

**Bergen Community College  
Division of Humanities  
Department of English**

**LIT 231: Literature and Environmental Issues  
Course Syllabus**

**Semester and year  
Section Number  
Meeting Times  
Location**

**Instructor:**  
**Office Location:**  
**Phone:**  
**E-mail:**  
**Office Hours:**

**Course Description:** This course engages students with a diverse selection of literature related to the natural environment. Students will be introduced to ecocriticism through analysis of fiction and non-fiction texts to explore the relationship between literature and the environment from a broad historical and cultural perspective. Environmental writing will be explored through a survey of major literary movements. This is a three-credit General Education course. Prerequisite: English 101

<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Means of Assessment</b>
1. Identify major movements in environmental writing, including (but not limited to) pastoral, Romantic, and postcolonial.	Discussion, Writing, Multimodal Presentation
2. Analyze responses to our natural environment—both fiction and nonfiction—as they shift over time in response to economic and political phenomena.	Discussion, Writing, Multimodal Presentation
3. Engage in formal ecocritical responses to literary texts.	Discussion, Writing
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical, aesthetic, and literary aspects of environmental literature through both oral and written assignments.	Discussion, Writing

Student Learning Outcomes	Means of Assessment
5. Produce a properly formatted written evaluation of selected texts; and demonstrate competency in both research methodologies and literary analysis.	Discussion, Writing, Multimodal Presentation

### Essential Learning Outcomes

SLOs:	EL 1	EL 2	EL 3	EL 4	EL 5	EL 6	EL 7	EL 8	EL 9	EL 10	EL 11
1.	x	x							x		
2.	x	x							x		
3.	x	x							x	x	
4.	x	x							x		
5.	x	x			x				x		

EL1-Effective Speaking  
 EL2-Effective Writing  
 EL3-Mathematical Reasoning  
 EL4-Scientific Reasoning  
 EL5-Technological Competency  
 EL6-Information Literacy  
 EL7-Social-Behavioral Analysis

EL8-Historical Analysis  
 EL9-Humanistic Analysis  
 EL10-Intercultural Awareness  
 EL11-Moral Literacy

### Means of Assessment

1. Students will perform critical analyses of works corresponding to each literary genre and movement in environmental writing. Two formal analyses will be assigned in which students will demonstrate competency through formal syntheses of multiple texts. Informal written assignments will likewise gauge student competency. (SLO #1, SLO# 3, SLO #5)
2. The midterm examination will be composed of a series of essays. Essays will focus on both aesthetic categories—the formal components of works—as well as the economic and political registers of the texts under analysis. (SLO #2, SLO #3)
3. The final project for the course will be a traditional term paper in which students will produce a formal Eco-critique of selected works. (SLO #3, SLO #5)
4. Each student will lead a class discussion of assigned texts for which s/he will produce a series of relevant questions. (SLO #4)

### Signature Assignment

Researched Analysis: Students will write a 7-10 paged analysis, using secondary sources, of a primary source text introduced in the course.

## Sample Required Texts

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* ISBN: 978-0618249060

Laurence Coupe, Ed. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*  
ISBN: 978-0415204071

Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* ISBN: 978-1944869014

Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* ISBN: 978-0312428594

Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People* ISBN: 978-0486406572

## Course Content

Following Laurence Buell's indictment of environmental writing and "nature poetry" as reducing our global ecosystem to "mere setting," we will consider a diverse set of literatures that seek instead to understand the environment as a working and dynamic ecology. We will thus consider the pastoral as a point of departure as we consider how nature has been *framed* by writers from the Ancient to the Romantic to the Postcolonial era while we attempt to come to grips with our increasing alienation from our natural environment.

## Grading policy

Critical Essays: 40%

Midterm Examination: 25%

Final Paper: 25%

Class participation: 5%

Informal written assignments & Quizzes: 5%

Written assignments must be formatted according to MLA standards. You will find citation guides on our library's website ([www.bergen.edu/library](http://www.bergen.edu/library)). BCC's Writing Center is located in L125, and you are encouraged to work on your papers with our faculty and professional writing tutors. Please note that the center is indeed a tutoring center—you are not to drop off your paper for proofreading as this is not a function of the center.

## Attendance Policy

Your presence is vital to our classroom community, so regular attendance is required. You will be permitted four absences after which your grade will be negatively affected. You are expected to come to class every day prepared to discuss assigned texts and to produce written responses both in class and at home.

## Academic Integrity

A note on plagiarism: please give credit where credit is due! Honesty is expected of you. It is expected that the work you hand in will always be your own, and that you will never copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or whole essays from any other person's work, for that is plagiarism. If you are ever unclear about how to cite another person or author's ideas, come see me or consult the staff in the writing center.

In order to help you avoid plagiarism and preserve academic integrity, you are required to submit all papers to the Turnitin links embedded in the specific modules of our site. Turnitin alerts you to text that should be put in quotation marks and cited, and/or paraphrased in your own words. **The use of Artificial Intelligence is also plagiarism; it is truly better to think for yourself than ask a computer to think for you.** Papers are flagged for AI use by Turnitin. I will check the originality reports. No paper will be graded unless it has been turned in at the appropriate link. Note that any papers submitted for grading that are determined to be plagiarized will receive a failing grade. If this is the second incident of plagiarism, you may fail the course.

