



Instructor: Ella Soper-Jones

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Course Number: ENG259H5S

Course Title: Literature and the
Environment

Course description: This course offers a survey of literature from the early modern period to the present that takes as its concern the ethics and aesthetics of representing “nature.” The course will begin with a study of Cormac McCarthy’s widely acclaimed *The Road*, a novel about the plight of a father and son eking out an existence in the wake of an environmental apocalypse. From this perspective, we will ask, “How did we get here?” and “From here, where do we go?” We will then consider a more chronologically ordered selection of works including country-house poems dating from the 17th century, Romantic and Victorian poetry, American Transcendentalism, wild animal stories, the “deep terror” tradition in Canadian literature, and more contemporary works of environmental justice and eco-activism. We will study a variety of genres: poetry, novels, works of creative non-fiction, scientific and philosophical treatises, and short stories as well as popular media-ads, comics, and film. This course will also offer a primer on ecocritical theory: we will pose some vital questions about the study and practice of

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ecocriticism: “What is ecocriticism, and why might it matter?” “What might it mean to ‘practice’ ecocriticism?” and “Is anybody listening?”

The primary authors to be considered include: Cormac McCarthy, Ben Jonson, Thomas Gray, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Henry David Thoreau, Mary Austin, Charles G.D. Roberts, Ernest Thompson Seton, Fred Bodsworth, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Robinson Jeffers, P.K. Page, Terry Tempest Williams, Arundhati Roy, Margaret Atwood, Fred Pearce, Derek Walcott, Alice Walker, Indra Sinha, Joy Williams, and Derek Jensen and Stephanie McMillan.

Required Reading:

Coursepack; Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (Vintage); Fred Bodsworth, *Last of the Curlews* (McClelland & Stewart); Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People* (Simon & Schuster); Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan, *As the World Burns: 50 Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial* (Seven Stories Press).

Film: Edward Burtynsky, *Manufactured Landscapes*

First Authors to be Studied: McCarthy, *The Road*; coursepack; Bodsworth, *Last of the Curlews*

Method of Instruction: Lecture / discussion

Method of Evaluation: Creative-writing assignment (15%), article-critique blog (15%), research essay (30%), final exam (30%), participation (10%).