This course examines the various ways that nature is represented in U.S. popular culture. What can advertisements, films, television, and video games teach us about the ways we imagine nature and the environment? What ideas about nature are conveyed by zoos, aquariums, and nature-oriented theme parks? Popular culture representations of nature tell us more than how we imagine nature and the environment. They also articulate and naturalize ideas about race, gender, sexuality, and ability. They present certain kinds of identities as natural and normative and other kinds of identities as unnatural or out of place in nature. We will examine the politics of identity and environment in depictions of SeaWorld, gay penguins, and Mother Earth. What is at stake in movies like Pocahontas, Avatar, and Moana? How are ideas about race and colonialism communicated in advertisements for the Discovery Channel and The Body Shop? We will explore the ways that representations of nature can at times justify existing relationships of power and privilege in society and the ways in which such representations may also at times contest those existing relationships of power and privilege.

As part of this class, you will be responsible for contributing examples of popular culture to class discussion through your portfolio assignments. One of the aims of this class is to help you be a more critically and engaged reader of the popular culture that surrounds you.

**Learning Objectives**

- Provide a working definition of popular culture and an explanation of what we gain from studying popular culture representations of nature and the environment.
- Analyze the depictions of nature and the environment in television shows, films, advertisements, video games, and other popular culture texts.
- Describe and provide examples of the way ideas about race, gender, ability, and sexuality are communicated and contested through depictions of nature and the environment.
- Communicate effectively through written and oral communication.

**Required Texts**


*All other readings are available on Canvas.*
Course Policies

Preferred First Name: The University of Oregon has a preferred first name policy. According to this policy, a student or employee’s preferred first name will be used in university communications and reporting except where the use of the legal name is required for university purposes. If you have reason to believe your preferred first name may not be listed correctly in the roster or you do not feel comfortable taking advantage of UO’s preferred first name policy, please communicate to me the name you wish to use. The preferred first name policy can be accessed here: http://policies.uoregon.edu/node/216

Accessible Education: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if aspects of the instruction or course design result in barriers to your participation. Students are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (AEC) 541-346-1155; http://aec.uoregon.edu/. AEC helps provide services including sign language interpreting, computer-based note-taking, classroom relocation, exam modifications, and alternative text conversion. Please request that the Accessible Education Center send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

Late Work: All work is to be handed in on time. Late work will be penalized one grade per day.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to adhere to University of Oregon’s standards of academic integrity. All work should be your own, and all sources should be appropriately acknowledged. Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, duplicate submission, cheating on examinations, and false citations. Please do not hesitate to speak to me if you have any questions about use of sources or citations. It is far better to ask than to unintentionally plagiarize. Please refer to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers as a citation style-guide. Please read the Academic Misconduct Code in full. It can be accessed at: http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and constitutes part of your grade. You may miss two class meetings without penalty. Your final grade will drop one-third of a letter grade for each subsequent absence. Missing four classes is grounds for failure. Exceptions to this policy may be made for those with adequate excuse and sufficient documentation. Please contact me to discuss. You are responsible for all assigned materials in the class and ensuring that your work is turned in on time.

Participation: This is a discussion-based seminar. Consequently, attendance alone is not adequate. You are expected to come to class prepared, having read the material and engaged critically with it. You should attend class ready to share your thoughts about the readings and discuss your portfolio assignments. I expect you to contribute meaningfully during each session.

Title IX Policy and Reporting Responsibilities: UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. Consequently, all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Students seeking to discuss a situation without talking to a mandatory reporter may call 541-346-SAFE. This 24/7 hotline is staffed by confidential, trained counselors. For confidential help, students may also contact University Health Services (http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu/) or Sexual Assault Support Services (http://sass-lane.org/).
Inclement Weather: In the event of inclement weather, the UO home webpage ([http://www.uoregon.edu/](http://www.uoregon.edu/)) will include a banner at the top of the page displaying information about delay, cancellation, or closure decisions for the Eugene campus. Additionally, the UO Alerts blog will be updated with the latest updates and bulletins. Local television and radio stations will also broadcast delay and cancellation information. Classes will not be held if cancelled by the university. Additionally, members of the campus community are expected to use their best judgment in assessing the risk of coming to campus and returning home, based on individual circumstances. Those who believe the road conditions from home are dangerous are urged and even expected to stay there to prevent injury.

