay, along with participation in peer review, required)</p> <p>(2) Environmental organization vision narrative</p> | 30% |

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

In teams of 4 students as assigned, create a portfolio of three environmental storytelling experiments. Publish each one on either a website or an Instagram account created just for this class.

(1) **"A day in the life"** of a nonhuman animal species that inhabits California, whether endemic or introduced. Tell this story through a series of 8-10 images and extended captions of 50-100 words each. Write the captions as if from the perspective of an individual animal from your species. To develop the content, identify, read, and briefly summarize 3-4 peer-reviewed academic articles about the species and its environmental issues in California. Create an annotated bibliography of these sources, submitted with the story by the due date. Resources for this research-based story will be provided.

(2) **"Observation diary"** in which each team member documents on a single day smells, sounds, and sights from the environment where you live. The day will be Wednesday, May 6. Observations could be taken indoors, looking through a window, on a balcony, in a backyard, and/or on a walk; and they can include plants, animals, objects, technologies, other people, etc. This spring, our day-to-day lives will be profoundly challenging. The diary aims to foster a sense of place and connection with the lives around us and with one another. For each observation, include an image or short audio/video plus a brief description. Introduce the diary with a 250-300 word post co-written by the team.

(3) An **LA menu of the future** that features three dishes and one beverage for an imagined restaurant opening in the year 2050. Your menu should convey specific environmental principles, should be accessible in terms of cost, and should reflect an aspect of the cultural histories and biological diversity of Southern California. As a team, spend time looking at LA restaurant websites for menu models, with an eye to how the local restaurant economy might be rekindled and reimagined after the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Additional requirements for the menu

- Give a name to your imagined restaurant and perhaps a tagline (phrase that captures mission).
- For each dish and the beverage, include a short description that highlight the ingredients and a connection to your imagined restaurant's guiding environmental principles.
- Optional: include imagery if the images are high-quality and bring your menu to life.

(4) **Individual reflection letter:** A one-page typed letter addressed to your TA and Professor Carruth summarizing the collaboration, your contributions, and the project's rewards/challenges.

TWO SHORT ESSAYS | 700-800 words each

To receive a grade, each essay must have a specific and original title, and must include the final word count at the top of the first page. Essay #1 requires a draft that you will submit to your collaborative project team members for a peer review workshop. The draft and participation in the peer review process are required to receive credit on the final version of Essay #1.

Essay #1–Environmental narrative analysis

Select a concept from our first unit (list provided on class WordPress site) and identify an example of the concept being “put to use” in an environmental narrative that you’ve read or viewed recently. The narrative can be a film, animation, novel, short story, popular science essay, or TV episode, and can be chosen either from our syllabus or from outside class. For the analysis, focus on specific scenes/ examples where you see evidence of the concept being applied/re-defined. In your introduction: (a) briefly summarize the chosen narrative’s subject and plot; (b) introduce an aspect of the narrative your essay will focus on; and (3) provide a 1-2 sentence thesis that explains how the narrative illustrates the chosen concept. Also provide a precise definition of the concept. In the essay’s body, develop your thesis by analyzing three or four specific aspects of the narrative. In your analysis, draw on one or more of the “elements of narrative” discussed in class (e.g., narrator, point of view, character, setting, etc.).

Essay #2–Environmental organization vision narrative

Imagine that you and a team of collaborators are founding a new environmental organization to address a challenge or issue about which you are passionate / deeply concerned today. The organization can be a non-profit group or a for-profit company. In order to launch, you need a compelling story to convey the organization’s mission and aspirations. Write this essay as if it were a profile of the organization appearing in a major magazine or news outlet. In your narrative, give the organization a name and describe the specific environmental challenge or innovation that inspires it. Then flesh out four to six principles / ideas that define its environmental and social values, commitments, and vision for the future.

