

VICTORIAN LAND

ENGLISH 516B | Fall 2022 | R 1:00-4:00 | LN2401

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-12pm (or by appointment), LNG36



Chamouni by John Ruskin

What is land? A material substance? An aesthetic? A point of access? A habitat? A resource? Is it a surface or a depth? A backdrop or a subject? Something to be studied or something to be exploited? Is it solid, liquid, ice? Who does land belong to: commoners, deed-holders, first peoples, imperialists... no one?

The possible answers to this question have serious implications for the ways that humans relate to their environment—and to each other. The British nineteenth century has cast long shadows into our present moment, not least in how we think about land. The industrial revolution, the enclosure of the commons, mechanized agriculture, imperial settlement and dispossession, exploration and natural history, major developments in geology—these are just some ways in which the British increasingly placed themselves in the role of masters over the world's land, helping in the process to create the climate and inequality crises of our own day.

This semester, we'll read literature—novels, poems, travelogues, and essays—that will help us make sense of how the Victorians, standing on the precipice of the Anthropocene, understood the ground beneath their feet.

Texts

Return of the Native by Thomas Hardy
Mary Barton by Elizabeth Gaskell
The Mill on the Floss by George Eliot
After London by Richard Jefferies
The Time Machine by H.G. Wells
King Solomon's Mines by H. Rider Haggard
Gardens in the Dunes by Leslie Marmon Silko

These seven texts are our novels for the semester. We will also read poetry, travel writing, essays, and more. All readings (except for the Silko novel) will be available for free on Perusall, which will be our course platform. You do not have to spend a cent on these readings if you don't want to. However, you may prefer to read the above novels in printed form rather than on a screen, in which case, I recommend picking up decent editions like Oxford World Classics, Broadview, Norton, or Penguin.

Requirements

Attendance. I trust and hope that you will want to attend, and that you will attend faithfully so long as you are able, but I understand you may need to miss class at some point. If you are unwell, for example, please do not come to class. If/when you need to miss class, I will ask for a short make-up assignment, just to keep you in the flow of the course conversation.

Perusall Comments. All of our class readings will be posted on Perusall. You must read them before class and leave at least three thoughtful comments on each one. Perusall will grade these automatically on a scale of 0-3. So long as you are averaging above 2.25 for the semester, you will receive full credit. Below 2.25 you will begin to lose credit. Perusall's grading system is complex—it will be able to tell whether or not you are really engaged in the reading.

Participation. Come to class ready to share your thoughts, ask questions, and debate. I will facilitate the conversation, but this will be primarily a discussion course, not a lecture.

One Presentation. Each of you will present once. You may choose whether to present on a critical text or a literary text. If you choose a critical text, your presentation should consist of: a.) summary of the text (5 minutes), b.) critical response to the text (10 minutes), and c.) two discussion questions for the class. If you present on a literary text, your presentation should consist of: a.) a close reading of one or two passages (10 minutes), b.) connections to our course themes (5 minutes), and c.) two discussion questions for the class. Please include some kind of visual aide (slides or handout) to facilitate everyone's attention and understanding.

Paper Proposal. In the style of a conference abstract, you must submit a proposal for the seminar paper you plan to write. We will discuss how to do this successfully.

Seminar Paper. A long essay pursuing an original argument related to our seminar themes. It must make a critical intervention about one of our primary texts and participate in a scholarly conversation, with appropriate research. Done well, this will be an early draft of a publishable article. (For PhD students, essay should be 6,000-7,000 words. For MA students, 5,000-6,000 words.)

Grading. Your grade in this class will be a holistic reflection of your work in class (participation and presentations; 50%) and your work outside of class (your writing; 50%).

Course Calendar

All readings will be posted on Perusall one week in advance. You may read them there or anywhere else you like. Wherever the course calendar says "selections" or "TBD," go to Perusall to see what exact titles/pages have been assigned.

READINGS		TOPICS
8/25	WORDSWORTH: selected poems and writings Lesjak: <i>The Afterlife of Enclosure</i> (Intro & Ch.1)	Enclosure / Nature / Wilderness / Landscape / Aesthetics / The Picturesque
9/1	HARDY: <i>Return of the Native</i> (Books 1-2) DUTT: selected poems Williams: <i>The Country and the City</i> (Excerpts)	
9/8	HARDY: <i>Return of the Native</i> (Books 3-6) Lesjak: <i>The Afterlife of Enclosure</i> (Ch.4)	
9/15	GASKELL: <i>Mary Barton</i> (Ch.1 – Ch.14) RUSKIN: "Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" Mitchell: <i>Landscape and Power</i> (Excerpts)	Industrialism / Urban Space / Pollution / Fossil Fuels / Labor
9/22	GASKELL: <i>Mary Barton</i> (Ch.15 – end) Hensley & Steer: <i>Ecological Form</i> (Intro)	
9/29	NO CLASS – PROFESSOR TRAVELING	

10/6	ELIOT: <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Books 1-4) Smith: "Beachy Head" Malm: <i>Fossil Capital</i> (Excerpts)	Labor / Anthropocene / Natural Science / Deep Time / Gradualism / Catastrophe / Speculative Futures
10/13	ELIOT: <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Books 5-7) Miller: <i>Extraction Ecologies</i> (Excerpts from Ch.1)	
10/20	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK	
10/27	JEFFERIES: <i>After London</i> ROKEYA: "Sultana's Dream" Heringman: "Deep Time at the Dawn of the Anthropocene"	
11/3	WELLS: <i>The Time Machine</i> MORRIS: <i>News From Nowhere</i> (Excerpts) Miller: <i>Extraction Ecologies</i> (Excerpts from Ch.3)	
11/10	HAGGARD: <i>King Solomon's Mines</i> Miller: <i>Extraction Ecologies</i> (Excerpts from Ch.2)	Exploration / Surveying / Imperial Extraction / Settler Colonialism
11/17	TROLLOPE: <i>Australia and New Zealand</i> (excerpts) HUDSON: <i>The Naturalist in La Plata</i> (Ch.1) SEACOLE: <i>The Wonderful Adventures</i> (Chs.1-4) Rudy: <i>Imagined Homelands</i> (Ch.4) Bhandar: <i>Colonial Lives of Property</i> (Ch.2)	
11/24	NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING	
12/1	SILKO: <i>Gardens in the Dunes</i> (Parts 1-5) Millican: <i>Travels...of an Orchid Hunter</i> (Excerpts) Silko: "Landscape, History, and Pueblo Imagination"	Gardens / Cultivation / Imperialism / Indigeneity
12/8	SILKO: <i>Gardens in the Dunes</i> (Parts 6-10) Kang, "The Garden in Motion" Tillett, "The Necessity of Lived Resistance"	