

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

Fall 2019

2019

Fall 8-15-2019

ENG 5061A-001: Topics in Literature and Literary Theory

Robin Murray

Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2019



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Murray, Robin, "ENG 5061A-001: Topics in Literature and Literary Theory" (2019). *Fall 2019*. 89.
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2019/89

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2019 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2019 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

**English 5061 A: Special Topics: (section 600 online and 001 face-to-face)
Ecocritical and Media Theory and their Applications**

Please Note: This is one of our Blended Graduate Seminars

Some of our graduate seminars are “blended” seminars, where online and on-campus graduate students are enrolled in the same course. Although each cohort is registered for a different section of the course, the requirements and course expectations for each group are identical, with the single exception that on-campus students may be required to meet each week with the instructor.

Instructors: Robin L. Murray

Email: rlmurray@cmu.edu

Online and Face-to-Face Combined

Phone or Text: 217-549-0199

(before 10)

Office Hours: campus, phone, Skype, or Facetime: T 1-2, W 1-3, and R 1-3 & by appointment

Catalogue Description: Special topics in language and literature not ordinarily treated in standard courses. The topic will vary from semester to semester.

Course Description: These interconnected sections of **ENG 5061A** will focus on ecocritical and media theory. Ecocriticism and media ask how the literary and media arts—one of the richest arenas for the practice of human imagination—does, has, or could shape environmental thought and action. We will read critical environmental theory, literature and media to pry open new and urgent questions about this burgeoning field and its applications. Grounded in the research and writing methods of literary and cultural studies, this course also asks participants to be global citizens – to think across national borders and disciplinary boundaries – in order to open up earthy and alternative ways of interpreting the ecological crises that are arguably relevant to students in any discipline.

Course Texts:

1. Theoretical and Foundational Texts (excerpts from each):
 - a. Cox, *Environmental Communication*
 - b. Friedman, *Hot, Flat and Crowded*
 - c. Murray/Heumann, *Ecology and Popular Film*
 - d. Articles on D2L you will share with each other through group presentations

2. Literary Texts for Application:
 - a. Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*
 - b. Hogan, *Solar Storms*
 - c. Robinson, *Housekeeping*
 - d. Watkins, *Gold, Fame, Citrus*
 - e. Woodrell, *Winter's Bone*

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of the course, the students will be able to

- (1) discuss, examine, and debate current issues in literary theory and cultural studies (possible examples include: theories of authorship; race and gender theories; digital humanities);
- (2) apply current theories to pertinent primary texts and/or contexts;
- (3) demonstrate competencies in a topic or theory to enable participation in professional or public

setting (such as submit a seminar paper for a conference presentation).

Because this is a graduate-level course, we also indicate which objectives are designed to help students achieve established goals for learning at the graduate level:

- Depth of content knowledge: 1, 2, 3
- Effective critical thinking and problem solving: 1, 2
- Effective oral and written communication: 1, 2, 3
- Advanced scholarship through research or creative activity: 3

Course Requirements and Goals:

- 1. Blog Responses:** You will complete reading responses and film and media analyses in your blog on D2L.
 - a. Reading Responses:** For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).
 - b. Film and Media Responses:** For these approximately 250-word analyses, you will engage with both the narrative and style of film and media viewed for class, exploring how well the work responds to and/or augments ecocinema and media definitions. Handouts will be provided to help with these responses.
- 2. Analysis/Synthesis of Ecocritical and Ecocinema/Media Theories:** Your final response will provide an opportunity for you to analyze and synthesize the ecocritical and ecocinema and media theories and approaches discussed throughout the semester. Think of this as a reflective piece. In lieu of a final exam, you will reflect on your reading and viewing during the semester, offering your own extended definition of ecocriticism and/or ecocinema or media in relation to the works read and viewed for class.
- 3. Discussion Group Presentation and Facilitation:** In groups of 3-4, you will lead an online class discussion about one of the ecocritical texts one time during the semester. As the discussion leaders you will first complete a multimedia presentation illuminating ecocritical readings of your text. Models will be provided to facilitate discussion. Please include thoughtful questions in your presentation to encourage a deeper engagement with the text and the lenses you apply to it. Keep in mind that a discussion leader does not lecture. Instead, you are facilitating discussion. Your role is to get your colleagues talking or writing about their reading in a fruitful and responsible way. You're not "filling people's heads" via banking model lecture, so you need to direct an ongoing discussion through careful planning. Please see handout for more information.
- 4. Discussion Participation:** For the approximately four group-led discussions, colleagues in other groups will share initial responses to the three multimedia presentations beyond the one they create. Everyone will then participate in what I hope are engaging, thoughtful, insightful, and informative critical discussions, responding to at least six of your peers' responses. Since there are only four of these discussions, and they are all group-led, my hope is that you will be able to engage more deeply with each peer's responses.
- 5. Project Proposal:** This should be a formal proposal in memo form (addressed to me) in

