

English 782

Tim Sweet, ENGL 782, Spring 2005, Current Directions in Literary Study

Tim Sweet

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Overview

While ecocriticism began to flourish only as recently as the 1990s, its historical roots run deep. We will trace the growth of ecocriticism from the history of Western environmental thought, classics of literary criticism, and insights from other humanities and social-science disciplines. Along the way we will develop an environmentally-oriented perspective on literary history, which we'll anchor to three object texts (Cooper, Thoreau, DeLillo). The theoretical readings fall into three categories:

Precursors. Classic studies concerned with the relationship between literature and environment, focusing particularly on technology (Marx), economics (Williams), and gender (Kolodny).

Interdisciplinary foundations. Groundwork laid by analyses of the human place in nature from several disciplines: history of science (Worster, Merchant), economics (Daly), philosophy (Evernden), political science (J. Meyer).

Current state and future directions. Current synthesis (Buell), a recent critique of that synthesis (Phillips), and questions for the future (S. Meyer, others TBA).

Required Texts

Available at the WVU bookstore Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (1995)

Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Rural Hours* (1850)

Don DeLillo, *Underworld* (1997)

Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (1992)

Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land* (1975)

Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (1964)

Dana Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology* (2002)

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854)

Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973)

Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy* (2nd ed. 1994)

In library or on e-reserve or photocopied

Herman Daly, "Steady-State Economics" (1993)

Bill McKibben, Introduction (2004) to *Walden*

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (1980), excerpts

John Meyer, *Political Nature* (2001), excerpt

Stephen Meyer, "End of the Wild" (2004)

other articles TBA

Graded Work

A presentation and annotated bibliography (minimum 4 scholarly sources) on one of the readings (10%)

- Annotations = 100 words each * Presentation should set a productive agenda and inspire interesting, analytical class discussion

An article-length essay project consisting of prospectus (10%); rough draft; reflective statement and final draft (80%)

- Topic must engage directly with course issues and must be approved in advance
- Prospectus = 500 words plus preliminary bibliography (min. 4 scholarly sources)
- Rough draft = full length plus full bibliography

- Reflective statement = 1 p., discussing goals and scholarly context and describing target journal
- Final draft = 20-25 pp., suitable for submission to an academic journal, incorporating minimum 8 recent scholarly sources (books published by university presses or equivalent, or articles from academic journals), documented using MLA style

Schedule

1/12 Intro; assign presentations

1/19 Buell, *Environmental Imagination* sections I and II (through p. 308)

1/26 Worster, *Nature's Economy*

2/2 Marx, *Machine in the Garden*

2/9 Williams, *Country and the City*

2/16 **Prospectus due**; Kolodny, *Land Before Her*

2/23 Evernden, *Social Creation of Nature*

3/2 Merchant, from *Death of Nature* (photocopy); Daly, "Steady-State Economics: A New Paradigm," *New Literary History* 24 (1993): 811-16 (go to the library and get this); Myer, from *Political Nature* (e-reserve)

3/9 Cooper, *Rural Hours*

3/16 **spring break**

3/23 Thoreau, *Walden*; McKibben, Introduction to *Walden* (e-reserve); remainder of Buell (pp. 311 ff.)

3/30 class canceled for writing time

4/6 **Rough draft due**; in-class workshop

4/13 Phillips, *Truth of Ecology*

4/20 Delillo, *Underworld*

4/27 Meyer, "End of the Wild," *Boston Review* 29.2 (April/May 2004)

<http://bostonreview.net/BR29.2/meyer.html> ; others TBA

Final draft of essay (including reflective statement) due Monday, 5/2