## Accessibility Statement

Bergen Community College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the College's programs or services, contact the Office of Special Services (OSS) as soon as possible at 201-612-5270 or [www.bergen.edu/oss](http://www.bergen.edu/oss). To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with OSS. The OSS works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. The OSS serves as a clearinghouse on disability issues and works in partnership with faculty and all other student service offices.

## Student Support Services

Bergen Community College provides exemplary support to its students and offers a broad variety of opportunities and services. BCC's Writing Center is located in L125, and you are encouraged to work with our faculty and professional writing tutors. A comprehensive array of student support services including advising, tutoring, academic coaching, and more are available online at <https://bergen.edu/currentstudents/>.



## Sidney Silverman Library Online Resources:

[Guides BY SUBJECT - LibGuides at Bergen Community College](#)

General Search and Databases: [Library | Bergen Community College](#)

## Sample Class Schedule

### Week 1: Introductions, Ecopoetics & Reading Nature

William Blake, "Nature as Imagination" (Reader)

Laurence Buell, "Representing the Environment"

(Reader)

A.R. Ammons "Corson's Inlet"\*

*\*All poems will be available on Moodle. Additionally, all readings appended by an asterisk will be made available on Moodle.*

## **Week 2: Portraits of Environmentalism, North**

Kate Soper, "The Idea of Nature" (Reader)

Rachel Carson, from *Silent Spring*: "A Fable for Tomorrow," "The Obligation to Endure," and "Surface Waters and Underground Seas"

## **Week 3: Portraits of Environmentalism, North continued**

Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*

*\*An Enemy of the People* will be staged at Bergen Community College later in the term: April 7, 8, 13, 14 & 15 at 7:30 PM & April 8 & 15 at 2 PM. We will attend a performance as a class.

## **Week 4: Portraits of Environmentalism, South**

Pablo Mukherjee, "Introduction" (from *Postcolonial Environments*)\*

Ramachandra Guha & Juan Alier, "The Environmentalism of the Poor" (*Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*)\*

Ken Saro-Wiwa, from *A Month and a Day*\*

Amitav Ghosh, from *The Hungry Tide*\*

**\*Critical Essay #1 due Thursday 2/9: 2-3 page analysis of A. R. Ammons's "Corson's Inlet" in which you use include the perspectives of Blake, Buell, or Soper.**

## **Week 5: Pastoralism & Enclosure: North & South**

Raymond Williams, "Pastoral and Counter-Pastoral" (*The Country and the City*)\* Virgil, from *Georgics*\*

Oliver Goldsmith, from *The Deserted Village*\*

John Clare, from *The Village Minstrel*\*

Vandana Shiva, "Living Economies" (*Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*)\*

## **Week 6: Pastoralism & Enclosure, Part II: Romanticism and its Discontents**

Raymond Williams, "The Green Language"

(Reader) Jonathon Bate, "From Red to Green"

(Reader) William Wordsworth, "The Solitary Reaper"\*

John Clare, "A Scene"\*

Alan Vardy, from *John Clare: Politics and Poetry*\*

## **Week 7: Transcendentalism, or Arcadia Revisited**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature*\*

Henry David Thoreau, "Writing the Wilderness"

(Reader) Rebecca Solnit, from *Wanderlust*\*

Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick*\*

## **Week 8: The Machine in the Garden: Landscape Ideology in the Age of Industry**

Leo Marx, "The Machine in the Garden"  
 (Reader) Walt Whitman, "A Locomotive in  
 Winter"\*  
 Emily Dickinson, "I Like to See it Lap the Miles"\*

### **Week 9: Spring Break!**

### **Week 10: The New Metropolis, Part I: Post-Industrial America**

Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of  
 Towns"\* Allen Ginsberg, "Sunflower Sutra"\*  
 Jamaal May, "Mechanophobia"\*  
 Rebecca Solnit "Detroit Arcadia"\*

### **Week 11: The New Metropolis, Part II: A Planet of Slums**

Raymond Williams, "The New Metropolis"\*  
 Mike Davis, from *Planet of Slums*\*  
 Chris Abani, from *Graceland*\*

### **Week 12: The Flowers of Empire**

Jamaica Kincaid, "The Flowers of Empire"\*  
 Ashley Dawson, "Capitalism and Extinction" (*Extinction: A Radical History*)  
 \*Term paper proposals due!

### **Week 13: The Flowers of Empire, Part II: Colonial Botany**

Pablo Neruda, "United Fruit"\*  
 Thomas De Quincey, "Ceylon"\*  
 Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*

### **Week 14: Postcolonial Ecologies**

Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*

### **Week 15: (4/25, 4/27)**

Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*

**\*Critical Essay #2: 2-3 page essay in which you consider Ghosh's novel in light of Dawson's commentary on capitalist expansion.**

### **Week 16: Musings on the Apocalypse**

Mary Shelley, from *The Last Man*\*  
 Dale Jamieson and Bonnie Nadzam, *Love in the Anthropocene*, selections TBD

### **Week 17: Final Projects Due. Proposals must be submitted by Week 12 of the term.**

Paper topics will be distributed after midterm, but students are encouraged to propose alternatives. Please note that you may use one of the critical essays as a springboard into this larger project.