

## ENVS 203: Intro. to Environmental Studies: Humanities

TR 12:00-1:20, 182 Lillis (Spring 2013)  
CRN: 32969

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### **Required Texts (available at UO Bookstore, internet, and Blackboard)**

- *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. A.R. George (Penguin)
- Matsuo Basho, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (Penguin)
- Helena Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
- Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
- \* Short readings on Blackboard
- ☆ Rosemary R. Ruether, "The Biblical Version of the Ecological Crisis"  
([www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1807](http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1807))

### **Course Description (Course website: Blackboard)**

Who are we? How do we understand our place in the biosphere? Assuming that attitudes about the natural environment are shaped by culture, this course explores those attitudes through humanistic disciplines including archaeology, art history, philosophy, literature, film, and religious studies. We will begin with deep history, oral traditions from tribal cultures, and environmental perspectives in some of the oldest known literary and religious texts. We will consider philosophical ideas about nature from Plato to Kant and modern phenomenology, some Asian traditions and texts, and then move into our own era and its responses to ecological challenges, environmental justice issues, and climate change. *This course fulfills the Arts and Letters Group Requirement and is a core course requirement for Environmental Studies and Environmental Science majors. The course must be taken for a grade in order to satisfy ENVS/ESCI major requirements.*

**Format:** Two eighty-minute lectures and one fifty-minute discussion section each week.

**Grading:** Section participation 20%---Midterm Exam 25%---Final Exam 25%--Reading quizzes 20%, and paper on *Under the Feet of Jesus* or *The Hungry Tide* 10%. A passing grade on the exams is necessary for a passing grade in the course. Improvement in quality of work during the course will be noted and rewarded.

**A Note on Reading:** To succeed in this course, you will need to read carefully and **keep up with the assignments**, adjusting to the many different kinds of writing you will encounter. You won't be reading for simple information, but rather to understand the writer's purposes, the kinds of language used, understandings of the natural world and wildness, and the values that are buried or coded in **symbolic forms, places, or images**. Your job is to figure out what cultural work is being done--in other words what ideas and attitudes are being shaped by the writer. **Be sure to read the assignments listed for each lecture BEFORE you come to class.**

**Policies:** All assigned work must be completed for a passing grade. **Work must be turned in on time for full credit, exams can only be taken at the scheduled time, and writing assignments must be typed and double-spaced in standard academic format.** Weekly reading quizzes will be given in discussion sections on key concepts and information from assigned work. Be sure to read carefully and bring your texts to class. It goes without saying that all work must be your own; if you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the Student Conduct Code (at [conduct.uoregon.edu](http://conduct.uoregon.edu) and [www.libweb.uoregon.edu](http://www.libweb.uoregon.edu)). Academic misconduct will be met with disciplinary action, usually an "F" for the course.

**Please retain the original copy of all work** returned to you during the term until the final course grade has been posted. If you have any question about whether your grades have been accurately recorded, you are responsible for providing these original copies as documentation.

**Computers and other electronic equipment:** Use of electronic equipment is **prohibited** during class, including laptop computers, cell phones, MP3 players, and tablets such as iPads. If you have a legitimate academic reason to use a laptop or iPad, you must consult with the instructor for an exception to this rule. Such use will be monitored and revoked if non-academic activities occur.

## Term Schedule

### **Week 1--Methods, Interpretation, and Nature in the Humanities**

- 4/2 Introduction to Environmental Humanities
- 4/4 Deep History and Art, Oral Traditions and the First Literature (Read \* Native American Creation Stories, pp. 1-8)

### **Week 2--Ancient Worldviews in Literature**

- 4/9 ☼☼ *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Penguin, trans. A.R. George)
- 4/11 Gilgamesh as Hero or Eco-destroyer? **Read also** \* "The Curse of Akkad," poem of eco-collapse 2200-1900 B.C. when the Akkadian empire of King Sargon and his dynasty was destroyed by drought. **Visiting Speaker, Dr. Kyle Powys Whyte, Philosophy Professor from Michigan State University specializing in Environmental Justice and Native American and Indigenous Studies.**

### **Week 3--Transcendent God/Immanent God, Transcendent Philosophy, and the Rise of the Mechanistic Worldview**

- 4/16 ☆ Genesis 1-2 (<http://etext.virginia.edu>) King James or Revised Standard Version; ☆Ruether, "The Biblical Vision of the Ecological Crisis" ([www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1807](http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1807)); \* Plato, selection from *The Republic*, Book VII--"Parable of the Cave."
- 4/18 \* Carolyn Merchant, from *The Death of Nature*.

### **Week 4--Pastoral Myth and the Romantic Movement**

- 4/23 The Dream of Rural Escape and the Romantic Sublime: Read \* Marlowe, Raleigh, Kant, Emerson, and Thoreau selections.
- 4/25 The Wilderness Debate: Read \* Gary Snyder and William Cronon.

### **Week 5--The Challenge of Modern Science**

- 4/30 Read \* Alphonso Lingus, from "Animal Body, Inhuman Face," and Merleau-Ponty, "The World of Perception and the World of Science." **View: selections from *Mindwalk* (1992)**
- 5/2 **Midterm Exam**

### **Week 6--Asian Traditions and the Meaning of "Nature"**

- 5/7 Chinese Poetry and Landscape Painting; Basho as Haiku Master and Nature Writer; Read \* Chinese poems incl. from Laozi, *The Tao Te Ching*, and ☼☼ Basho 51-95.
- 5/9 Finish Basho, *The Narrow Road*, pp. 97-143

### **Week 7--Landscape History and Environmental Justice**

- 5/14 Begin reading ☼☼ Helena Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, pp. 1-90; **in class view Pare Lorentz, *The River*.**
- 5/16 Continue reading *Under the Feet of Jesus*, pp. 93-130 **Visiting lecturer Professor Janet Fiskio, Oberlin College**

**Week 8--Environmental Justice and Poetry**

5/21 Finish *Under the Feet of Jesus* and start on Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* if you can.

5/23 Modern Poetry of "Nature": Read \* selected poems of Jeffers, Bishop, Harjo, and Ortiz; begin \*Abram, from *The Spell of the Sensuous*."

**Week 9--New Paradigms and Postmodern Environments**

5/28 Phenomenology--Back to the Lifeworld: Read \* Abram; \* Forster, "The Machine Stops" (1909); and begin reading \*\* Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, pp. 1-83.

5/30 Continue reading *The Hungry Tide* 83-132.

**Week 10--Climate Change, Animals, and Humans**

6/4 *The Hungry Tide*, pp. 132-244

6/6 Finish *The Hungry Tide*, pp. 244-329; in class view Jean Gionot's *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

**FINAL EXAM--Thursday, June 13, 8:00 a.m.**

