

HL 2003: Introduction to Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature
****Systems Thinking and the Ecocritical Enlightenment****
Spring 2016

****THIS IS A PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS: PLEASE REFER TO THE SYLLABUS ON
NTULEARN ONCE THE SEMESTER BEGINS****

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Time: TBA
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Objectives

- To analyze major texts of English literature written during England's "long" eighteenth century (extending from the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the passing of the Reform Act of 1832) within an ecocritical framework that addresses issues of sustainability, quality of life, and the relation of the human individual or community to the natural world
- To study how the individual's relationship to the external world (including society, nature, animals, the political system, and the sustainable balance of urban and rural life) was theorized in English literature of the Restoration, the Enlightenment, and the Romantic era
- To chart developments and continuities in literary forms, discourses, and traditions (including the pastoral, georgic, picturesque, sentimental and pathetic, etc.)
- To analyze formal and thematic connections between historical and contemporary fiction
- To explore the connections between literature, environmentalism, and other disciplines through "systems thinking"

Content

We will study canonical examples of English poetry and prose fiction written during the period 1660-1832. In order to contextualize these works historically, we will study major developments in England during this period, including evolutions in national identity; challenges to social hierarchies of class, race, and gender (and species!); and innovations in literary forms and genres. In class we will also be looking at some of the relevant secondary scholarship on ecological consciousness in the eighteenth century. These will assist our study of how environmental models and concerns (natural disasters; deforestation; the Chain of Being; encounters with new cultures and ecosystems through global exploration or colonialism; speciesism and anthropocentrism; the new perspectives afforded by new technologies like the microscope) informed eighteenth-century English literature. The semester will conclude with a "test case" of contemporary fiction (*Under the Skin*). We will tackle it using the same analytical skills and tools that we have used throughout the semester when studying classical, seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century literature. The module will also incorporate various video game features as a way to explore the contribution of literary concerns (such as narrative design, world building, characterization, tropes, intertextuality, and metaphor) to environmentalism and technology.

1. What is Ecocriticism? What is Systems Thinking?

Introduction to the module; historical and theoretical overview

2. Anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene

Assignment

Garrard, “The Future of Ecocriticism”; Sitter, “Academic Responsibility and the Climate of Posterity”; Wood, “What is Sustainability Studies?” (NTULearn and online)

3. Georgic and Pastoral in the Ecocritical Tradition

Assignment

Virgil, *Georgics*, Book 1; Theocritus, excerpt from the *Idylls*; Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”; Raleigh, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (NTULearn)

4. The Chain of Being and Systems Thinking

Assignment

Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (images); Rochester, “A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind”; Hogarth’s “Stages of Cruelty” (images); excerpt from *A Sentimental Journey*, “The Dead Ass”; Addison, *The Spectator* No. 519, “On the Scale of Being”; Pope, an excerpt from “An Essay on Man”; Johnson, *Idler* No. 17 (NTULearn)

5. Nature and Human Perspective

Assignment

Anne Finch, “A Nocturnal Reverie”; Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”; Coleridge, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”; Fielding, selection from *Tom Jones* (NTULearn)

MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE TBA

Hard copies dropped off at my office or pigeonhole by 5pm

6. Consumption and Colonialism

Swift, “A Modest Proposal” and Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels* (NTULearn)

7. Class, Resources, and Catastrophe

NO CLASS

Make-up class: Watch *Snowpiercer* (or a movie of your choice that deals with the following concerns) and write a one-paragraph response to its representation of the difficulties of resource distribution during or following a natural (or anthropogenic) disaster

MIDTERM BREAK

8. Water and Urbanization

Assignment

Swift, “A Description of a City Shower” (NTULearn) and Lee Tzu Pheng, “Singapore River” (<http://poetryprosedrama.blogspot.sg/2010/10/singapore-river-by-lee-tzu-pheng.html>); Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away* (in class)

9. Trees: Being, Metaphor, Personification

Assignment

Clare, “To a Fallen Elm”; Cowper, “Yardley Oak”; excerpt from *Magi – Labyrinth of Magic* manga (Volume 10, Chapters 90 and 96) (NTULearn and online)

10. Class, Gender, and Empire

Assignment

Duck, “The Thresher’s Labour”; Collier, “The Woman’s Labour”; Crabbe, “The Village”; Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village”; Shelley, “A Song: Men of England” and “To Sidmouth and Castlereagh” (NTULearn)

11. Anthropocentrism Revised?

Assignment

Under the Skin

12. Anthropocentrism Revised? (continued)

Assignment

Under the Skin

FINAL ESSAYS DUE: TBA

Hard copies dropped off at my office or pigeonhole by 5pm

Extensions will only be granted for documented cases of medical or family emergencies or for students with FYP projects confirmed by the Division of English (please contact me if you are an FYP student).

Learning Outcome

The course will provide students with an introduction to canonical examples of English literature (poetry, drama, prose fiction) from the period 1660-1832 and an opportunity to apply those examples to contemporary issues of ecological consciousness, quality of life, and urban sustainability. By the end of the course, students will be able to analyze the formal aspects of eighteenth-century literary genres and articulate how various authorities and identities are negotiated (or constructed) in terms of ecological consciousness. Students will also have a clear sense of how literary concerns such as narrative, perspective, and characterization can make a contribution to interdisciplinary systems thinking.

Student Assessment

- In-class or online writing exercises: 10% (**Tentative: Your participation mark will in part depend on brief responses to in-class viewings throughout the semester of *ECO - Global Survival Game***)
- Midterm Project (750-1000 words): 10%. Must be in MLA format and must address at least one text (this may be an excerpt) published before 1900 and incorporate two secondary sources. One of these secondary sources must be scholarly; the other may be a contemporary commentary from a local newspaper or blog. Discuss one of the texts we study this semester and an art object/architectural structure/site of cultural history in

contemporary Singapore in terms of how they both engage some of the same questions, concerns, or themes relating to our class discussions about ecological consciousness and sustainability. Options include but are not limited to Gardens by the Bay, CleanTech Park (adjacent to the NTU campus), the former National Theatre or National Library buildings, Bukit Brown, Gillman Barracks, Chijmes, Singapore Botanic Gardens, etc.

- Final Essay (2000-2500 words): 30%. Must be in MLA format and must address at least one text—a full text (not an excerpt). You may use *Under the Skin* as your primary text. Your final essay must incorporate at least three secondary sources (one of which must have been published in the last 10 years).
- **Alternate final essay options:** (a) Craft a narrative for a “systems thinking” environmental video game set in the eighteenth century. Write an essay “pitching” the design to a video game company: 2000 words to describe the game and how it models systems thinking; 500 words to justify your choices using three scholarly articles. The essay must allude to at least one primary source. (b) Design a “systems thinking” environmental video game on the website *Sploder* (free sign up; you will need to provide me with information about how to view it online) based on a primary text studied this semester. Write 1000 words explaining your design choices (using three scholarly articles). These alternate assignments must still include a Works Cited page in MLA format.
- Final Essay Exam: 50%

Textbooks/References

Michel Faber, *Under the Skin* (2000)

Texts on NTULearn