

## English 363W: Ecology without Shakespeare?

Fall Semester 2014

Instructor: Lowell Duckert

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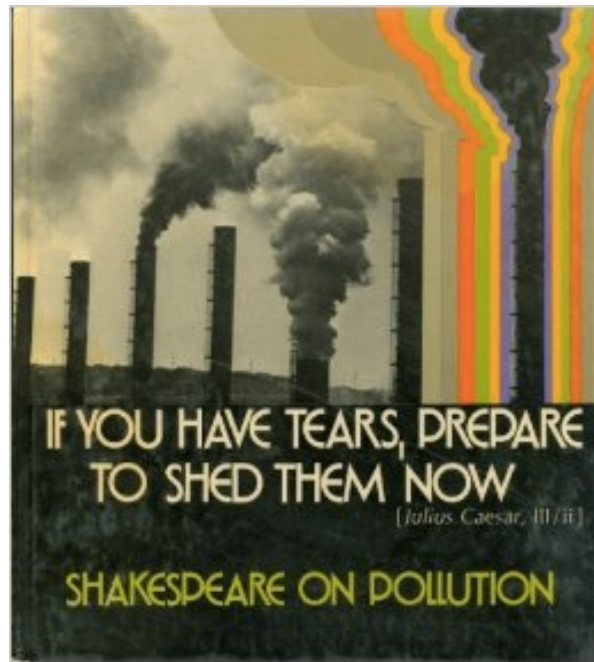
Meeting Time: 10:30-11:20 AM MWF

Meeting Place: Woodburn Hall G16

Office: Colson Hall 131

Office Hours: 2:30-5:30 PM M and by appointment

Office Phone: (304) 293-9700



(A title in Hallmark's *The Relevant Shakespeare* series, 1971)

Far from simply “going green,” ecological approaches to literature examine the complex relationships between humans and nonhumans, the entwinement of place and imagination, visions of crisis/catastrophe, and definitions of nature/the natural. Ecological criticism (also known as “ecocriticism”) is currently 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*.” Such a “natural” conflation of Shakespeare and ecology is worth investigating. We should ask not just *how* Shakespeare is ecocritical, but *why* he – and primarily he – leads the field. Together we 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?

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. to analyze the rich relationship between place and the imagination: what is commonly referred to as ecopoetics
2. to forge thematic connections across Shakespeare's art, investigating (and interrogating) key concepts like nature, ecology, the human, apocalypse, wilderness, and agency
3. to hone your writing through close readings and critical analysis of literature
4. to learn contemporary methods of studying English literature within an ecocritical frame
5. to critique anthropocentric (human-centered) modes of our age in order to imagine an ethics that accounts for our enmeshment with all things, one that might offer alternative futures besides catastrophe

### **Required Books:** (available from the WVU Bookstore)

*The Norton Shakespeare* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Although both are available in other formats, it is crucial that you have the editions specified 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! Difficult reading lies ahead, but the challenge, I assure you, will be mutual; I expect us to grapple with the readings, deviate at times, and pose more questions than answers.
2. *Eco-journals* are weekly emailed responses (1-2 pp.) in which you will meditate on how imagination and ecology are entwined—not only in the text, but also in your own day-to-day experiences. I would like you to pick a place in which to compose (local or not, built or otherwise) and stick to that site throughout the semester. Be creative; be personal. In general, your journals are meant to generate questions about that week's reading, and, I hope, enlarge your own sense of enmeshment. Each submission will be graded pass/fail according to length, adherence to location, and relevance to the reading (i.e., do you cite and expand on the text rather than merely summarize it?). Your journals will also be valuable springboards for your papers.
3. *A short paper* (5 pp.) on *King Lear* and environmental degradation, possibly in conjunction with a classroom visit (more below).
4. *A midterm paper* (5 pp.) that places one play in conversation with one or more keywords (Garrard) and a current environmental issue of your choice.
5. *A final paper* (10 pp.) that builds on your midterm research.
6. *Peer-editing exercise*: as you draft your final paper, I will assign you a peer-editing partner who will offer constructive criticism. Each person will compose a short write-up for the other (and for me).

