

HL 2003: Introduction to Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature
****Systems Thinking and the Ecocritical Enlightenment****
Spring 2019

**THIS IS A PRELIMINARY DRAFT (SUBJECT TO CHANGE): PLEASE REFER TO
THE FINAL VERSION ON NTULEARN ONCE THE SEMESTER BEGINS**

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Time: TBA

Location: TBA

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
- 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 use an ecocritical lens to 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 the production of coal and its influence on urbanization, industrialization, deforestation, pollution, colonialism, and social justice awareness; evolutions in national identity; challenges to social hierarchies of class, race, and gender (and species!); and innovations in literary forms and genres. We will also be looking at some of the relevant secondary scholarship on ecological consciousness in the eighteenth century: this will assist our study of how environmental models and concerns (natural disasters; resource use; 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.

Week 1: Introduction

Introduction to the module; historical and theoretical overview

Week 2: Ecocriticism, Sustainability, and Systems Thinking: Combatting Green Colonialism

Assignment

Garrard, “The Future of Ecocriticism”; Wood, “What is Sustainability Studies?”; Klein, “Let Them Drown” (NTULearn)

Week 3: The Chain of Being, Anthropocentrism, and Systems Thinking

Assignment

Rochester, “A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind”; Addison, *The Spectator* No. 519, “On the Scale of Being”; Pope, excerpt from “An Essay on Man”; Smollett, excerpt from *Humphry Clinker* (NTULearn)

Week 4: The Industrial Revolution

Assignment

Barbara Freese, Chapter 3 of *Coal: A Human History*; William Blake, “The Chimney Sweeper” (from *Songs of Innocence*) and “The Chimney Sweeper” (from *Songs of Experience*) (NTULearn)

Week 5: Nature, the Romantic Perspective, and Animal Studies

Assignment

Anne Finch, “A Nocturnal Reverie”; Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”; Johnson, *Idler* No. 17 (NTULearn)

Week 6: 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)

Week 7

NO LECTURE

Make-up class: watch one of these films with an environmental focus: *Princess Mononoke*, *Avatar*, *Snowpiercer*, *Okja*, *The Mermaid*, or *Mad Max: Fury Road* and write a one-paragraph response to its representation of the difficulties of resource distribution or some other environmental issue. Please turn in your film responses during the next class meeting.

MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE: TBA

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

MIDTERM BREAK

Week 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>)

Week 9: Consumption and Colonialism

Assignment

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

Week 10: Pastoral and Anti-pastoral?

Assignment

Excerpt on the pastoral and post-equilibrium ecology from Garrard, *Ecocriticism*; Crabbe, “The Village”; Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village” (NTULearn)

Week 11: Class, Community, and Empire

Shelley, “A Song: Men of England” and “To Sidmouth and Castlereagh” (NTULearn)

Week 12: Anthropocentrism Revised?

Assignment

Under the Skin (first half)

Week 13: Anthropocentrism Revised? (continued)

Assignment

Under the Skin (second half)

Week 14: Semester Review

FINAL ESSAYS DUE: TBA

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, urban sustainability, and green colonialism. 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%

- 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; must 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 have studied and an ecocritically or historically significant 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), Bukit Brown, Pulau Ubin/Chek Jawa, Gillman Barracks, Chijmes, HortPark, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore Botanic Gardens, etc.
- **Alternate midterm option:** play at least three 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 secondary 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 we read this semester. (b) Design a “systems thinking” environmental video game (on the website *Sploder*, for instance) based on a primary text we studied this semester. Write 1000 words explaining your design choices (using three scholarly articles). *Sploder* has free sign up, but you will need to provide me with information about how to view it online. If you choose this option but don’t want to use *Sploder*, that’s fine, but clear it with me first. 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)—you will need to purchase this text yourself
 Texts on NTULearn