Class Communication: The primary means of communication outside of class in this course will be through your UO email account. Please check this account regularly. I am also most readily available through email. Generally, you can expect an email response from me within two working days. You should also check Canvas at least once prior to each class session.

Classroom Electronic Communications Policies: Cell phone use during class is prohibited. Tablets are permitted only to access the reading. Laptops are permitted only with express permission or during class activities requiring laptop use.

Course Assessment

Undergraduate

- Attendance and Participation, 10%
  - To receive an A, you should attend every class, arrive on time, bring a copy of the readings, and contribute thoughtfully to the discussion. Contributing thoughtfully means that you pose questions and provide answers that reflect your careful reading of the material, including directly referencing passages in the reading. In responding to your peers’ observations, questions, and interpretations, you engage with the substance of their ideas and model respectful disagreement. In your questions, comments, and critques, you show a willingness to take intellectual risks. You remain focused and fully engage with any work (including group work) assigned during class. Your contributions develop bridges between different class sessions, contributing to a conversation that spans the quarter.

- Portfolio: 40%
  - There will be 8 portfolio assignments during the course of the quarter. Each one will be due on Canvas prior to class on Wednesday. Each portfolio entry will be worth 5% of your grade.
  - Each portfolio entry focuses on a popular culture text you have found. This can be an advertisement, a television episode, a youtube video, a video game, an internet meme, a song, a popular book, a film, etc. You are to apply one of the readings from that week to the popular culture text you selected. You are expected to write 300-500 words.

- Final Research Project: 50%
  - In your final research project, you will apply what you have learned in class to a song, film, advertisement, television show, video game, or other popular culture text. You may revisit a popular culture text from your portfolio. Your final research project should apply at least 5 peer-reviewed works to your popular culture item. You may use readings from the class, but you are not required to rely solely on course readings. A list of additional resources is provided at the end of the syllabus. You should meet with me outside of class to discuss your project and sources prior to Week 6.
  - Early Draft: 5%
This typed double-spaced document should include either an image or link to the popular culture item on which you intend to write your final project. You should start the draft with a paragraph discussing the argument you might make. You should then discuss three assigned articles you intend to use in your final project. For each article, you should write a paragraph explaining how you might apply this article to your item. Thus, you are expected to have at least four paragraphs in this early draft. It is due to Canvas prior to class on Monday, February 27th.

- Peer Workshop: 5%
  - If you are absent, insufficiently prepared, or fail to fully engage with your peers, you will not get credit for this opportunity.
- Presentation: 10%
  - This short presentation (10-15 minutes) will be given during the last two weeks of class. Feedback from this presentation will help you craft your final paper. Your final presentation should include a sample of your popular culture item, identification of your argument, and examples of how you will be applying at least 3 of the articles to your item in building this argument.
- Final Paper (8-10 pages): 30%
  - Due to Canvas prior to final exam period, Monday March 20th @ 10:15am

Graduate

- Attendance and Participation, 10%
  - To receive an A, you should attend every class, arrive on time, bring a copy of the readings, and contribute thoughtfully to the discussion. Contributing thoughtfully means that you pose questions and provide answers that reflect your careful reading of the material, including directly referencing passages in the reading. In responding to your peers’ observations, questions, and interpretations, you engage with the substance of their ideas and model respectful disagreement. In your questions, comments, and critiques, you show a willingness to take intellectual risks. You remain focused and fully engage with any work (including group work) assigned during class. Your contributions develop bridges between different class sessions, contributing to a conversation that spans the quarter.
- Portfolio: 30%
  - You will complete any 6 of the 8 portfolio assignments. Each one will be due on Canvas prior to class on Wednesday. Each portfolio entry will be worth 5% of your grade.
  - Each portfolio entry focuses on a popular culture text you have found. This can be an advertisement, a television episode, a youtube video, a video game, an internet meme, a song, a popular book, a film, etc. You are to apply one of the readings from that week to the popular culture text you selected. You are expected to write 300-500 words.
- Final Research Project: 60%
  - In your final research project, you will apply what you have learned in class to a song, film, advertisement, television show, or other popular culture text. You should meet with me to discuss your final paper topic prior to week three in the class.
  - Annotated Bibliography: 10%
    - Your annotated bibliography should contain ten sources from peer-reviewed journal articles or chapters from reputable academic books. Four of these sources may be from the class. This is due to Canvas prior to class on Wednesday, February 15th.
Early Draft, 5%
  ▪ You should turn in a 4-6 page draft of your paper to Canvas prior to class on Monday, February 27.