which you propose your project's focus, the significance of your choice, and the means by which you will address your project's focus. Your proposal should be (again) at least a full page, single-spaced.

6. **Final Project:** The major written work for the course is a project to be submitted during the last week of classes. We will discuss multiple options for this project that should be from 10-15 pages worth of text. Multimedia, pedagogical, or journal or conference-specific projects are welcome.

Grades:

1. Blog Responses: (21%)	210 points
2. Analysis/Synthesis of Ecocritical and Ecocinema/Media Theories: (10%)	100 points
3. Discussion Group Presentation and Facilitation: (10%)	100 points
4. Discussion Participation: (20%)	200 points
5. Project Proposal: (9%)	90 points
6. Final Project with draft: (30%)	300 points
----- ----- (100%)	----- ----- Total: 1000 points

Other Policies:

Tech Support: If you need assistance with D2L, call the Center for Online Learning (217-581-8452) during regular business hours or email col@ciu.edu. D2L tutorials and guides are available 24/7 under the "Help for Students" widget on the D2L My Home page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk (217-581-HELP). If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Plagiarism: The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

Electronic Writing Portfolio: This class is a writing intensive class, so you may submit your paper as a writing portfolio sample, following the instructions on the CASL Website. Submissions must be made during the course of the class to receive my approval. Please note that the Writing Center is available for help with all writing assignments, as well. Take advantage of this free service.

Writing Center: Ambitious students can also seek help from the Writing Center. Call for an appointment (581-5920) or visit ((CH3110) at any point in the writing process, from brainstorming, planning and drafting, to final editing. Bring your assignment sheet and any written work and/or sources with you. The Writing Center is open Monday-Thursday, 9-3 and 6-9, and Friday from 9-1.

Please Note: Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide each of their English department professors with the yellow form, "Application for English department Approval to Student Teach." These are available on a rack outside the office of Dr. Melissa Ames.

Also Note: You must complete all major assignments to complete this course.

ENG 5061A 2019 Tentative Course Calendar, Subject to Change
(Please Note: Section 600 is online. Section 001 will share work face-to-face)

August

Introductions

- 20 **Introduction to the class and to each other.** Review the syllabus and share any questions you have during office hours or via email or text. Complete a visual introduction to yourself as a student, scholar, and colleague (due by Thursday at 5) and share it in our first discussion (due next Tuesday). Read "Greening Library" Bibliographic Essay (ecocriticism up to 2009) and View Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) Member Perspectives (<https://www.asle.org/explore-our-field/ecocriticism-and-environmental-humanities/member-perspectives/>) and complete a 250-word blog response to an area of interest to you by Tuesday, August 27, at 3:30 p.m.

Here's a reminder about reading responses for your blog: Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).

Assignment due by Thursday, August 22, at 5 p.m.: Visual Introduction completion and posting

Assignment due by Tuesday, August 27, at 3:30 p.m.: Visual Introduction Discussion and Blog Response to reading and viewing on ASLE Website. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

What is Ecocriticism? Historical Perspectives

- 27 **Assignment due by Tuesday, August 27, at 3:30 p.m.:** Visual Introduction Discussion (view posts and say hello to each of your peers) and Blog Response to reading and viewing on ASLE Website.

For this week (by September 3), read chapter 1 in *Environmental Communication* and chapter 9 in *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* (<https://epdf.pub/the-columbia-guide-to-american-environmental-history.html>) and view multimedia presentation and *Pale Rider*. Complete a reading blog connecting with film by Tuesday, September 3 at 3:30 p.m.

