

HL 2003: Introduction to Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature
****Systems Thinking and the Ecocritical Enlightenment****
Spring 2017

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

Instructor: Professor Samara Cahill

Email: sacahill@ntu.edu.sg

Office Hours: Wednesday, 10:30am-12:30pm
(or by appointment)

Phone: 6592 1534

Office: HSS-03-73

Time: Tuesday, 1:30-3:30pm

Location: HSS Auditorium

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.

10 January: What is Ecocriticism? What is Systems Thinking?

Introduction to the module; historical and theoretical overview; instructions and overview of model UN debates and *Empire & Island* activities

17 January: Anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene

Assignment

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

24 January: Labor and the Georgic

Assignment

Virgil, *Georgics*, Book 1 and excerpts from Barbara Freese, *Coal: A Human History* (NTULearn)

31 January: The Chain of Being and Systems Thinking

Assignment

Addison, *The Spectator* No. 519, “On the Scale of Being”; Pope, an excerpt from “An Essay on Man”; excerpt from Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*; Johnson, *Idler* No. 17 (NTULearn)

7 February: Nature and Human Perspective

Assignment

Rochester, “A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind”; Anne Finch, “A Nocturnal Reverie”; Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” (NTULearn)

14 February: Trees—Being, Metaphor, Personification

Assignment

Clare, “To a Fallen Elm”; Cowper, “Yardley Oak” (NTULearn); excerpt from *Magi – Labyrinth of Magic* manga (Volume 10, Chapters 90 through 96: <http://mangayou.com/mangafox/magi-labyrinth-of-magic>) (online)

21 February

NO CLASS (I WILL BE AT THE SCSECS CONFERENCE)

Make-up class: At some point in the first half of the semester watch one of the films from the *Sustainable Earth Film Series* (you may choose another environmental film, but please clear it with me first) and write a one-paragraph response to its representation of the difficulties of resource distribution. Please turn in your film responses before 24 February.

MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE: Friday, 24 February

Hard copies dropped off in HL2003 box in Division of English by 5pm

MIDTERM BREAK (27 February-3 March)

7 March: Water and Urbanization

NO CLASS (CELEBRATE NTU!)—E-LECTURE WILL BE AVAILABLE ON NTULEARN

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>)

14 March: Consumption and Colonialism

Assignment

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

21 March: Class, Community, and Empire

Assignment

Crabbe, “The Village”; Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village”; Shelley, “A Song: Men of England” and “To Sidmouth and Castlereagh” (NTULearn)

28 March: Anthropocentrism Revised?

Assignment

Under the Skin

4 April: Anthropocentrism Revised? (continued)

NO CLASS (I WILL BE AT THE ASECS CONFERENCE—E-LECTURE WILL BE AVAILABLE ON NTULEARN!)

Assignment

Under the Skin

11 April: Semester Review

FINAL ESSAYS DUE: 18 April

Hard copies dropped off in HL2003 box 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

- *Sustainable Earth Film Series* (dates, time, location TBA). **Counts toward participation mark.** Watch one of these films for the make-up class (21 February) assignment:
 - *Avatar*
 - *The Mermaid*
 - *Mad Max: Fury Road*
 - *Princess Mononoke*
- In-class (tutorial and lecture) or online writing exercises: **10% (Your participation mark will significantly depend on your involvement in the in-class RPG (Role Playing Game) *Empire & Island*)**
 - Activity in the lecture: Model United Nations debate (weekly)
 - Activity in tutorial groups: team discussion and strategizing for next week's debate (weekly)
- 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.
- **Alternate midterm option:** play at least 3 hours of an “eco” or “resource management” video game of your choice and write an analysis of 750-1000 words about how the game models (or fails to model) ecocritical, sustainability, or systems issues. You must still use two sources (one must be scholarly; the other does not have to be scholarly, but must be a significant commentary on the game—see me if you have questions). Many games are available on the website *Steam* (some are free, others are not). Possible games (available on *Steam* or otherwise) include but are not limited to: *Shelter*, *Minecraft*, *Rust*, *Tree of Life*, *Don't Starve*, *Reus*, *Eco—Global Survival Game*, or *Harvest Moon*.
- 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 scholarly 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 significantly engage 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). (c) Write an analysis of the trajectory/narrative development of the in-class participation exercises based on the game *Empire and Island* using three scholarly

works (2000-2500 words). 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