Peer Workshop, 5%
  ▪ If you are absent or not sufficiently prepared, you will not get credit for this opportunity.

Presentation, 10%
  ▪ This short presentation (7-10 minutes) will be given during the finals period for this class. Your final presentation should include a sample of your popular culture item, identification of your argument, and examples of how you will be applying at least 3 of the articles to your item in building this argument.

Research Paper (12-15 pages): 30%
  ▪ Due to Canvas by Thursday March 23rd at 12:00pm

**Class Outline and Schedule**

**Week One** Introducing Environmental Cultural Studies

Monday, January 9: Introduction

Wednesday, January 11: What is Popular Culture?

**Portfolio Entry 1 Due**

**Week Two** What is Nature?

Monday, January 16: No Class, MLK Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 18: Keywords: Nature, Wilderness, and Mother Earth

**Portfolio Entry 2 Due**

**Week Three** Nature and Popular Culture

Monday, January 23: The Politics of the Natural

Wednesday, January 25: Buying & Selling Nature

**Portfolio Entry 3 Due**

*Graduate Students* Meet with Prof. Wald about Final Paper Topic Prior to End of Week

**Week Four: The Ecological Indian**

Monday, January 30: The Ecological Indian in Film

Wednesday, February 1st: The Ecological Indian Goes Global

**Portfolio Entry 4 Due**

**Week Five: Environmental Exclusion**

Monday, February 6: Racialized Leisure Identities

Wednesday, February 8: The Corporeal Unconscious

**Portfolio Entry 5 Due**

**Week Six: Queer Ecologies**

Monday, February 13: Gay Nature?
Wednesday February 15: Normative Environmentalisms
Noël Sturgeon, “‘The Power is Yours Planeteers’: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Children’s Environmentalist Popular Culture,” *Environmentalism in Popular Culture*, 103-119.

**Portfolio Entry 6 Due**
*Undergraduate Students* Meet with Prof. Wald about Final Paper Topic Prior to End of Week

**Graduate Students: Annotated Bibliography Due**

**Week Seven: Digital Contexts**

Monday, February 20: Video Game Environmentalism?

Wednesday February 22: Guest Speaker Alenda Y. Chang!

**Portfolio Entry 7 Due**

Special Event: Alenda Y. Chang Public Lecture @ 4pm

**Week Eight: Unpopular Culture**

Monday, February 27: Peer Workshop
To be prepared for your peer workshop, you need to bring five copies of your outline to class.

**Early Draft Due** to course website prior to the start of class.

Wednesday, March 1: Unpopular Culture

**Portfolio Entry 8 Due**

**Week Nine: Final Presentations**

Monday, March 6: Presentations
Wednesday, March 8: Presentations

**Week Ten: Final Presentations**

Monday, March 13: Presentations
Wednesday, March 15: Presentations

**Final exam period**, Monday March 20th @ 10:15am Graduate student presentations. Attendance required from all.
Undergraduate Student Final Paper Due Monday March 20th @ 10:15am to Canvas

Graduate Student Final Paper Due Thursday, March 23rd @ 12pm to Canvas

Additional Resources

- See also, http://www.ecomediastudies.org/resources/bibliography/


Adam Miyashiro, Moana Syllabus, <https://moanasyllabus.wordpress.com/>


__________. *Film and Everyday Eco-disasters*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.


