

English 263: Shakespeare 1

Fall Semester 2012

Instructor: Lowell Duckert

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Meeting Time: 12:30-1:20 PM MWF

Meeting Place: Brooks Hall 302

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Office Hours: 2:00-5:00 PM W and by appointment

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(Shakespeare's Mulberry Tree, Stratford-upon-Avon)

Ecocriticism is defined by one of its most famous practitioners as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” Far from simply “going green,” however, ecocriticism stresses the intricacies of place, the intertwining of nonhuman and human, theories of embodiment and materiality, visions of crisis/catastrophe, and the state of nature/the natural in general. Presently, ecocritical approaches are gaining popularity within early modern studies—and Shakespeare seems to be the common denominator. One critic, Greg Garrard, has gone so far to announce: “[E]nter Shakespearean ecocriticism. By that I do not mean only the application of pre-existing ecocritical approaches to Shakespearean texts, but rather the possibility...that ecocriticism itself might *be Shakespearean*” (“Foreword” to *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, 2011). Such a “natural” conflation of Shakespeare and ecocriticism is worth investigating. We should ask not just *how* Shakespeare is ecocritical, but *why* he – and primarily he – leads the field. This honors course will explore this question and many others: How can we better understand ecosystems and their enmeshed communities through Shakespeare's art? What/who is excluded from ecologies? Why? How does Shakespeare construct, negotiate, and challenge modes of being in the world? How might early modern works of art speak to the present but also create new ecologies, desirable futures?

I have several goals for this course:

1. to examine the rich relationship between place and the imagination: what is commonly referred to as ecopoetics
2. to make thematic connections across Shakespeare's works, investigating (and interrogating) key concepts like ecology, transnationality, and the human
3. to help you improve your writing through close readings and critical analysis of literature
4. to introduce you to contemporary methods of studying English literature within a (primarily) ecocritical frame

The learning objectives for this course follow the English B.A. Program Goals. After taking this class, you will be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts
 - a. by identifying genre conventions and analyzing their effects
 - b. by identifying and analyzing effects of complexity or ambiguity
 - c. by locating texts in social / economic / political / literary histories
 - d. by connecting texts to other literary or cultural texts
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies

Code of Courtesy

Arrive on time with your cell phone silenced. Bring the appropriate book to class. Give me your full attention. Laptops are allowed only for note-taking purposes. Remain in the room until the class ends. Conduct yourself in a manner respectful to all present. Never hesitate to ask a question, to express a doubt, or to request clarification.

Required Books: (available from the WVU Bookstore)

The Norton Shakespeare (2nd edition)

Although the plays are available in many other formats, it is crucial that you have the Norton edition in order to follow along.

Requirements:

1. *The basics:* Attend class; participate in discussions; complete readings and assignments on time. I expect you to be prepared for every class – meaning that you need to pose thoughtful questions and ideas to the group. This is not a straightforward lecture class!
2. *Eco-journals:* This course critically examines place. Each week I want you to pick a specific place to write (either one of your favorites or somewhere new) and compose a brief, approximately two-page entry in a journal (or such). You may either respond to the question I ask before the weekend or answer/pose questions of your own. Creativity is encouraged! Keep in mind that even though these are *informal* pieces, you must intelligently engage the material. For instance, what does your sonnet to a tree tell us about gender in *As You Like It*? I will pick up the journals every Monday before class and return them to you on Wednesday. Your journal will be a valuable study guide for the final exam and a springboard for your final paper.

3. *Writing assignments*: Three short but intense writing assignments culminate in a fourth, five-page “problem paper.” Detailed information about the assignments will be available in advance, and you will have ample opportunity to discuss the assignments in section.

4. *Peer-editing participation*: Once this semester I will assign you to small peer-editing groups designed to offer constructive criticism. I will ask you to compose a short write-up for your peers (and ultimately me).

5. *Midterm presentation*: In early October I will assign you to groups and ask you to research a contemporary environmental topic of your choice. You will then present this issue in conversation with any of the works we have read so far. Again, detailed guidelines will be provided far in advance.

Attendance Policy:

I will allow **two** absences—after that, your grade drops a letter for each additional absence (for example: an A becomes a B). Late work will not be accepted. At six absences, you fail the course. You may not take an incomplete. If you foresee a scheduling conflict, you must notify me as soon as possible. In general, though, I do not want to know why you are absent.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty of any kind will be treated as a serious offense. In most cases, you will fail the course. You can find more on the Student Conduct Code at http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code

Disability Statement:

If you feel you need accommodations based on the impact of a disability, the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.wvu.edu>) is available to assist you.

Contact:

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours (information above), and feel free to email/call me at any time. Make sure that your MIX email address is operational; I will frequently notify you about what to read for a given day, and I will occasionally post documents online.

Grading Rubric:

Your grade for the course will be determined by adding together the following:

Peer-editing participation	5
Participation and attendance in class	15
Midterm presentation	10
Eco-journal	10
Three short but intense writing exercises	3 x 5 = 15
Final writing exercise	20
Final examination	25
Total	100

Schedule of Readings (subject to change):

Week One

M 8/20 Introductions
W 8/22 Introduction to ecocriticism: "Nature and Silence" by Christopher Manes (online)
F 8/24 Selections from *Sonnets*; WA#1 handed out (translation exercise)

Week Two

M 8/27 *As You Like It*; WA#1 due
W 8/29 *AYL*
F 8/31 *AYL*; WA#2 handed out (close reading)

Week Three

M 9/3 No Class: Labor Day
W 9/5 *AYL*; WA#2 due
F 9/7 *AYL*

Week Four

M 9/10 *King Lear*
W 9/12 *King Lear*
F 9/14 *King Lear*

Week Five

M 9/17 *King Lear*
W 9/19 *King Lear*; WA#3 handed out (problem paper)
F 9/21 No Class: work on problem paper

Week Six

M 9/24 No Class: work on problem paper
W 9/26 *Pericles*; WA#3 due
F 9/28 *Pericles*

Week Seven

M 10/1 *Pericles*
W 10/3 *Pericles*
F 10/5 *Pericles*

Week Eight

M 10/8 Presentations
W 10/10 Presentations
F 10/12 *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Week Nine

M 10/15 *MWW*
W 10/17 *MWW*
F 10/19 *MWW*

Week Ten

M 10/22 *Macbeth*
W 10/24 *Macbeth*; first paragraph of final paper due.
F 10/26 No Class: participate in peer-editing workshop (online)

Week Eleven

M 10/29 *Macbeth*
W 10/31 *Macbeth*
F 11/2 *Macbeth*

Week Twelve

M 11/5 *The Winter's Tale*
W 11/7 *WT*
F 11/9 *WT*

Week Thirteen

M 11/12 No Class: Veterans Day
W 11/14 *WT*
F 11/16 *WT*; final paper due

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Recess

Week Fifteen

M 11/26 *The Tempest*
W 11/28 *The Tempest*
F 11/30 *The Tempest*

Week Sixteen

M 12/3 *The Tempest*
W 12/5 *The Tempest*
F 12/7 Final review and class conclusion

W 12/12 Final: 3-5 PM