Spring 2-1-2019

LIT 422.01: Ecocritical Theory & Practice

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LIT 422 (section 1) – **Ecocritical Theory and Practice** (Spring 2019)
Class Time: Tues./Thurs 11-12:20 LA 335
Professor Louise Economides (louise.economides@mso.umt.edu) Office: LA 119
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1:00-2:30 pm and by appointment

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**Required Texts:**
Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake.*

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**Course Objectives:** During the 1990's, "ecocriticism" emerged as a new field of theory with the general goal of analyzing literary representations of nature, animals and humanity's relationship to the more-than-human world. Scholarship within British and American Romanticism was particularly important to first-wave ecocriticism. Since then, a variety of new approaches have emerged to challenge the ideological investments of first-wave critique. In this survey of the current field of green literary studies, we will cover first, second and third-wave ecocriticism, including deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, queer, postmodern and anthropocene ecologies. Along the way, we will consider links between ecocriticism and earlier theory (such as feminism, marxism and deconstructionism), as well as debates between different schools of eco-critique. We'll also explore whether ecocriticism is a coherent theoretical school, and will use ecocritical frameworks to interpret literary texts.

A holistic issue we’ll investigate throughout the course is the role that the arts can play in heightening our awareness of the ecological challenges we face today and in promoting environmental advocacy. Some of the questions we’ll address include the root causes of our environmental crisis, whether anthropocentric and/or humanist subjectivity is adequate (or increasingly problematic) in the face of contemporary ecological problems, the viability (and risks) of new concepts of subjectivity issuing from post-humanist theory, the extent to which identity politics (including concepts of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and species) mediate our understanding of environmental debates, and the issue of technology’s impact on how we think about “nature” today.

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**Graded Work** Please note: *Papers must be hard copies – I do not accept e-mailed essays* (if you are unable to attend class, please put hard copy of essay in my departmental mailbox in LA 133 a.s.a.p). Late papers will be reduced by one grade point for each day after due date (B- becomes C+, for example). No paper will be accepted that is more than two class periods late.

1) **Two research papers:** Two essays (8-10 pages) which engage with issues and theories discussed in class. A first draft for essay one is required.

2) **Group Presentation:** Working with a group of peers, you will be leading our class discussion on a critical essay and writing an overview of the process (2-3 pages) that generated your presentation. Please see separate assignment sheet which details requirements for presentations.

3) **Class Participation and Attendance:** Regular attendance (no more than 3 absences) and active participation are vital to your success in this course. If you miss more than 3 classes this semester, you can expect a maximum grade of “C” for your participation grade (less if you failed to meet participation guidelines listed here). “Active Participation” includes 1) coming to class having carefully read and annotated assigned texts 2) sharing your thoughts about the readings during our class discussions 3) asking focused questions concerning the readings, indicating prior preparation 4) responding to questions posed by your peers and/or instructor 5) actively participating in group work 6) coming to office hours to discuss issues we don’t have time to cover in class.
Course Policies

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321.” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper.

Accommodation: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Learning Outcomes: The following are some of the learning outcomes for this course –

1. Familiarity with the diverse methodologies and focuses of ecocritical theory.
2. Comprehension regarding how various schools of ecocriticism are in conversation with one another and build upon previous schools of critical theory.
3. Creative application of insights from ecocriticism to literary analysis.
4. Understanding how the study of literature creates disciplinary-specific demands upon researchers. Successful mastery of conventions entailed in literary analysis.
5. Capacity to conduct independent research using electronic search engines and other media.
6. Connecting ecocriticism with thinking skills that can be applied to solving ecological problems.
7. Ability to draft and revise written work effectively, using feedback from instructor.

Graduate Increment: Graduate students taking this course are expected to produce papers commensurate with professional quality literary scholarship. This entails writing longer papers than undergraduates (10-15 pages rather than 8-10 pages), which employ more critical sources (minimum of 5 sources not otherwise discussed in class) and which reflect a higher level of synthesis and/or sophistication than undergraduate papers. Graduate students must also teach one class on the syllabus (please see instructor regarding parameters for this).

GRADED WORK POINT TOTALS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay one</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay two</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
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WEEKLY SCHEDULE
(Subject to changes) – All readings on Moodle unless otherwise indicated

WEEK ONE: Defining Ecocriticism
Thurs. 1/10  Course introduction; Marland’s overview of “Ecocriticism” from Literary Theory An Anthology

WEEK TWO:  First Wave Ecocriticism and Green Romanticism

Tues. 1/15  Bate, “Toward Green Romanticism”; Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness”
Thurs. 1/17  Thoreau, “Walking”

WEEK THREE:  Deep Ecology

Tues. 1/22  Devall and Sessions from Deep Ecology; Manes, “Nature and Silence”
Thurs. 1/24  Leopold, from A Sand Country Almanac

WEEK FOUR:  Ecofeminism

Thurs. 1/31  Merchant, from The Death of Nature

WEEK FIVE:  Debates About Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

Tues. 2/5  Ferry, from The New Ecological Order; Callicott, “Holistic Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Ecofascism”
Thurs. 2/7  Cuomo, “Considering the Problems of Eco-Feminism”

WEEK SIX:  Ecocriticism and Sexuality

Tues. 2/12  Glazebrook, “Eco-logic”; Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism”
Thurs. 2/14  Carter, “The Company of Wolves”

WEEK SEVEN:  Queer Ecology

Tues. 2/19  Mortimer-Sandilands, “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies”: Presentation Group #1
Thurs. 2/21  Spahr, “Gentle Now …” and other poems

WEEK EIGHT:  Environmental Racism and Social Ecology

Tues. 2/26  Bullard, “Environmental Racism…”; Silko, “Lullaby”

WEEK NINE:  Dark Ecology and the “End of Nature”

Tues. 3/5  McKibben, from The End of Nature; Phillips “Is Nature Necessary?”
Thurs. 3/7  Morton, “The Dark Ecology of Elegy” – Presentation Group #2

WEEK TEN:  New Materialism and the Anthropocene

Tues. 3/12  Bennett, from Vibrant Matter
Thurs. 3/14  Bonneuil/Fressoz from The Shock of the Anthropocene

WEEK ELEVEN:  Literature and the Anthropocene
Tuesday, March 19
Lecture on Cli-Fi; Clark, from *Ecocriticism on the Edge*

Thursday, March 21
Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” – **Presentation Group #3**

**WEEK TWELVE: SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)**

**WEEK THIRTEEN:** Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*
Tuesday, April 2
*Oryx and Crake*

Thursday, April 4
*Oryx and Crake*

**WEEK FOURTEEN:** *Oryx and Crake*, continued; Powers, *The Overstory*
Tuesday, April 9
*Oryx and Crake*; Glover, “Human/Nature: Ecological Philosophy…”
**Presentation Group #4**

Thursday, April 11
Powers, *The Overstory*

**WEEK FIFTEEN:** *The Overstory, Continued*
Tuesday, April 16
Powers, *The Overstory*

Thursday, April 18
Powers, *The Overstory*

**WEEK SIXTEEN:** *The Overstory, Continued*
Tuesday, April 23
Powers, *The Overstory*

Thursday, April 25
Powers, *The Overstory*