Here are some environmental organization websites that might provide inspiration and fodder:

- Climate Justice Alliance: <https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/>
- La Cocina Kitchen Incubator: <https://lacocinasf.org/mission>
- Impossible Foods: <https://impossiblefoods.com/heme>
- Orion magazine: <https://orionmagazine.org/about/mission-and-history/>
- Patagonia: <https://www.patagonia.com/company-info.html>

| Week | Assigned Materials and Deadlines |
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| WEEK ONE | <i>Course introduction</i> |
| | <i>Environmental histories and futures</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Seamus Heaney's "Höfn" (2006) <input type="checkbox"/> Kyle Powys Whyte, "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now" (2017) |
| WEEK TWO | <i>"Last chance to see": biodiversity travelogue, extinction elegy</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Darwin, "Galapagos Archipelago," <i>Voyage of the Beagle</i> (1839) <input type="checkbox"/> Catriona Sandilands, "Mockingbird Resilience" (2014) <input type="checkbox"/> IUCN Red List, "Ivory-Billed Woodpecker," "Passenger Pigeon" (2019) |
| | <i>"The trouble with wilderness": colonialism, conservation, the sublime</i> <input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Wilderness Act (1964) <input type="checkbox"/> Edward Abbey, "Polemic: Industrial Tourism & the National Parks" (1968) <input type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Solnit, "The Thoreau Problem" (2007) |
| WEEK THREE | <i>"Toxic discourse": eco-apocalypse, multispecies community</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Rachel Carson, CHS 1-3, <i>Silent Spring</i> (1962) <input type="checkbox"/> Marina Zurkow, "Mesocosm (Wink, TX)"—animation artwork (2012) |
| | <i>"American pastoral": agrarianism, back-to-the-land, farmworker rights</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Cesar Chavez, "Wrath of Grapes" —speech (1986) <input type="checkbox"/> Wendell Berry, "Pleasures of Eating" (2009) <input type="checkbox"/> Monica White, "D-Town: African American Farmers..." (2010) |
| WEEK FOUR | <i>Environmental justice</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Ramachandra Guha & J. Martínez-Alier, "Environmentalism of the Poor" (1998) <input type="checkbox"/> Wangari Muta Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture—video (2004) |
| | <i>Varieties of environmentalism genres of environmental fiction</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Karen Tei Yamashita, <i>Through the Arc of the Rainforest</i> , pp. 1-61 (1990) |
| | Collaborative deadline #1—"A day in the life" with annotated bibliography |
| WEEK FIVE | <i>Varieties of environmentalism genres of environmental fiction (continued)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Karen Tei Yamashita, <i>Through the Arc of the Rainforest</i> , <u>finish</u> (1990) |
| | <i>Unit one synthesis and catch-up day</i> |
| | Essay #1 draft deadline—email to team and cc: TA |

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| WEEK SIX | <p><i>Waste: Trash dumps, trash clean-up</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Geoff Manaugh & Nicola Twilley, "Touring the Largest Active Landfill in America" (2013) <input type="checkbox"/> Andrew Stanton (dir.), <i>WALL-E</i>–film (2008) |
| | <p>OBSERVATION DAY FOR COLLABORATIVE DIARY</p> |
| | <p><i>Waste: Plastic, from technological miracle to planetary pollutant</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Roland Barthes, "Plastic" (1957) <input type="checkbox"/> Jeremy Konner (dir.), <i>The Majestic Plastic Bag</i>–film short (2010) |
| <p>Essay #1 final deadline</p> | |
| WEEK SEVEN | <p><i>City: Urban disasters, eco-poetics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Patricia Smith, selected poems from <i>Blood Dazzler</i> (2008) |
| | <p><i>City: Wildlife corridors, community gardens, environmental equity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gary Snyder, "Night Song of the Los Angeles Basin" (1986) <input type="checkbox"/> Scott Kennedy (dir.), <i>The Garden</i>–film (2008) |
| | <p>Collaborative deadline #2–"Observation diary"</p> |
| WEEK EIGHT | <p><i>Climate: Data, models, lived experience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mike Hulme, "Why We Disagree about Climate Change" (2009) <input type="checkbox"/> Lauren Redniss, <i>Thunder & Lightning...</i> (2015) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative project check-in / showcase |
| WEEK NINE | <p><i>No class–Memorial Day</i></p> |
| | <p><i>Climate: Stories for a changing planet, part I</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> BRING TO CLASS Lauren Redniss, <i>Thunder & Lightning...</i> (2015) <input type="checkbox"/> UCLA Climate Lab, Episodes #1 & #6–short videos (2017) |
| | <p>Collaborative deadline #3–"LA menu of the future"</p> |
| | <p>Collaborative deadline #4–individual reflection letters</p> |
| WEEK TEN | <p><i>Climate: Stories for a changing planet, part II</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Charlie Jane Anders, "The Day It All Ended," from <i>Hieroglyph: Stories & Visions for a Better Future</i> (2014) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>One Strange Rock</i>, "Alien"–TV episode (2019) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Course conclusion and review |
| | <p>Essay #2 final deadline</p> |