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LIT 491.01: Petromodernity and Culture - Art in the Age of Big Oil

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Petromodernity and Culture:

Art in the Age of Big Oil

"Oil is our God...we all worship Petroleum, *A Crude Awakening*

"We live in a petrol world." Stephanie LeManager

LIT #491 01

T/R: 3:30-4:50

Instructor: Katie Kane

LA 103B

CRN: 32993

Email: katie.kane@mso.umt.edu

Spring 2022

Office: LA 111

Text#: 406-880-5856

O. Hours: T: 12:30-1:30

R 12:00-2:00

& By appointment

This seminar explores the relationship between world literature and energy and natural resources. We will read a range of literary, cultural, and theoretical works about that most combustible of planetary resources: oil.

Oil is the signal resource of the post-war capitalist world system, and our world is soaked in oil—in its many diverse forms. Indeed our age can be defined as Stephanie Lemanager does, by the term Petro-Modernity. Petroleum and its associated “products” are everywhere, particularly in those case where it seems to be scarce, as yet undiscovered, and even invisible or absent. Petromodernity determines the entirety of our global lives: how, where, and when we live, move, work and play; what we eat, wear, consume. Oil is the key shaping element in our political and physical landscapes—not simply visible at the pumps, in times of scarcity, and in the spectacular booms and busts of places like the Bakken Oil Patch or in the epic disasters of spills. Oil flows though and undergirds the phones, the paper, the computers we use. The ubiquity of Oil—a situation that is particularly true for the American West—means not only that modern culture is a Hydrocarbon culture. Necessarily then, recent scholarship has begun to engage with Petromodernity, discovering the ways in which oil and other fossil fuels represent the deep well structure in contemporary culture, art and literature.

On the basis of this understanding of Petromodernity, the seminar will engage with local and global genres of fiction and poetry, cinema and documentary—texts that contain deep structures of petroculture and that unveil deeply connected international patterns in literary form and theme as well as petro-economics and power. We will attempt to track the ways in which world literature can, following Graeme McDonald and Franco Moretti, provide both a method and an archive to cognitively and materially map and critique global inequity in the

arena of unevenly produced resources. In mapping the emergence of both cultural and political responses to Petromodernity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the seminar will also try to track the ways in which the documents of culture contain new and important ways to think about new, speculative forms of energy futures in a “post oil” epoch.

Coursework: Final grades will be determined by your performance in three separate categories of coursework:

1. Presentation	20%
2. Abstract Presentation	10%
3. Final Essay	<u>70%</u>
	100%

Presentation

On Tuesday Jan 25th, I will hand around a presentation sign up sheet. Sign up for a text that you are passionate about exploring or otherwise compelled to engage with (this is an opportunity for you to illuminate the text we are reading for that day—it is that clichéd but important “teachable moment”). You may choose to do a close reading of the text we are engaging with for the day, provide meaningful historical context, engage the class in an exercise, or present a performance a piece. Please submit a two page essay (and any other materials, such as power point) that will either form or support the presentation work you will be doing. Run the class!

Final Research Essay with Abstracts and Drafts: You will turn in an abstract and draft of your essay before submitting the final version. This 10-15 and or 20-25 page creative, analytic and scholarly essay with attached bibliography represents the principal writing exercise of the semester. The essay will argue for the relevance of a distinctive, personal analysis of a text/set of texts and/or issues surrounding a textual constellation of issues and ideas germane to the class. In addition, you will be responsible for accessing and harnessing the larger debates surrounding the literary artifact, historical phenomenon, and/or interpretive issue. To that end you will use library resources to familiarize yourself with the reading histories of the text(s) you have chosen and you will incorporate those materials in the argument of your essay. **Here you must use AT THE VERY MINIMUM FOUR outside sources**—peer-reviewed, culturally and theoretically oriented sources we have not read in class, but I do encourage you to incorporate more.

Final Essay Production Schedule:

1. On Tuesday, March 15th, and on Thursday, March 17th, you will turn in an abstract (precis, plan, blueprint, conceptual map) of your final paper to the class collective during class. You will also be asked to provide fellow students with a brief summary of your planned project and a copy of your abstract and sources. **Please read your two page text**. You will need to include a working **annotated** bibliography of the sources and texts you will be working with. Abstracts without an annotated bibliography will be docked at least five (of ten) points. Abstracts that are not two page single spaced in length will be docked at least five (of ten) points. **Please bring 8 paper copies with you to class**.
2. Monday, April 11th, Tuesday April 12th, and Wednesday April 13th (depending upon when

you schedule your conference) your Rough Draft will be due. You will meet with me in consultation over the rough draft in LA 111 in conference. The Rough Draft must be a minimum of four or 8-10 pages long.

3. The Final Draft of the essay is due on Monday May 9th, by 5:00. Upload to UMBox.

Attendance: Attendance is required and will be recorded: three or more unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course itself. Late arrivals and early departures will, if they occur frequently, count as absences. If you do arrive late you will be responsible for letting me know after class that you were present for the day. Absences due to medical and family emergencies will be excused, provided you come and discuss the situation (**ASAP**) with me. Lengthy crises that require multiple absences may require your reconsideration of enrollment in school this semester. Strolling in and out of the classroom, if it happens with frequency will result in your attendance being affected.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

The University of Montana is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The University of Montana prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person on the basis of sex, gender, pregnancy status, age, race, national origin or ethnicity, religion, disability, status as a veteran of the Vietnam era or other covered veteran, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, or genetic information, in its educational programs, admissions policies, employment practices, financial aid, or other school-administered programs or activities. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students by any faculty, staff, or student will not be tolerated at the University of Montana or in this classroom.

