Title of the Course: IKA 6/718 Culture and the Environment

Instructor: Prof. Dr. Serpil OPPERMANN

Year and Term: 2016 S Fall

Class Hours and Rooms: Monday 13.00-16.45 Seminar Room

Office Hours: Monday 10:00-11:00

Aim: This graduate course will provide students with a broad foundation in contemporary ecocritical/ecocultural studies and the Environmental Humanities. The course offers an advanced critical outlook on the current ideas about human and nonhuman relationships, nature and culture, and how their ecological interactions are articulated and contested in what came to be known as naturecultures. The major focus of the course will be on a broad range of ecocritical theories which foreground the interactions between human and nonhuman environments, social and environmental justice issues in relation to climate change and other ecological problems, feminist ecocritical ideas, and the relations between bodies and the environments in the age of the Anthropocene. Students will develop and articulate their own critical methodologies, using the models we discuss in class and branching off in directions of their own choice. The general aim of the course is to create environmental awareness and familiarize the students with pressing ecological problems that are also cultural problems. This course at large addresses the question posed by Cheryll Glotfelty: “How then can we contribute to environmental restoration, not just in our spare time, but from within our capacity as professors of literature?” Of course here we add: “as students of cultural studies and literature.”

Course Contents: Main contents of the course will be based on various branches of ecociticism, feminist approaches to eco-cultural problems, nature/culture dualism, anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, cultural interpretations of non-human nature, posthumanism, and the Anthropocene debates. Class sessions will feature a mixture of student presentations and free-flowing discussion on questions at issue for environmental thought.

Required Books

Adamson, Joni, and Scott Slovic, eds. Special issue of MELUS 34.2 (Summer 2009).


**Essays to be Discussed**


On The Anthropocene, the following texts will be discussed:


**Course Outline:**


**Week II—IV—What do you think of Timothy Clark’s ‘quandaries’ How do you compare these 13 quandaries with Glotfelty’s introduction, Heise’s and Buell’s approach? How does the idea of Multiculturalism change with the influence of Nonhuman Cultures? Patricia Yaeger’s graduate students essays (2011)

Texts to be discusses include:

Barry, Peter. “Ecocriticism,”

Slovic, Scott. “Love is Never Abstract.”

Buell, Lawrence. “The Emergence of Environmental Criticism.” Chapter 1 of The Future of Environmental Criticism
Buell, Lawrence. “The Ethics and Politics of Environmental Criticism.” Chapter 4 of The Future of Environmental Criticism
Adamson, Joni, and Scott Slovic. “Guest Editors’ Introduction: The Shoulders We Stand On”
Heise, Ursula K. “From the Blue Planet to Google Earth: Environmentalism, Ecocriticism, and the Imagination of the Global.”
Estok, Simon C., “Ecocriticism in an Age of Terror.”
Kirby, Vicki. “Nature Conversations: Or, What if Culture was really Nature All Along?” Chapter 7 in Material Feminisms.
Plumwood, Val. “The Ecological Crisis of Reason.” Chapter 1 of Environmental Culture
Feder, Helena. “Rethinking Multiculturalism
Reed, T.V. “Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism.” In The Environmental Justice Reader
Yaeger, Patricia. “Literature in the Ages of Wood, Tallow, Coal, Whale Oil, Gasoline, Atomic Power, and Other Energy Sources.”
Donna Haraway on naturecultures

Week V-VI- Introducing Environmental Humanities and Ecological/Digital Humanities in the Age of the Anthropocene

Deborah Bird Rose
Sverker Solkv
Timothy Clark,
Poul Holm et al
Joni Adamson- “Networking”
The Anthropocen texts

Week VII- IX- Feminist ecocriticism. What is the most important dimension feminist environmentalists have brought into ecocritical studies? What is queer ecology? How do these movements relate to animal studies?

