

English/Environmental Studies 26405

Winter 2017

Professor Benjamin Morgan, bjmorgan@uchicago.edu

Office Hours: Walker 512, 12-1 T/Th; please make an appointment via <http://bjm.ycb.me>

Course Website: <http://uchicago.box.com/c19et>

Nineteenth-Century Environmental Thought

Course Description

This course examines nineteenth-century Anglophone writing about nature and the environment in the context of our present situation of climate change and ecological collapse. It is often said that there is no longer such thing as a natural environment: humans have so extensively shaped the planet that anything we might point to as untouched “nature” in fact bears the trace of human agency. We will take this situation as the outcome of processes that were set into motion in the nineteenth century, when extraordinary expansions of industrial technology and fossil-fuel mining took place. We will examine in particular some of the ways in which nineteenth-century writers already understood the idea of a “natural environment” to be culturally made. We will also explore the period’s forceful literary critiques of industrialization. Some questions we will consider: In a world after nature, what new environments begin to emerge? Is “environment” itself an outdated, human-centered concept? How does the nature of the environment shift as we move between rural, urban, and colonial zones?

Required Texts -- please purchase the editions indicated by ISBN

- Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (9780199538539)
- Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (9780141439679)
- Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (9780140431841)
- Course Reader, available in the Humanities copy room (basement, Walker Museum)

Course Requirements

1. **Reading log.** At each of our meetings, I will ask you to turn in ~3 pages (if handwritten; 1.5 typed) of notes that you have taken in preparation for our discussion. I will give you a handout with some guidance on how to write these. These notes will be graded check/plus/minus. You must turn in twelve of these (meaning you may skip four days).
2. Three **short assignments** that will involve a small amount of extra research or in-class presentations.
3. A **final paper** of 10-12 pages due at the end of the quarter. I will give you suggested paper topics, but you are also welcome to pursue a topic of your own choosing in consultation with me.
4. **Participation.** I expect you to actively participate in each class discussion. In concrete terms, this means speaking a few times at each meeting and doing your best to facilitate our conversation.

Policies

Attendance:

You must come to every class. If you miss more than one class, your final grade will drop a half grade (e.g. B -> B-) for each class missed. If you miss more than three classes, you may be given an incomplete.

Office Hours:

My office hours are **by appointment**, T/Th 12-1pm. You may make an appointment at <http://bjm.ycb.me>.

Technology:

Please do not use laptops or other devices in class. Phones must be turned completely off before class begins.

Online Submission Policy:

Papers for this course are submitted by email. Within 2 hours of the deadline, I will send you a receipt confirming that I have received and opened your paper/response. Until you have a receipt, the paper is not turned in. If you have not received a receipt within 2 hours of the deadline, contact me immediately.

Late Papers:

If your paper is late, it will lose a half grade (e.g. B to B-). The grade will continue to drop every 24 hours. I give extensions only in case of major emergencies.

Formatting:

Papers must be double spaced, in Times New Roman typeface, 1-inch margins, numbered, with header and title in MLA format. Papers must also include a works cited page in MLA format.

Grading:

Participation: 10%

Reading log: 20%

Other assignments: 20%

Final paper: 50%

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

It is your responsibility to ensure that all of your written work conforms to accepted standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is not only copying others' work; any improperly documented use of ideas can constitute plagiarism. Please consult the discussion of plagiarism and academic honesty in *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*. If you were not given this book in your core humanities class, please let me know and I will obtain a copy for you. It is crucial that you are familiar with these standards, and it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with them. If these standards are in any way unclear to you or if you are uncertain about best practices with regards to note-taking please consult with me.

Any undocumented use of another person's ideas constitutes plagiarism. This includes copying another text word for word. It also includes summarizing and paraphrasing an original source with similar language and/or syntax, or presenting as your own an argument that you heard in another class or from another person. Please note as well that copying non-copyrighted material (such as Wikipedia or a non-copyrighted webpage) also constitutes plagiarism.

Academic dishonesty includes buying papers online, outsourcing your academic work to someone else (paid or unpaid), and submitting the same paper to more than one course. This is not an exhaustive list of the acts that constitute academic dishonesty and plagiarism. If you are uncertain about how or whether to cite your sources, please contact me.

Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense, even if it is unintentional. Any form of plagiarism may result in immediate failure of this course and disciplinary action.

Schedule of Readings

Unit 1: Landscape and Place

Week 1

1/3: Course introduction

1/5: Henry David Thoreau, "Walking"

Week 2

1/10: William Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"
John Ruskin, from "The Moral of Landscape" (365-387)

1/12: Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* 1-60

Week 3

1/17: Hardy, *Woodlanders* 60-114

Raymond Williams, "Wessex and the Border," from *The Country and the City*

1/19: Hardy, *Woodlanders* 114-236

Charles Darwin, selections from *On the Origin of Species*

Week 4

1/24: **Smart Museum visit -- Assignment one (lead discussion on one object at the Smart)**
Lawrence Buell, "Space, Place, and Imagination from Local to Global" in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*

1/26: Hardy, *Woodlanders* 236-331

Unit 2: British Industrialism and the Rhetoric of Nature

Week 5

1/31: Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* 9-102

2/2: Dickens, *Hard Times* 102-195
Critical essay on *Hard Times* TBD (handout)

Week 6 - Mini-research project

2/7: **Special Collections Visit (Regenstein) to view *Household Words* 1 April 1854 - 12 August 1854 and Meynell, *London Impressions***

Ernst Hart, "Nature's Changes of Dress" *Household Words*

Henry Morley, "Death's Doors," *Household Words*

Henry Morley, "Ground in the Mill," *Household Words*

Alice Meynell, *London Impressions*, "The Climate of Smoke" (pp. 9-11)

2/9: **NO CLASS** - Take time to work on *Household Words* research

Week 7

2/14 **Assignment two** - *Household Words* presentations
Excerpts on nature and British industrialism (handout)

2/16 Dickens, *Hard Times* 195-288

Unit 3: Nature and the British Colonies

Week 8

2/21 Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* 27-104

2/23 Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* 104-136

Rob Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism"

Assignment 3 - Close reading workshop (in preparation for final paper)

Week 9

2/28 Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* 136-301

3/2: **NO CLASS**

Week 10

3/7 Toru Dutt, "Buttoo," "Sindhu," "Sonnet—Baumarghee," "Sonnet--The Lotus," "Our Casuarina Tree"

Edmund Gosse, "Introductory Memoir"

Saturday 3/11, 5pm: Final Paper due