Here's a reminder about reading responses for your blog: Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).

Assignment for September 3 by 3:30: Complete readings and multimedia and film viewing and complete a reading response blog post connecting with film. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section. Begin reading *Parable of the Sower* (for September 10).

September

Environmental History: Economic, Organismic, Human, and Chaotic Ecology:

- 3 **Assignment for September 3 by 3:30:** Complete readings and multimedia and *Pale Rider* viewing and complete a reading response blog post connecting with film.

Read *The Parable of the Sower* and view multimedia presentation introducing environmental justice and environmental racism for September 10. Complete a reading response blog. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Here's a reminder about reading responses for your blog: Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You

might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).

Assignment due by Tuesday, September 10, at 3:30 p.m: Read *The Parable of the Sower* and view multimedia presentation. Complete reading response blog. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism:

10 Introduction and Application with *Parable of the Sower*

Assignment due by Tuesday, September 10, at 3:30 p.m: Read *The Parable of the Sower* and view multimedia presentation. Complete reading response blog. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Here's a reminder about reading responses for your blog: Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).

Assignment due for Tuesday, September 17, at 3:30 p.m.: Read "Environmental Nostalgia" chapter from *Ecology and Popular Film*, view film multimedia presentation and watch *Beasts of the Southern Wild* or *Sweet Country*, and complete a film/media response. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Evolutionary Theory, Environmental Adaptation, and the Eco-Hero:

17 **Assignment due for Tuesday, September 17, at 3:30 p.m.:** Read "Environmental Nostalgia" chapter from *Ecology and Popular Film*, view multimedia presentation and watch *Beasts of the Southern Wild* or *Sweet Country*, and complete a film/media blog response. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Reminder about blog responses:

- a. Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).
- b. Film and Media Responses: For these approximately 250-word analyses,

you will engage with both the narrative and style of film and media viewed for class, exploring how well the work responds to and/or augments ecocinema and media definitions. Handouts will be provided to help with these responses.

Assignment due by Tuesday, September 24, at 3:30: Read “Reconstructing Underground Urban Space” from *Ecology and Popular Film* and view multimedia presentation and watch *Dark Days* or *Smoke Signals* and complete a film/media blog response. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Animal Studies, Affective Ecocriticism, and Eco-Trauma:

24 **Assignment due by Tuesday, September 24, at 3:30 p.m.:** Read “Reconstructing Underground Urban Space” from *Ecology and Popular Film* and view multimedia presentation and watch *Dark Days* or *Smoke Signals* and complete a film/media blog response. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Reminder about blog responses:

- a. Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).
- b. Film and Media Responses: For these approximately 250-word analyses, you will engage with both the narrative and style of film and media viewed for class, exploring how well the work responds to and/or augments ecocinema and media definitions. Handouts will be provided to help with these responses.

Assignment due by Tuesday, October 1, at 3:30 p.m.: Read Terry Gifford articles and view multimedia presentation and watch *Attenberg* or *Leave no Trace* and complete a film/media blog response. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

October

Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, and Post-Pastoral

1 **Assignment due by Tuesday, October 1, at 3:30 p.m.:** Read Terry Gifford articles and view *Attenberg* or *Leave No Trace* and multimedia presentation. Complete a film/media blog response by October 1. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section. Begin reading *Winter's Bone*.

Reminder about blogposts:

Reading Responses: For these approximately 250-word blog responses, please approach the reading for the week through a particular ecocritical lens to move beyond summary. You might evaluate or critique the text in relation to this lens. You might argue for or against its points. Engage with the text rather than summarizing it. Personal and pedagogical connections are welcome, as are intertextual readings (exploring other texts with which the work engages).

- c. Film and Media Responses: For these approximately 250-word analyses, you will engage with both the narrative and style of film and media viewed for class, exploring how well the work responds to and/or augments ecocinema and media definitions. Handouts will be provided to help with these responses.

Assignment due by Tuesday, October 8 at 3:30 p.m.: Submit a final project proposal for peer review and conferencing.

Final Project Proposals and Group Presentation Planning!