Texts to be discussed include

Gaard, Greta. New Directions for Ecofeminism”
Gaard, Greta. “Strategies for a Cross-Cultural Ecofeminist Literary Criticism”
Timothy Morton. “Guest Column: Queer Ecology.”
Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands. “Queering Ecocultural Studies.”
Sandilands, Catriona and Bruce Erickson. Introduction” in Queer Ecologies
Stacy Alaimo. ‘Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of 'Queer' Animals.”
Michael Allen Fox and Lesley McLean. “Animals in Moral Space.”
Armbruster, Karla. “Thinking with Animals: Teaching Animal Studies-Based Literature Courses.”

Week X- Postcolonialism and ecocriticism

Texts to be discussed include

Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. “Introduction.”
Heise, Ursula K., “Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Question of Literature”
Nixon, Rob. “introduction in Slow Violence
Wright, Laura. ‘Introduction’ in Wilderness Into Civilized Shapes

Week XI- XIII- The most recent ecocritical and ecocultural theories: Material ecocriticism, elemental ecocriticism, and the posthuman turn in cultural studies or Posthumanities
Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann
Jane Bennett
Rachel Tallman
Rosi Braidotti
Cary Wolfe
Karen Barad
Katherine Hayles
Jeffrey Cohen

Week XIV: Exam

Method of Instruction: Lectures and student presentations

Course Requirements: Attendance is obligatory. More than 11 hours of absence will result in F1. This course requires an extensive level of engagement with the course material. The students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the core themes and concerns of environmental thought and certain core issues of cultural studies before moving on to the more complex social, cultural and philosophical issues of ecocritical/ecocultural studies. The students are required to read and prepare critical responses to the assigned texts and are expected to participate in class discussions. They are also expected to prepare short in-class presentations (close reading of articles), and discuss the background, contexts and relevance of this to other topics.

Student Work:

Keep up with the reading, come ready to engage in discussions and always participate in lively debates. Prepare 2 "response papers" (maximum 5 pages) on the texts we discuss and develop a praxis/application paper by the end of the semester, reinforcing an existing mode of ecocritical approaches or proposing and experimenting with a new direction in the field (c. 10 pages devoted to the "theory," c. 5 pages applying the theory to specific situations and/or texts). Students earn %5 credits in discussions.

Assessment:
A. ONE major research paper of about 10 pages (Term Paper) on the environmental-cultural issues. This will be an in depth critical analysis of a specific phenomenon concerning the environmental cultural issues. (20%)  
B. Two brief response papers to specific readings which will be used as discussion papers. (10% each)  
C. ONE MIDTERM EXAM (10%) and FINAL EXAM (50%)

Questions to Consider

1. What do you understand by the terms ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ and how are they interrelated?
2. What is involved in studying ‘literature’ and ‘environment’?
3. How do our underlying assumptions about knowledge (epistemology) and the nature of existence (ontology) shape our attitudes and actions towards 'nature'?
4. What is the relationships among humans and between humans and the physical world, including human bodiliness?
5. Are human beings just the result of random evolutionary processes? Is that all they are?
6. Why has “nature” had such a powerful impact on poets and novelists over the past 150 years?
7. When do poets and scientists think in similar ways? When do they think in different ways?
8. Are you familiar with recent utopian or dystopian projections of the future?
9. How effective is this dystopian vision as a critique of current tendencies?
10. "Be fruitful and multiply."–Is that a good idea or a waste? Does evolution conflict with the religious teachings of major religions? Can the two viewpoints be reconciled?
11. How did 'nature' figure in the literature/film/TV that you experienced as a child? How important is
children's literature in shaping attitudes towards the more-than-human world?

12. To what extent does this narrative advance an environmental ethic?

13. To what extent are animals and the environment shown to be involved in communication in this text?

14. What role does place play in human relationships with the non-human world?

15. How can the physical environment affect your mood or ‘disposition’?

16. What might this suggest about the relationship between ‘mind’ and ‘body’?

17. What kind of ‘atmosphere’ is conveyed by these texts, and how is this accomplished through the language used?

18. How is the relationship between human social relations and the treatment of the environment configured in other science fiction texts with which you are familiar?

19. What connections between social injustice (especially classism, racism, sexism) and environmental destruction are evident in this text?

20. Why is ecocriticism necessary to teach in the 21st century?

“Have pity on this small blue planet searching through time and space”

Jeanette Winterson. GUT SYMMETRIES.