

Liverpool John Moores University

Title: The Literature of Extinction: American Writing and the Environment
Status: Definitive
Code: **5115ENGL** (122156)
Version Start Date: 01-08-2021

Owning School/Faculty: Humanities and Social Science
Teaching School/Faculty: Humanities and Social Science

Team	Leader
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Academic Level: FHEQ5 **Credit Value:** 20 **Total Delivered Hours:** 37
Total Learning Hours: 200 **Private Study:** 163

Delivery Options

Course typically offered: Semester 2

Component	Contact Hours
Lecture	11
Seminar	22
Tutorial	2
Workshop	2

Grading Basis: 40 %

Assessment Details

Category	Short Description	Description	Weighting (%)	Exam Duration
Essay	AS1	Timed (take-home) critical analysis of literary, visual or other text 1500 words	40	
Essay	AS2	2500 word essay	60	

Aims

1. To develop students' understanding of the representation of the environment through the study of selected critical discourses drawn from, for example:

- phenomenology, Marxism, cultural geography, psychoanalysis, ecocriticism, environmentalism, affect theory or literary theory;*
2. *To situate American ideas about the environment in their historical and cultural contexts;*
 3. *To explore how the experience of the non-human world shapes individual and group identities and how, reciprocally, those identities affect how people experience that world;*
 4. *To analyse the environmental aesthetics of a range of American literary and visual texts.*

Learning Outcomes

After completing the module the student should be able to:

- 1 Understand and evaluate different critical discourses about the experience and representation of the environment;
- 2 Demonstrate awareness of how American ideas about nature and the environment have developed through particular historical and cultural contexts;
- 3 Through critical engagement with a range of critical, literary, visual and other texts, reflect on how humans experience and know the non-human world;
- 4 Analyse how nature and the environment are represented in a range of American literary and visual texts.

Learning Outcomes of Assessments

The assessment item list is assessed via the learning outcomes listed:

1500 word	4				
2500 word essay	1	2	3	4	

Outline Syllabus

The module will be taught in thematic blocks. The blocks below are indicative, as are the set texts:

*1) Block 1: 'Pure' nature and the idea of America. An introduction to how nature is central to the concept and ideology of America, as shown, for example in the metaphors that have historically been used to evoke American national identity, and in the conceptual mapping of America. David Henry Thoreau and responses to him organize this block. Set texts: Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild* and Native American poetry.*

*2) Block 2: 'Polluted' nature and increasing sensitivity to anthropogenic climate change and extinction. This block explores the philosophy and development of modern environmentalism through the analysis of key American texts. Set texts: Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Don DeLillo, *White Noise*, and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antartica*.*

Learning Activities

Lectures, seminars, and consultation tutorials; private study, written work and Canvas activity.

Notes

Scientists recently designated the contemporary era as the sixth age of mass extinction, and the first in which humanity has played the primary role. This module explores how human-made, or anthropogenic, extinction on various scales, from the local and national to the planetary is conceptualized and represented in important American environmental and ecocritical texts. By studying a range of genres, including fiction, poetry, film, art, autobiographical writing, ecological writing, nature writing, and ecocritical theories, we will consider the imaginative and ideological strategies that allow individuals and communities to form attachments to different American environments.

The set texts explore threats to species, ecosystems, traditional lifeways and people through everyday actions and spectacular events. Environmental distress is felt everywhere, from Middle America to spaces designated marginal, frontier and extreme. The set texts demand a rethink of how we relate to different environments by calling on, for example, the critical powers of the American idea of the wilderness, the figure of the 'ecological Indian', and the genre of environmental literature.