7. *Theater review:* the School of Theatre & Dance is producing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the WVU Creative Arts Center on 11/19-11/21 and 12/2-12/7. Attendance is required. (I will try to secure group tickets for us.) After the performance you will write a brief ecocritical review of the production.

**Grading Rubric:**

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

Peer-editing exercise	5
Theatre review	5
Participation and attendance in class	15
Short paper	15
Eco-journals	20
Final paper (includes midterm)	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Classroom Visit:**

Because one of our learning objectives is to think about how Shakespeare's ecotheorizations speak to the present age – and may even influence current environmental policy – I will try to arrange an in-class meeting with a local environmental organization. If you have any reservations about this visit, or feel unable/unwilling to participate for *any* reason, please do not hesitate to tell me. I will assign you a different task.

**Attendance Policy and Code of Courtesy:**

I define “present” as arriving on time with your cellphone silenced; bringing the appropriate book to class; giving me your full attention; and remaining in the room until the class ends. Laptops are allowed only for note-taking purposes. I will allow **three** 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. The deadline to drop selectively is F 10/24, while the last day to withdraw from all classes is M 12/8.

**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 (III.B.1) at [http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office\\_of\\_student\\_conduct/student\\_conduct\\_code](http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code)

**Inclusivity Statement:**

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

**Any attempt to disrupt the nondiscriminatory environment of this class will not be tolerated.**

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

**Contact:**

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours (information above), and feel free to email/call me at any time. Never hesitate to ask a question, express a doubt, or request clarification. 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.

**Schedule of Readings (subject to change):**

Week One

M 8/18            Introductions  
W 8/20            Greg Garrard, "Beginnings: Pollution" and "Positions" from *Ecocriticism*  
F 8/22            Sonnets 18, 44, and 45; *The Rape of Lucrece*

Week Two

M 8/25            *As You Like It*; Garrard, "Pastoral" and "Wilderness"  
W 8/27            *AYL*  
F 8/29            *AYL*

Week Three

M 9/1            No class: Labor Day  
W 9/3            *AYL*  
F 9/5            *AYL*

Week Four

M 9/8            *King Lear*; Garrard, "Apocalypse"  
W 9/10           *KL*  
F 9/12           *KL*

Week Five

M 9/15           *KL*  
W 9/17           *KL*  
F 9/19           *Pericles*; short paper due

Week Six

M 9/22 *Per*  
W 9/24 *Per*  
F 9/26 *Per*

Week Seven

M 9/29 *Per*; Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Shakespeare Dwelling: *Pericles* and the Affordances of Action" (online)  
W 10/1 *The Tempest*; Garrard, "Dwelling"  
F 10/3 *Tem*

Week Eight

M 10/6 *Tem*  
W 10/8 *Tem*  
F 10/10 *Tem*

Week Nine

M 10/13 No class: Fall Break  
W 10/15 Sharon O'Dair, "Is it Shakespearean Ecocriticism if it isn't Presentist?" (online); Gabriel Egan, "The Presentist Threat to Editions of Shakespeare" (online); midterm paper due  
F 10/17 TBD

Week Ten

M 10/20 *The Winter's Tale*; Garrard, "Animals"  
W 10/22 *WT*  
F 10/24 *WT*

Week Eleven

M 10/27 *WT*  
W 10/29 *WT*  
F 10/31 *Macbeth*

Week Twelve

M 11/3 *Mac*  
W 11/5 *Mac*  
F 11/7 *Mac*

Week Thirteen

M 11/10      *Mac*; Steve Mentz, "Shakespeare's Beach House, or The Green and the Blue in *Macbeth*" (online)  
W 11/12      *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Garrard, "Futures: The Earth"  
F 11/14      *MND*

Week Fourteen

M 11/17      *MND*  
W 11/19      *MND*  
F 11/21      *MND*

Week Fifteen:

No class: Fall Recess

Week Sixteen:

M 12/1      Individual conferences  
W 12/3      Individual conferences  
F 12/5      Individual conferences

Week Seventeen

M 12/8      Class conclusion; final paper due on scheduled day of exam