

**AFTER NATURE:  
VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Comparative Literature/English UNxxxx  
Spring 2019  
Time TBA  
Location TBA

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When did humans leave nature behind? As the tragic realities of climate change, species extinction, and ecological crisis become daily more visible, humanity's appreciable mark on the earth-system has prompted the suggestion that we now live in a geological epoch of our own making: the "Anthropocene." In this course, we'll turn back to a major inflection point in humanity's relationship with the natural world, examining nineteenth-century ideas about—and representations of—nature and the environment that continue to inform our own. Across novels, poetry, scientific writing, art criticism, and social theory, we'll look at different senses of "nature" as a source aesthetic wonder and moral value, and as a zone of alterity and violence: "red in tooth and claw." We'll consider advances in, and literary responses to, sciences like geology, evolutionary biology, and climatology that remain vital for understanding humanity's roles and effects in the natural world. We'll read about how human activity was seen—in a steam-powered and coal-fired industrial age—as entangled with nature as an extractable resource and sink for waste products, both in Britain and across the territories of its empire. In writings about polluted landscapes and toxic workspaces, we'll address the significant costs of Victorian industry to human health. Finally, we'll contemplate alternative visions of human/nature interaction—rural landscapes that nostalgically record vanishing ways of life; and apocalyptic visions that look ahead to a world actually existing "after nature."

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The following texts are on order at Book Culture. If buying online, be sure to check the ISBN to ensure the same edition. Other materials will be provided in CourseWorks and/or as handouts.

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Oxford, 2008); ISBN: 9780199536276

Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (Penguin, 1998); ISBN: 9780199536276

H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (Penguin, 2008); ISBN: 9780141439525

**REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

- weekly attendance and active participation in course meetings
- discussion questions / responses (on CourseWorks):
  1. weekly ~200-word posts, due by midnight on the day prior to the week's *first* class; no response is required in weeks where papers are due
  2. four ~200-word posts, during the semester, connecting course materials and themes to current (environmental) events
- 5-7pp. paper, due by 5pm on Friday in Week 6
- 5-7pp. paper, due by 5pm on Friday in Week 11
- take-home final examination

**GRADES**

- attendance and participation 15%
- discussion questions / responses 20%
- first paper 25%
- second paper 25%
- final examination 15%

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance.** Attendance is an essential component of the seminar. Absences (unless excused by an official note from a doctor, academic advisor, or coach) will adversely affect your participation grade. Lateness to seminar will similarly affect your grade. Absences for religious observance are permitted, but please check in with me at the beginning of the semester in this regard. If you are not able to make it to seminar for *any* reason, please email me in advance.

**Late Work.** Weekly responses will not be counted towards your final grade if late. Papers will be docked a third of a grade (i.e., from A- to B+) for every day they are late beyond the deadline.

**Electronics.** Laptops and/or tablets are permitted in the classroom only for taking notes or consulting secondary texts. Phones and other electronic devices are not permitted.

**Academic Integrity.** This course abides by the Honor Code of Columbia College (<http://bulletin.columbia.edu/columbia-college/standards>), with which you should familiarize yourself. Any violation of academic integrity described therein will incur a failing grade for the course and will moreover be reported to the relevant authorities.

**Accessibility and Accommodations.** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) facilitates equal access for students with disabilities by coordinating reasonable accommodations and support services. In order to secure such accommodations and services, you must first register with the ODS (<https://health.columbia.edu/disability-services>). If you have any concerns about accessibility and/or accommodations, feel free to contact me at any time.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

In weeks where Days 1 & 2 are combined, you should complete the main reading (i.e., the novel) before class on Day 1. Recommended/optional reading is indicated by an asterisk (\*).

**Week 1 | Introduction**Day 1

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Earth and Her Praisers"

Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature" (67-85); "Nature," "Ecology" (from *Keywords*)

Day 2

Paul Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind" (23)

Will Steffen et al., "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives" (842-67)

**Week 2 | Romantic Ecologies**Day 1

William Wordsworth, "The Ruined Cottage," "Lines Written in Early Spring,"  
"Composed Upon Westminster Bridge," "The World is Too Much With Us"

John Clare, "All Nature has a Feeling," "The Fallen Elm," "Helpston Green"

Jonathan Bate, "A Language That is Ever Green" (12-32)

\*Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (127-34)

\*James McKusick, "The Ecological Vision of John Clare" (77-94)

Day 2

George Gordon, Lord Byron, "Darkness"

John Keats, "To Autumn"

Bate, "Living with the Weather" (431-77)

