

Department of English & Writing Studies

DRAFT SYLLABUS**English 4320G (001)****Animals and the Environment in Renaissance Literature**

Winter 2024

Western University is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

Prerequisites: 1.0 from English 3000-3999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course engages with the current critical interest in animal studies, ecocriticism, and climate studies to investigate the poetry, prose, and drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this period, England was significantly affected by a period of global cooling we now know as the Little Ice Age, which created extreme weather patterns similar to those we experience today. In addition to climate change, early modern English relationships with animals and the environment were shaped not only by traditional practices of farming and hunting, but also the more recent developments of urbanization, industrialization, and colonialism. To explore these topics, we will look at texts such as Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *As You Like It*; country house poems such as Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst"; and Margaret Cavendish's anti-hunting poems and her early sci-fi prose work, *The Blazing World*, which depicts a land peopled with human/animal hybrids.

Course Objectives:

Learn about the fields of early modern ecocriticism, animal studies, and climate studies

Engage critically and creatively with canonical and non-canonical literature through discussion, writing, research, and practice

Explore relationships between historical context, literary criticism, theory, and experience

Explore relationships between past and present

Develop effective arguments through a combination of close reading and independent research

Evaluate and integrate secondary criticism into your own arguments

Communicate with clarity, respect, and care in class discussions and written work

Course Ethos:

Our class will honour the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We will use each other's preferred and chosen names and pronouns; we will engage in respectful and generous conversation with each other; we will avoid language that is hurtful, violent, or exclusive. We will also acknowledge that we may make mistakes, and that learning from each other and questioning ourselves is part of the EDI process.

Course Materials

Required Texts (available at the bookstore)

Margaret Cavendish, *A Description of the Blazing World* (Broadview, 2016)

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (Oxford, 2008)

William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Simon and Schuster/Folger Shakespeare, 2015)

Secondary and selected primary readings available on OWL.

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Participation: 20%

Response Paper: Theories and Concepts 10%

Seminar: 20%

Proposal 5%

Essay Draft and Workshop 10%

Final Paper (with reflection): 35%

Participation 20%

This grade evaluates ongoing participation in class discussions. A seminar class depends on everyone's informed and engaged input. When reading, take notes, record questions, and come prepared to discuss and examine both primary and secondary texts in detail. This is especially important if you're reading online. This makes things cheaper (good) but harder to remember (bad) if you don't take notes.

Please be sure to bring hard copies of primary texts (when relevant), and either print out the secondary texts (preferable) or bring your laptop for reading.

Note: Repeated absences (i.e., more than 3 missed classes without legitimate medical or personal reasons) means that you will forfeit this portion of your grade.

Response Paper: Theories and Concepts 10% (800-1000 words, max.)

Due Date: Jan. 16, in class (please hand in hard copy)

To help us engage with the readings for this introductory class (and to inspire conversation), each of you will write a 800-1000 word response. You can choose to focus your response on only one of the readings, or you might respond to a concept shared among more than one reading. This response should show evidence that you've read and understood the material (i.e. citations from the text, engagement with critical concepts). But you are also welcome to add a more personal/experiential response that applies these ideas to your own environmental conditions/experience. I won't be asking you to formally present these responses, but I will be inviting you to informally share ideas/experiences generated by this assignment.

Seminar Presentation 20% No extensions will be provided for this assignment.

Due Date: Sign up

Get into groups of two or three, and sign up for **one** seminar presentation. Your presentation should be approximately 20 minutes long. You will also be responsible for moderating a discussion (approx. 20-30 minutes) following the presentation.

For this seminar, please do the following:

1. Introduce the primary text: give us a *brief* synopsis (i.e. you're helping us get our heads back into the text, not giving an exhaustive overview), and a short literature review (at least **three** critical sources). Who else has written on this text? What sorts of ideas are being discussed?

It's fine if those discussions don't have an ecocritical/animal/climate studies perspective. What you're doing here is aiming to give us some critical context and open up the conversation.

2. Introduce the week's secondary text (if there's more than one, you may focus just on one). Provide a clear summary of the argument and the stages of the argument.

3. Provide an initial reading of a short section of your primary text using concepts or ideas in the secondary text. Think of this as a case study. What might our secondary text contribute in terms of helping us read animals and the environment in our primary text? Make sure that you don't just rephrase an analysis our secondary text has already offered. Aim to take it further, either by considering the implications of this analysis more deeply (i.e. open up the analysis), or by investigating another section of the text (i.e. test it by applying it elsewhere). You may also choose to disagree with or question aspects of the secondary text's argument in your analysis.

