Green ink: landscape, literature, and ecocriticism

Ecology is my word: tag
me with that: come
in there:
you will find yourself
in a firmless country:
centres and peripheries
in motion,
onic,
terrelations!

A. R. Ammons, from ‘Tape for the Turn of the Year’ (1965)

This course considers ecocriticism as a way of navigating and mapping the intersections between the earth, the human, and the book in modern and contemporary narratives of lost landscape and environmental catastrophe.

At its most radical, ecocriticism proposes new paradigms of reading and writing; it makes strange claims about language and form; and it disrupts distinctions between human and non-human, art and science, fiction and non-fiction, poetry and polemic, nature and culture.

As we read and discuss some key texts in this burgeoning field, we will also be asking what ecocriticism wants. Who defines its practices and priorities? Which perspectives does it favour, and which are erased? Can any text be read ecocritically?

Will literature really save the world?

**Week 1: What is ecocriticism?**

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962); Chapter 1, ‘A Fable for Tomorrow’.


**Week 2: Deep ecology: Decentring the human object**


**Week 3: Capitalism and the nature of ‘nature’**

Film: *Robinson in Ruins*, dir. by Patrick Keiller (2010).
Stephen Daniels, Patrick Keiller, Doreen Massey, and Patrick Wright, ‘To dispel a great malady: Robinson in Ruins, the future of landscape and the moving image’. Project page on the Tate website, which can be accessed via [this link](#).

**Week 4: Eco-justice: Identity, land, and form**

Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic, ‘Shoulders We Stand on: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism’, *MELUS* 34:2 (Summer 2009), pp. 5-24.
Kathryn Yussof, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Chapter 1, ‘Geology, Race, and Matter’.

**Week 5: John Barleycorn is dead: Ecopoesis and the voice of the non-human**

Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000); Chapter 9, ‘What are poets for?’
Kate Rigby, ‘Earth, world, text: on the (im)possibility of ecopoiesis’, *New Literary History* 35:3 (2004), 427-442.

**Week 6: Reading the unthinkable: Weirdness, language, and extinction**

Finola Anne Prendergast, ‘Revising Nonhuman Ethics in Jeff VanderMeer’s Annihilation*, *Contemporary Literature* 58.3 (2017), 333-60.
Jacques Derrida, ‘No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)’, *Diacritics*, 14:2 (Summer, 1984), 20-31.