8 Midterm Week!

Final Project Proposal due for peer review (with blog partner) and electronic conference with me by October 8 at 3:30 p.m. Peer reviews, conferences due by October 15 at 3:30 p.m.

Assignment due by Tuesday, October 15, at 3:30. p.m.: peer review and conferences. Please also meet electronically with your group members to begin planning your presentations. Review group presentation prompt and delegate work. Begin reading *Winter's Bone!*

Environmental Regionalism:

15 **Note:** We will have peer reviews and conferences on your project proposals this week. Begin reading your works for your presentations and meet electronically with your group members.

Assignment for Group 1: Complete Group 1 Presentation of background information on environmental regionalism (start with provided information) by Friday, October 18 at 5:00 p.m.

Assignment for Everyone: Read *Winter's Bone!*

Assignment for rest of class: We will then Apply to *Winter's Bone* (book and film) in a discussion due Tuesday, October 22, at 3:30 p.m. Begin reading *Housekeeping*.

Climate Change and the Anthropocene:

22 **Note: Group 1 Presentation** due by Friday, October 18 at 5:00 p.m. **Full-Class Discussion** due by Tuesday, October 22, at 3:30 p.m. on presentation and *Winter's Bone* book and film.

Group 2: Presentation of background information on climate change and the Anthropocene (start with provided information) due by Friday, October 25 at 5:00 p.m..

Assignment for rest of class: We will then apply to *Gold, Fame, Citrus* through a discussion due Tuesday, October 29 at 3:30 p.m.

Assignment for Everyone: Read *Gold, Fame, Citrus* (due 10/29).

Disability Ecocriticism:

29 **Note: Group 2 Presentation** due by Friday, October 25 at 5:00 p.m. **Full-Class Discussion** due by Tuesday, October 29 at 3:30 p.m. on *Housekeeping* book and film.

Group 3 Presentation of background information on disability ecocriticism (start with provided information) due by Friday, Nov at 5:00 p.m.

Assignment for rest of class: We will then apply to *Housekeeping* (book and film) through a discussion due by Tuesday, November 5 at 3:30 p.m.

Assignment for Everyone: Read *Housekeeping* (due 10/5)

November

Gender and Ecofeminism:

5 **Note: Group 3 Presentation** due by Friday, November 1 at 5:00 p.m. **Full-Class Discussion** due by Tuesday, November 5 at 3:30 p.m. on presentation and *Housekeeping*.

Group 4 presentation of background information on gender and ecofeminism (start with provided information) due by Friday, November 8 at 5:00 p.m.

Assignment for rest of class: We will then apply to *Solar Storms* through a discussion due by Tuesday, November 12 at 3:30 p.m.

Assignment for Everyone: Read *Solar Storms* for a November 12 discussion.

Rhetorical Ecomedia and the Future of Environmentalism:

- 12 **Note: Group 4 presentation** due by Friday, November 8 at 5 p.m. and **Full-Class Discussion** due by Tuesday, November 12 at 3:30 p.m. on presentation and *Solar Storms*.

Assignment for Tuesday, November 19 at 3:30: Read brief excerpts from Part III in *Environmental Communication* and Part III in *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* with a Screening of the Chinese documentary *Under the Dome* and complete either a reading or film/media blog response by Tuesday, November 19 at 3:30 p.m. Respond to your blog partner in the comments section.

Assignment for Thursday, November 21: Final Project draft due for peer review with your blog partner and electronic conference with me. Turn in draft by Thursday, November 21 at 5:00 p.m. and complete peer review by Friday, November 22 at 5:00 pm. Have a good break!

Sharing Your Own Ecocritical, Ecocinema, and/or Ecomedia Projects!

- 19 Final Project draft due for peer review with your blog partner and electronic conference with me. Turn in draft by Thursday, November 21 at 5:00 p.m. and complete peer review by Friday, November 22 at 5:00 pm. Have a good break!
- 25-29 Thanksgiving Break, No Classes!

December

- 3 Final Project due and shared with peers through Discussions completed by Thursday, December 5 at 5:00 p.m.
- 9 Final Exam Week! Analysis/Synthesis of Ecocritical and Ecocinema/Media Theories due by Thursday, December 11 at 5:00 p.m.