4. Push our collective discussion further. Finish your seminar by asking us three questions. Please ask the questions one at a time. You may need to prod us to start thinking. I can help out.

Please email me a copy of your questions and your bibliography **by 9:00 a.m.** on the day of your presentation. I will post it on OWL for everyone's reference.

Final Paper Proposal 5% (300-500 words)

Due Date: Tuesday, March 12, in class (hard copy please)

The proposal should aim to identify the primary text/s you hope to work on, the research questions you plan to ask, and if possible, a tentative argument or working thesis (keeping in mind that this may change). Aim to contextualize your thinking in relation to the theory and criticism we've already read in class, and/or in relation to your initial research: what ideas might help you in your explorations? How might your explorations contribute to the critical discussion?

Please include an initial bibliography of at least 5 sources (no annotations required). You don't need to have read these, but do take the time to think about whether they're appropriate for your research. Feel free to use the Animals and Environment Bibliography to help you out.

I am willing to consider critical/creative or critical/experiential paper proposals. Please keep in mind that however you approach this paper, you must engage in and integrate research and critical thinking. You may use your seminar as a jumping off point.

Essay Draft (and workshop) 10%

Due Date: April 2, 9:30 a.m. Please submit your drafts on the OWL assignment portal before our class and bring three hard copies for workshopping. (alternatively, you can email your draft to your group members once you get to class)

The last class will be devoted to discussion/critique of essay drafts/substantial outlines, with your peers and with me. Drafts/outlines should be at least 4 pages double spaced and should build on your proposal (you're welcome to bring longer drafts, but it's not expected). Aim to have drafted an introduction with working thesis, along with some initial textual analysis. Think of this as an opportunity to: "try out" your ideas in relation to your primary text/s; get feedback on the viability of your thesis; brainstorm further approaches; discuss essay organization/structure; share ideas for critical sources.

NOTE: If you hand in a replica of your proposal, you will be graded on your participation in the workshop only.

Research Paper 35% (12-15 pages)

Due Date: April 8, midnight (OWL assignment portal)

This paper will explore an environmentally-related topic of your choosing in relation to one or more primary texts from our syllabus. It should be based on substantial research (5-10 secondary sources), and make a clear, well-developed, and well-written argument.

Please include in your submission your essay draft/outline **plus a 300 word reflection on your research and revision process**. This may include (but isn't restricted to) a discussion of how the workshop/consultation process contributed to your thinking; how your secondary sources (including historical contexts) helped you shape your argument; what conceptual struggles you experienced and how you overcame them.

The Fine Print

Technology Use

At times, we will likely all be reading from laptops in this class. If you wish to use your computer for notetaking, that's fine too. Phones must be put away, and no surfing, social media, emailing, texting, is permitted while we are in class. If you are dealing with a crisis and need phone access, please let me know.

Email

I check email on a regular basis Monday to Friday, and will respond to emails within 24-48 hours. Please do not expect an immediate response from me on weekends.

Submission of Assignments

The response paper and final essay proposal will be submitted as hard copies at the end of our class on the dates indicated above. This is to give my eyes a rest from the computer.

The final paper Draft and the Final Paper will be submitted through the OWL Assignments tab.

Be sure to keep a copy of all assignments submitted.

Late Assignments

There will be no extensions provided for the response paper, the seminar, or the essay draft: these are tied to specific class discussions and must be submitted/delivered during the relevant class.

Proposals must be handed in before the final paper.

Final papers are due the final day of classes, April 8th. I'm expected (by the powers that be) to get your grades in one week after the end of term, but I'm willing to discuss short (e.g. 1-2 day) extensions for those who need them. Papers handed in late without authorization from me will receive 2%/day deductions. I will not deduct grades if I've authorized an extension.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive

0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

AI Technologies

Use of AI technologies such as Chat GPT are not permitted in this class, and using these will be considered to be in violation of Western's Academic Integrity Policy. I value *your* thoughts, research, and writing, and a primary goal of this class is to support and encourage you to strengthen those critical and creative skills. These independent skills can be strengthened over all stages of the seminar planning and essay writing processes, from conceptualizing, researching, and drafting, to the final stages of editing and polishing. As we all know, AI can introduce mistakes, make up sources, and reinforce stereotypes. It's your perspectives that are unique, not the AI's. So if you're not sure what to write about for the final paper, or if you're having trouble finding sources, or you need a push to get you going down a good exploratory path, then please talk to me, not Chat GPT!

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Scrupulous accuracy in the quotation and citation of all sources and references is expected.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.