**Week 3 | Moralizing Nature**Day 1

John Ruskin, from *Modern Painters* (I: "Of Truth of Skies [Of the Open Sky]"; "Of Truth of Clouds ["First, Of the Region of the Cirrus"]; III: "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," "Of Modern Landscape," "The Moral of Landscape"; IV: "Of the Turnerian Picturesque," "Of Turnerian Light"; V: "The Two Boyhoods")

Day 2

Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Starlight Night," "Spring," "Pied Beauty," "Hurrahing in Harvest"

Emily Brontë, "Stars," "The Starry Night Shall Tidings Bring," "Will the Day be Bright or Cloudy?," "High Waving Heather," "Alone I Sat the Summer Day," "To a Wreath Upon the Snow," "Mild the Mist Upon the Hill," "Shall Earth No More Inspire Thee," "No Coward Soul is Mine"

**Week 4 | Industrial Nature**Days 1 & 2

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (I.-II.vii)

Edwin Chadwick, "Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Classes"

Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (excerpts)

**Week 5 | Industrial Nature** (continued)Day 1

Dickens, *Hard Times* (II.viii-III)

\*Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (153-64)

Day 2

Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (excerpts: 9-16, 34-9, 43-50, 149-52, 157-61, 193-207) and “A Visit to the Cholera Districts of Bermondsey” (430-7)

**Week 6 | Geology and Deep Time**Day 1

Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (excerpts)

Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (excerpts)

Day 2

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (excerpts), “The Kraken,” “Vastness”

Robert Browning, “Among the Rocks”

**Week 7 | Evolution and Natural Selection**Day 1

Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (excerpts: 1-6, 60-130, 459-90)

\*Gillian Beer, “Darwin’s Language”

Day 2

Robert Browning, “Caliban Upon Setebos”

Tennyson, “Lucretius,” “De Profundis,” “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,” “By an Evolutionist,” “The Making of Man”

**Week 8 | Humanity’s Place in Nature**Day 1

John Stuart Mill, “Nature” (from *Three Essays on Religion*)

Thomas Huxley, “On the Relations of Man to the Lower Animals” (from *Man’s Place in Nature*)

John Tyndall, “The Belfast Address”

Day 2

Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,” “Binsey Poplars,” “The Sea and the Skylark,” “Ribblesdale,” “Inversnaid”

Christina Rossetti, “An Apple-Gathering,” “Winter: My Secret,” “Goblin Market,” “The World,” “Amor Mundi”; *Sing-Song* (excerpts)

**Week 9 | Nature Enclosed: Forest and Farm**Days 1 & 2

Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (5-173)

Hardy, “Throwing a Tree”

Charlotte Mew, “The Trees are Down”

- \*William A. Cohen, “Arborealities: The Tactile Ecology of Hardy’s Woodlanders”
- \*Peter Wohleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees* (excerpts)

### **Week 10 | Nature Enclosed** (continued)

#### Days 1 & 2

Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (174-367)

Hardy, “The Dorsetshire Labourer”

Hardy, “Hap”

Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (197-214)

\*Richard Kerridge, “Ecological Hardy”

### **Week 11 | A Changing Climate**

#### Day 1

Mary Somerville, *On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences* (163-72)

John Tyndall, “On the Absorption and Radiation of Heat by Gases and Vapours”

George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature* (excerpts)

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History”

\*Roger Fleming, *Historical Perspectives on Climate Change* (65-82)

#### Day 2

Hopkins, “The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe”

### **Week 12 | The Climate of London**

#### Day 1

Ruskin, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Lecture 1)

Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (excerpts: letters 1, 5, 8, 12, 29, 33, 52, 53, 59)

Alice Meynell, “The Climate of Smoke”

\*Allen MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination* (137-69)

\*Vicky Albritton and Fredrik Jonsson, *Green Victorians* (21-47)

#### Day 2

Richard Jefferies, *After London* (excerpts)

\*John Plotz, “Speculative Naturalism”

### **Week 13 | Nature in the Colonies: Race and Resources**

#### Days 1 & 2

H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mines* (7-125)

Huxley, “On the Geographical Distribution of the Chief Modifications of Man”

David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (excerpts)

\*William M. Adams, “Nature and the Colonial Mind”

**Week 14 | Nature in the Colonies** (continued)

Days 1 & 2

H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (126-233)

Rob Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" (233-51)

\*John Miller, "The Environmental Politics and Aesthetics of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*"

**Week 15 | Conclusion**

Day 1

Robert Pack, "The Trees Will Die"

Robert Frost, "Our Hold on the Planet"

Denise Levertov, "An English Field in the Nuclear Age"