# Course number: 01:195:220

# The Ecological Imagination in Literature, Film, and Media

## Catalog description

Study of the imagining of human/nonhuman relationships in recent world literature, film, and media. Interpretation of texts and visual artifacts within their cultural traditions, and in dialogue with local, regional, or planetary environmental changes and activism.

## Course description

*Environmental Humanities* is an umbrella term for the scholarly work done by researchers focusing on cultural factors for explaining human environmental change: customs, preferences, values, identities, power relations, worldviews, epistemologies, and ontologies. Its practitioners also seek to identify what constitutes environmentally relevant knowledge, and affirm the need to include cultural values, political and religious ideas, and other deep-seated human behaviors in understandings of the environment.

The environmental humanities doesn’t believe in the separation of “Nature” and “Humanity,” and asks a common ontological question with serious political ramifications: “How are human identities and responsibilities to be articulated when we understand ourselves to be members of multispecies communities that emerge through the entanglements of agential beings?” The environmental humanities are emphasizing the importance of indigenous and local knowledge as part of a radical reconfiguration of our understanding of the living world, and as a consequence of the interdisciplinary, transnational and cross-cultural vocation of the field and the scope of the issues under study.

In this course we will explore the issues outlined above in a variety of texts and films, since the late 1980s, from different geographies and cultural traditions in which the relationship of the human to the nonhuman is re-imagined within specific cultural contexts, and while pondering on a variety of environmental issues: toxicity, food sovereignty, conservation, multi- and trans-species perspectives, the emergence of popular environmental movements and indigenous ontologies resisting development, the blessings and curse of ecotourism, and the impact of climate change and the notion of the Anthropocene.

## Learning Goals

### Course Learning Goals

* To become familiar with relevant notions in the Environmental Humanities drawn from philosophical ontology, ecocriticism, political ecology, and environmental history;
* to become familiar with the environmental and cultural history of the countries involved;
* to learn critical concepts relevant to literary and cultural analysis;
* to develop critical thinking skills;
* to develop analytical reading and writing skills; and
* to improve oral and written proficiency.

### Comparative Literature Learning Goals

* Students will demonstrate familiarity with a variety of world literatures as well as methods of studying literature and culture across national and linguistic boundaries and evaluate the nature, function and value of literature from a global perspective.
* They will demonstrate critical reasoning and research skills; design and conduct research in an individual field of concentration (such as literary theory, women's literature, postcolonial studies, literature and film, etc); analyze a specific body of research and write a clear and well developed paper or project about a topic related to more than one literary and cultural tradition.
* They will demonstrate competency in one foreign language and at least a basic knowledge of the literature written in that language.

### Environmental Studies Minor Goals

*1. Environmental Literacy –* Students who complete the minor will understand and be able to articulate, both orally and in writing, the core principles, concepts, and theories that form the field’s interdisciplinary foundation.

*2. Environmental Methods/Techniques –* Students who complete the minor will be able to demonstrate proficiency in at least one spatial analytical method/technique.

*3. Environmental Problem Solving –* Students who complete the minor will be able to apply perspectives from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities in an integrated fashion to analyze concrete environmental problems and evaluate alternative approaches to them.

## Texts and films

### Primary sources

* Witi Ihimaera. The Whale Rider. 1987. New Zealand.
* Ken Saro-Wiwa. Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy. 1992. Nigeria.
* Mayra Montero (Cuba-Puerto Rico). In the Palm of Darkness. 1998. Haiti.
* J. M. Coetzee, The Live of Animals.1999. South Africa.
* Zakes Mda, The Heart of Redness. 2000. South Africa.
* Yann Martel. The Life of Pi. 2001. Canada.
* Indra Sinha. Animal’s People. 2007. India.
* Amitav Ghosh. The Hungry Tide. 2004. India.

### Films

* The Whale Rider (2002); New Zealand.
* Tambogrande: Mangos, Muerte, Minería (2007); Perú.
* Crude: The Real Price of Oil (2009); Ecuador.
* Waste Land (2010); Brazil.
* The Life of Pi. (2012).
* Detrás del TIPNIS (2012); Bolivia.

### Secondary sources

Clark, Timothy. 2011. The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Environment. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2012. “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change.” *New Literary History* 43 (1): 1-18.

De la Cadena, Marisol. 2010. “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond ‘Politics.’” *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 334-370.

De Vos, Ricardo. “Extinction Stories: Performing Absence(s).”

Fatheuer, Thomas. 2011. *Buen Vivir: A Brief Introduction to Latin America’s New Concepts for the Good Life and the Rights of Nature*. Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Gudynas, Eduardo. 2010. “The New Extractivism of the 21st Century: Ten Urgent Theses about Extractivism in Relation to Current South American Progressivism.” *Infoshop News of theAmericas Program, Center for International Policy (CIP)*. January 21 2010. <http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20100421011214362>

Gudynas, Eduardo. 2011. “*Buen Vivir*: Today’s tomorrow.” *Development* 54 (4): 441–447.

Heise, Ursula K. 2008. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McNeill, J. R. 2000. Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century. New York: W. W. Norton.

Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nye, David, Linda Rugg, James Fleming, and Robert Emmett. 2013. *The Emergence of the Environmental Humanities*. Stockholm, Sweden: MISTRA, The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research.

Robbins, Paul. 2012. Political Ecology. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Rose, Deborah Bird, Thom van Dooren, Matthew Chrulew, Stuart Cooke, Matthew Kearnes, and Emily O’Gorman. 2012. “Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities.” *Environmental Humanities* 1: 1-5.

Sörlin, Sverker. 2012. “Environmental Humanities: Why Should Biologists Interested in the Environment Take the Humanities Seriously?” *BioScience* 62 (9): 788-789.

Villalba, Unai. 2013. “*Buen Vivir* vs. Development: A Paradigm Shift in the Andes?” *Third World Quarterly* 34 (8): 1427-1442.

Wood, Rachel Godfrey*.* 2010. “New Left=New Extractivism in Latin America.” *Blog International Institute for Environment and Development*. June 29 2010. <http://www.iied.org/new-left-new-extractivism-latin-america>

## Course requirements

### Exams (2) (30%)

### Essay 1 (20%)

* 1,450-1,550 words.

### Essay 2 (25%)

* 2,000-2,100 words.
* Essays must be turned in as word attachments in the “Assignments” section of the course’s sakai site.
* The essays must follow the MLA norms for research papers.

### Class Participation. (15%)

* The students must read the material in advance, and prepare for class discussions.
* The purpose of our meetings is to collectively study the texts in their formal aspects, plots, and historical backgrounds in order to support the search for an essay topic, and its development in the essay itself.
* The criterion for grading class participation is the following:

A, 90: Active and regular participation in class discussions.

B, 80: The student occasionally contributes to class discussions.

C, 70: The student only responds when asked directly.

D, 60: The student attends class regularly but remains silent most of the time.

F, 50: Frequently absent.

### Oral Presentation. (10%)

* Each student will pair with another classmate, and deliver a 15 minute presentation on a topic listed in the course calendar.
* The presentation must include a Power Point and handouts for the rest of the class.

**GRADING**

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| **Letter grade** | **Arithmetic Minimum%** | **Definition** |
| A | 92-100 | Outstanding (Distinguished. The student consistently demonstrates outstanding comprehension and interpretation of the subject.) |
| B+  B | 87-91  81-86 | Good (The student has acquired comprehensive knowledge of the subject markedly above that constituting satisfactory performance in the subject.) |
| C+  C | 77-80  70-76 | Satisfactory. (The student shows adequate understanding of the content of the course.) |
| D | 60-69 | Poor (The student lacks understanding in some important respects, but has met the minimum acceptable standard.) |
| F | 0-59 | Failing (Failure. The student has failed to meet the minimum acceptable standard.) |

## Calendar

## Other information

**ATTENDANCE**

**1. Policy on missed or late assignments and make-up exams.**

* On principle, assignments will not be accepted after the due date. I will deal individually with exceptional cases.

**2. Policy on attendance**.

* You are required to attend all class meetings, and I take attendance daily. We cover a lot of material in class, so missing any class session can be costly.
* I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences; instead, I give you three free passes to miss class for any reason. After you use up those three absences, each additional absence will reduce your grade by 5%. Of course, if you have a severe illness or family emergency that causes you to miss multiple classes, I will accept a note excusing you, though you will be expected to make up the work you missed. If you have concerns about your attendance record, please consult with me in office hours.
* Lateness I do not like late arrivals to class – it shows a disrespect for your professor, your studies, and your fellow classmates. I do realize, though, that sometimes lateness is unavoidable. Therefore, like at the opera, we will have one late seating. Stunts arriving late to class will have to wait in the hall until I admit them to the classroom, usually about 15 minutes after the start of class. Do not open the door if it is closed. Stunts arriving more than 15 minutes late will not be admitted to class, and it will count as one absence.

**3. Reporting Absences**

* *Stunts are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website* [*https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/*](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/) *to indicate the date and reason for your absence.  An email is automatically sent to me.*
* In cases where stunts must miss classes or labs for periods longer than one week, they will always be directed to see a an of Stunts for assistance *to help verify these circumstances.*

**POLICY ON ACAMIC INTEGRITY**

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, nying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of acamic integrity.

For a complete discussion on acamic integrity, violations, and sanctions go to:

[http://acamicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml)

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ias of another as one's own in any acamic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be intified by quotation marks or by appropriate inntation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source stored in print, electronic or other medium is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment..." and conclu with a footnote intifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the rear of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge such as names of lears of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among stunts in the course must be acknowledged.

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| Plagiarism Tutorials:  *Take a 20 minute interactive-tutorial on Plagiarism and Acamic Integrity,* [*http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html*](http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html)  *For another view, use the Camn Plagiarism Tutorial* [*http://library.camn.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/*](http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/)  *Consult Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! for tips about how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accint.* [*http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib\_instruct/instruct\_document.shtml*](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml) |
| *Optional:* Online Learning Tools from Rutgers University Libraries including Rutgers RIOT, Searchpath and RefWorks <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/lib_instruct.shtml>  *Optional:* Acamic Support Programs: <http://lrc.rutgers.edu/> |