Disabilities Accommodation:

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations for coursework. To request accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible in the semester. I will work with you and with Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/>, or call 406.243.2243 (Voice/Text)."

Pronouns/Names:

Please let us know what pronoun that you would like the class to use.

If you have an alternative name or nickname that you would prefer to be called, please let me know. In both cases, I ask for your patience as I navigate my neurological eccentricities.

Mental Health Issues (during COVID and otherwise):

As a student you may experience a range of issues that interrupt or impede work in the classroom community: COVID, strained relationships, climate change/modernity, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, depression, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance

or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. University of Montana services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website at <https://www.umt.edu/diversity/resources/mental-health.php>

Classroom Policies & Culture

"Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics, which are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might elicit strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful, even when we strongly disagree with each other. Be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom."—I stole this statement from S. Brook Corfman's syllabus, and I am glad that I did.

Moodle: No. Unless something unusual happens: like the end of the world.

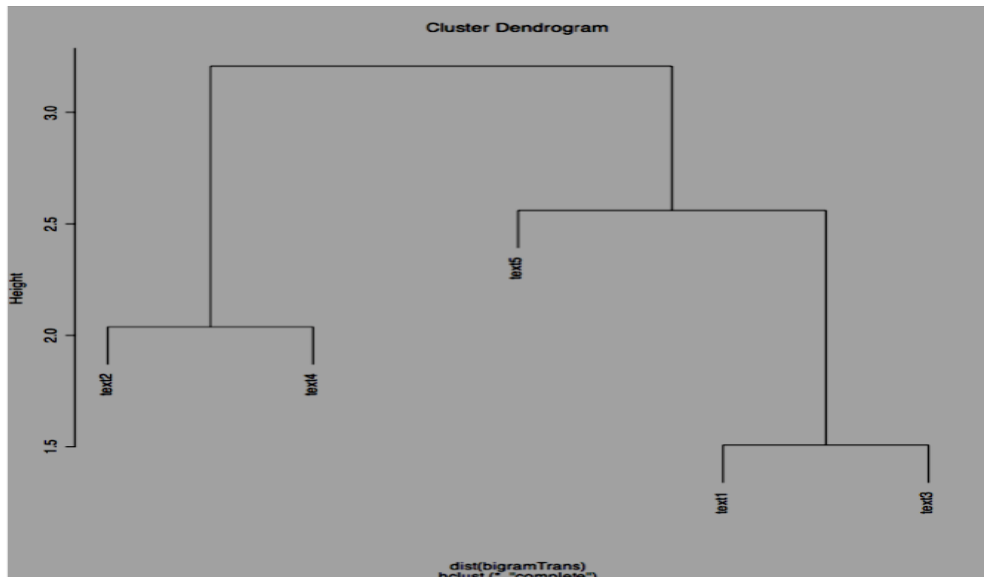
UM Box: Yes. PDF Documents will be shared on UM Box and you will upload Response Essays and Final Paper onto the platform, as well.

All Final Essays will be uploaded and returned through UMBox via a folder that only the individual student and I will be able to access. All assessment will be done online.

Scholastic Dishonesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty—in as much as they keep the individual student as well as the collective community from learning—will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. FOR A DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM SEE <http://www.lib.umt.edu/services/plagiarism/index.htm>. The Provost's Office has asked all faculty at the University of Montana to attach the following statement on plagiarism to their syllabi: "All students must practice academic honesty. 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://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student.conduct.php>

THE PURCHASED PAPER

"The Internet and email are now the tools of choice for plagiarism. Advertisements in college papers and in the regular press as well as on the Internet announce the availability of student and professional services, sometimes couched in such euphemistic terms as 'editorial assistance,' but often blatantly offering commercially prepared essays, academic papers, and even theses for sale. The easy availability of such assistance from various web sites has increased student 'cut and paste' activity to the degree that it is now expected and regarded as a common practice (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2000 a)" (31, Source).



“Lack of integrity and unethical behavior within the educational sector is inconsistent with one of the main purposes of education; that is to produce ‘good [critical] citizens, respectful of the law [and willing to challenge it when necessary], of human rights and fairness (it is also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as one of the principle means of fighting corruption)” (10, “Combating Academic Fraud: Towards a Culture of Integrity”

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001330/133038e.pdf>)

English Department Goals for the Study and Use of Models of Literary Interpretation:

- familiarity with the vocabulary of contemporary literary interpretation;
- working knowledge of schools of literary interpretation;
- overview of recent debates;
- development of skills of logical argument and interpretation;

Goals for Student Writing: We will work to develop and hone the following skills in all of our writing exercises this semester.

- voice that is consistent & appropriate to the audience & purpose;
- correct diction & sentence structure;
- sound judgments unified by a clear message;
- evidence or reasons supporting all judgments;
- logical linkage of judgments and evidence;
- transitions that connect a series of ideas and evidence;
- correct spelling and punctuation and proper MLA style documentation

UNIVERSITY WIDE COVID PROTOCOLS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

- Mask use is required within the classroom or laboratory.
- If you feel sick and/or are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please don't come to class and contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330.
- If you are required to isolate or quarantine, you will receive support in the class to ensure continued academic progress.
- UM recommends students get the COVID-19 vaccine and booster. Please direct your questions or concerns about vaccines to Curry Health Center.
- Where social distancing (maintaining consistent 6 feet between individuals) is not possible, specific seating arrangements will be used to support contact tracing efforts.
- Class attendance will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom.