

**Comparative Literature 9696B**  
**Apocalypse and Pastoral: Genres of Environmental Fantasy**



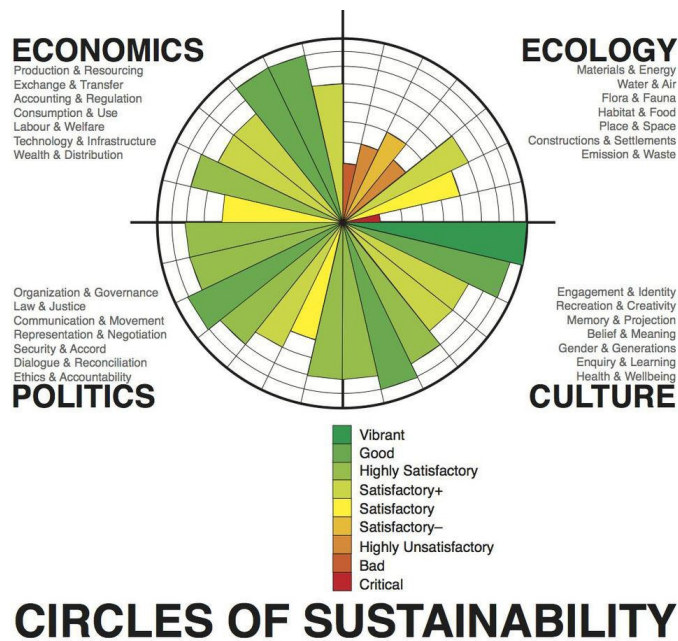
Spring Term 2023  
Wednesdays from 9:30am to 12:30pm  
Room: TBA

Professor James Miller  
The Pride Library, [jmiller@uwo.ca](mailto:jmiller@uwo.ca)  
519-661-2111, extension 85828

## 1. Course Description

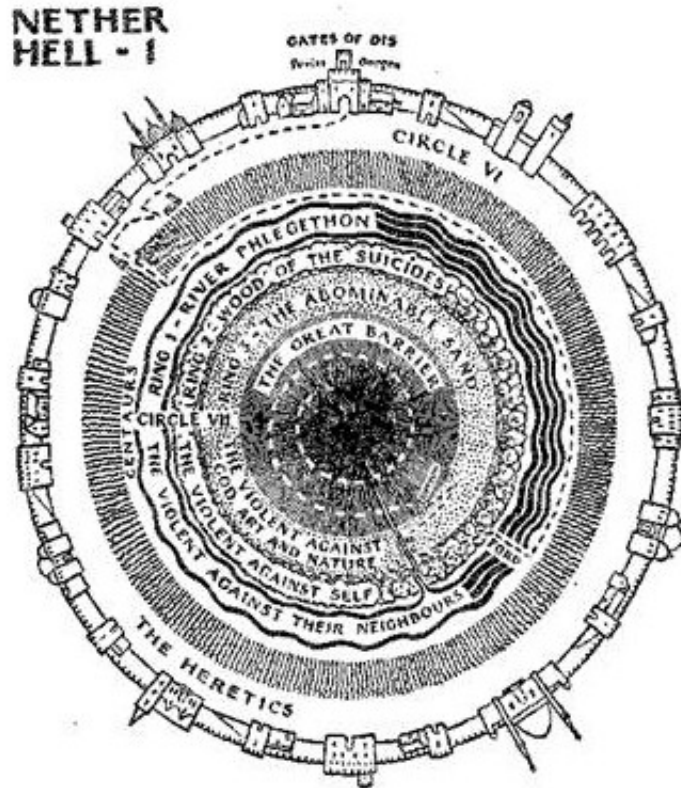
Environmental fantasies in the West have traditionally been expressed in two literary genres: Pastoral, which harks back to the origins of Nature and Culture; and Apocalypse, which looks forward to the long-overdue destruction of the Fallen World in preparation for the sudden creation of “New Heaven and New Earth.” While Pastoral emerged in the literature of pagan antiquity, Apocalypse developed out of biblical sources. Originally unrelated to each other, the two genres of environmental hope and anxiety collided in the culture of Augustan Rome and momentarily converged in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages to produce a holistic view of time, space, divine order, and human potential. In this course we shall study the literary consequences of that convergence, which may still be discerned in the environmental fantasies generated by the authors of ecological doomsday reports, green radical manifestoes, and contemporary speculative fiction.

For example, an old theological allegory of holistic interdependence underlies the UN World Habitat Forum's recent championing of the “Circles of Sustainability” method for understanding, assessing, and confronting the seemingly intractable problems of urban life in the twenty-first century. As developed by the researchers behind the UN briefing paper *Accounting for Sustainability* (No. 1, 2008), the method results in the symbolic transformation of the messy realities of an actual city – Melbourne, for instance, or Mumbai – into an instantly readable and comparable profile of its economic, political, cultural, and ecological ratings in four sets of seven categories centripetally arrayed across the quadrants of a wheel-diagram.



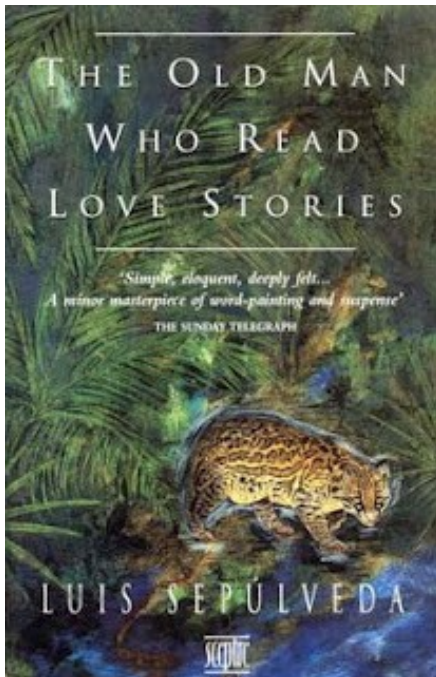
Why is contemporary environmental discourse so deeply allegorical? The UN's rotary method of urban evaluation was brilliantly anticipated by Dante in his mapping of the City of Dis in the *Inferno* (completed c. 1310). As a groundbreaking allegory of urban decline and environmental degradation, the *Inferno* reconstructs Florence as an infernal model for the Devil's imperial capital: a concentrically structured *pozzo* (“cistern”) into which the polluted currents of ancient and modern history inescapably drain. Populated with sinners notable for their rapacious greed, rampant violence, and raging egotism, the multiple rings of the City of Dis project an ominous vision of the “Circles of Unsustainability” into which humanity, already fallen through desire, may fall even further through antisocial disregard for

natural order. In this course we shall study a range of contemporary environmental discourses — including the democratic pragmatism and administrative rationalism underlying the “Circles of Sustainability” model of urban analysis — in order to develop a hermeneutical method for assessing literature (including film texts) focused on environmental crises. Besides Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, readings for the course will include St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*, Pope Francis I's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, Luis Sepulveda's *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, and Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. Global extensions of the convergence of Pastoral and Apocalypse will be traced in the Dante illustrations of Sandow Birk and the animated feature film *Princess Nausicaä* by Hayao Miyazake.



## 2. Assignments / Grade Breakdown

1. Critical Essay (20-25 pages).....60%
2. Oral Presentation in class (30 minutes).....30%  
To be scheduled in weeks 4-13
3. Respondent's Remarks (10 minutes).....10%  
To be scheduled in weeks 4-13



### 3. Schedule of Readings

Part One: The Allegorization of Environmental Fantasies

WEEK ONE **September 14:** PASTORAL

Reading: Selections from Theocritus, *Idylls*; Virgil, *Eclogues* [2, 5]

WEEK TWO **September 21:** APOCALYPSE

Reading: Old Testament → Daniel 7-12; New Testament → Revelation [online]

WEEK THREE **September 28:** CONVERGENCE/CONVERSION

Reading: St. Francis, *Canticle of the Sun*; Pope Francis, Encyclical: *Laudato Si'*

WEEK FOUR **October 5:** CONCURRENCE/CONCILIATION

Reading: Dante, *Inferno* 13-16; *Purgatorio* 28-33

WEEK FIVE **October 12:** CONTRAVENTION/CONTESTATION

Reading: Spenser, *Faerie Queene* VI [especially canto 10]

Part Two: The Persistence of Allegory in Modern Environmental Discourses

WEEK SIX **October 19:** MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSES

Reading: Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*

St. Francis, *Canticle of the Sun*; Pope Francis, Encyclical: *Laudato Si'*

WEEK SEVEN **October 26:** ELEGIAC PASTORALISM

Readings: Supelveda, *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*

WEEK EIGHT **November 2:** NO CLASS

Reading Week

WEEK NINE **November 9:** INFERNAL URBANISM

Readings: Salviani, *Gomorra*

WEEK TEN **November 16:** ECOTHEOLOGY OF REGENERATION

Screening: Miyzake, *Princess Nausicaä*

WEEK ELEVEN **November 23:** (POST)APOCALYPTIC BILDUNGSROMAN

Readings: Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

WEEK TWELVE **November 30:** GREEN HAGIOGRAPHY

Readings: Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*

WEEK THIRTEEN **December 7:** PARADISE SUSTAINED

Readings: Atwood, *Maddaddam*



#### 4. Required Readings: Printed Texts [on order at the Bookstore]

a. Margaret Atwood. *Oryx and Crake*

**Paperback:** 416 pages

- **Publisher:** Vintage Canada (July 28 2009)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 030739848X
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0307398482

b. Margaret Atwood. *The Year of the Flood*

**Paperback:** 448 pages

- **Publisher:** Vintage Canada (July 27 2010)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 030739798X
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0307397980

c. Margaret Atwood. *Maddaddam*

**Paperback:** 416 pages

- **Publisher:** Vintage Canada (Aug. 12 2014)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0307397998
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0307397997

d. Dante. *Inferno* trans. Robert Hollander

**Paperback:** 736 pages

- **Publisher:** Anchor; Tra Blg edition (Jan. 8 2002)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0385496982
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0385496988

e. Roberto Saviano. *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples'*

*Organized Crime System*

**Paperback**

- **Publisher:** Picador (Dec 10 2008)
- **ASIN:** B00SQCEUXW

f. John S. Dryzek. *The Politics of the Earth. (third edition)*  
**Paperback:** 288 pages

- **Publisher:** Oxford University Press; Third Edition edition (Dec 14 2012)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0199696004
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0199696000

g. Luis Sepulveda. *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories* [paperback edition]

- **Publisher:** Harcourt (March 1994)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0151685509
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0151685509

## 5. Required Readings: Online Texts

a. Virgil. *Aeneid*, book 6

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/VirgilAeneidVI.htm>

b. Pope Francis. *Praise Be to You - Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

c. St. Francis. *Canticle of the Sun*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canticle\\_of\\_the\\_Sun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canticle_of_the_Sun)

## 7. Required Viewings

a. *Princess Nausicaä*. Animated feature film by Hayao Miyazake.

## 8. Contact

James Miller

UC 351 (Office) or The Pride Library (Weldon Mainfloor)

ex 85828 (UWO) 519-673-0234 (Home)

[jmiller@uwo.ca](mailto:jmiller@uwo.ca)



## **9. Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the *Western Academic Calendar*). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's verbatim or paraphrased text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against a possible charge of plagiarism. This also applies to work facilitated or written for students by third parties.

## **10. Absenteeism**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

**N.B.** E-mail will be used extensively.