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LIT 524.1 Literature and Environment: Changes in the Land: Literature, Nature, Politics

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Changes in the Land

We will spend the semester worrying questions that have challenged geographers, artists, and ecocritics for some time--how do we recognize environmental change? How is it useful and important to notice the ways land changes under human direction or influence? What are some effects of changes to land forms, flora, fauna, water cycles, atmosphere, soundscapes, etc.? We will look at the way writers and other artists represent such changes, and, while the majority of work will consider the American West, we will range farther as we explore how nature and politics intertwine to reshape our land and landscapes. We will use the work of ecocritics, historians, and geographers to help us find suitable methodologies for our task. By the end of the term we should be adept at recognizing change in places that don’t always encourage us to see their histories.

As writers and critics we will work to develop modes of representation and analytical strategies that will bring land, landscape, change and effect into view for scrutiny, for advocacy, and for art. What happens when we think about textual representation by thinking about land, landscape, and change? At once universally important and unequivocally local, land and earth determine habitat, biota and culture. How then do we read literary texts in ways that will reveal the important undercurrents in our grounded world? How do we recognize change over time? How are earth, land, and landscape emplotted in narrative, image, representation? What reading/writing/analytical methods help us discern the earth’s role relationally--between species,
among species, and between and among human cultures? How might we recognize change as it occurs? Whether you are a critical reader and interpreter of texts or a producer of literary texts, this course will provide tools to understand how the world gets in literary texts and why that matters. Expect some critical work, some literary nonfiction, some fiction, and a few surprises.

**Outcomes:**
In this course we will examine literature and other forms of representation from the ground up, so to speak. What do texts look like when viewed from the perspective of the elements? How does environmental change determine or inflect narrative, character, and ethical substance of the text? What can this perspective tell us about the way we inhabit spaces? About our animal selves?

We will look at texts from the late 20th and early 21st centuries that posit, defend, critique and challenge ideas about the status of land and landscape through their relations to cultural (socio-political) practices. As we move through the semester we will look at these issues through different modes of discourse, with particular attention to the contributions made by literary texts. In addition, we will carefully consider the ways in which readers of literature appropriate the theories and methodologies of ecocriticism, as well as other disciplines. By the end of the course your work will show a sophisticated use of theoretical and methodological discourses and attentiveness to the ways in which elemental nature and environmental change has been represented in literary texts.

**Assessments:**
During the semester, you will participate in two presentations, with a written summary, one on a critical text, and one on additional literary texts; six short provocative pieces on the primary readings (1 in January, 2 in February, 2 in March, and 1 in April); and one final essay or textual project, of substantial length (18-30 pp.) *

*I am willing to negotiate with each of you to establish a project that meets both the objectives of the course and your academic needs.

**Books:**
The University bookstore should have copies of nearly all the books, BUT they never order enough copies and they are overpriced. I have placed copies of many on reserve in the library (sometimes multiple copies). Some of you may wish to buy used books on-line. I will place some required readings on reserve. Critical books are available on-line, or library, or ILL, or rarely, on loan from me. For living writers, if you can afford it, buy NEW. Royalties feed writers. If you buy used, get the best deal you can. The Book Exchange can have good prices, or you can shop on-line. I might recall a book to place on reserve, so keep that in mind. For the literature, public libraries are a good bet. Borrow—many of these are old chestnuts around Missoula, so you might be able to borrow from friends.

**Required:**
Cronon. *Changes in the Land*
Pollan. *Second Nature*
Stewart. *The Marches*
Jackson. *Landscape in Sight*
Nixon. *Slow Violence*
Hogan. *Mean Spirit*
Steingraber. *Having Faith*
Waldie. *Holy Land*
Puchner. *Model Home*
Solnit. *Paradise Built in Hell*

**Additional Reading:**

For each area below, you will receive a separate list of texts.

1. We will also read several articles on method and issues in the field of ecocriticism.

2. In addition to the required books above, which we will discuss in class, you will, as part of small reading groups, read additional literary texts. Each member of the group will write a short piece 250+ words discussing the relationship between the reading-group books and at least one of the required books). The group as a whole will give a short presentation on the selected book.

3. Literary Reading Groups: choose from the list and form reading groups of three people.

4. Critical/ Theoretical book Group: choose from the list or another title pre-approved by yours truly. I encourage you to find a theory, methodology, or perspective that interests you and explore that one.

**Schedule:**

1/16: Introduction and discussion of rhetorical situation and challenges.

1/23: *Changes in the Land*

1/30: *Second Nature*; additional short piece

2/6: *The Marches*; additional short pieces

2/13: *Landscape in Sight*: front matter through Part 3 (p182)

2/20: *Landscape in Sight*: Part 4 through end; additional piece

2/27: *Slow Violence*; additional short piece

3/6: *Mean Spirit*
3/13: visual, aural, sensory ways of knowing: short excerpt

3/20: *Having Faith*
3/27: SPRING BREAK

4/3: *Holy Land*

4/10: *Model Home;* presentations

4/17: *Paradise Built in Hell;* presentations

4/24: Discussion of projects, questions, summaries, issues, reflections,

**PROJECTS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN NOON MAY 1**--my office or my Dept mailbox.

WE will NOT meet during final exams.

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**The Fine Print**

**Attendance:**
Expected. If you have a compelling reason to be away (presenting your work at a conference in Rome or you are in the hospital), please see me ahead of time.
**Disabilities accommodation:**
Students with registered disabilities may obtain assistance with the registration process and the relocation of classes (if needed) through Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 (406) 243 2243 VOICE/TDD. Students with disabilities can expect access at the University of Montana-Missoula. Wherever possible, the University exceeds mere compliance with the civil rights laws of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Montana Human Rights Act. The University's programs are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. The campus assures Program access is delivered to the maximum extent feasible and in the most integrated manner possible. Disability Services for Students, a student affairs office, leads the University's program access efforts for students. Disability Services provides and coordinates reasonable accommodations and advocates for an accessible and hospitable learning environment. We encourage self-determination and self-reliance by students with disabilities. Examples of services include priority registration, physical accessibility arrangements, academic adjustments, auxiliary aids (readers, scribes, sign language interpreters, etc.), alternative testing, conversion of print textbooks to e-text, assistive technology assistance, and other reasonable accommodations. To achieve equal access, Disability Services vigorously pursues the removal of informational, physical, and attitudinal barriers to all University programs. "Expect Access", Disability Services handbook for students, and a campus accessibility map are available on the UM Disability Services for Students website. Students with disabilities should plan ahead and get in touch with Disability Services prior to arriving on campus. For additional information, contact Disability Services for Students in Lommasson Center 154 or (406) 243-2243 (Voice/Text) or dss@umontana.edu. Please visit the UM Disability Services for Students website to find details on our services. Please see me privately.

**Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism is the representing of another's work as one's own. It is a particularly intolerable offense in the academic community and is strictly forbidden. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion. (See Student Conduct Code that follows in this section of the catalog.) Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording but also ideas. Acknowledgment of whatever is not one's own original work is the proper and honest use of sources. Failure to acknowledge whatever is not one's own original work is plagiarism.

**Incompletes:**
Please refer to university catalog for policy.

**Student Conduct Code:**
You are expected to adhere to the code.

**Grades:**
Your grade will be based on written work, on presentations, and on participation in the work of the course. Your final written project will comprise 60% of your course grade. This method of evaluation is standard for graduate courses in literature.
**Useful background reading:**

Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Environment*

Garrard. *Ecocriticism*

*The Oxford Introduction to Literature and Environment*

Glotfelty and Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader*

Hiltner. *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*