

NATURE

COMICS

NATURE IN POPULAR CULTURE ENVS 410

"the case
of the
vanishing
bees."



SYLLABUS v.2.0

ENVS 410; CRN #42136

M-T-W-R 9:00 AM
Peterson 110

Summer 2016



in this syllabus
you'll find the
course...

- overview
- expectations
- assignments
- policies
- resources
- schedule

Course Introduction: What will we do?

In this course you will examine the various ways that nature is represented in U.S. popular culture. We'll explore how popular culture shapes people's lives and environments. We'll also question what is at stake in these kinds of depictions of the natural world; why and how they matter to how we relate to the world, each other, and our own identities. What can advertisements, films, television, and popular music teach us about the ways we imagine nature? What ideas about nature are conveyed by zoos, aquariums, and nature-oriented theme parks? Is popular culture a productive "site" for environmentalist movements to make political or social change, or a place where eco-friendly ideas go to die? Do we have the power to change the ways popular culture operates in our lives?



Step 3: Evaluate arguments in the scholarly debates about nature in popular culture

Step 4: Participate in those debates by doing the ground work for our own research or interventions

We'll rely on **three principle frameworks** that will guide our work in environmental cultural studies:

1. Close textual analysis: central to all literary and cultural studies is slow, careful analysis and interpretation of how a text's form, its constitutive parts, and signification produce meaning. If a text seems to associate nature with femininity, for example, what parts of the text lead you to interpret it that way?

2. Intersectionality theory: first articulated by Kimberle Crenshaw, "intersectionality" describes the interlinked and overlapping avenues of oppression that affect different social identities. Sociological concepts like race(ism), sex(ism), or able(ism) are seldom experienced as discreet phenomena; different forms of oppression inform, combine, offset, or otherwise influence the experience of social (dis)empowerment. This is a critical term in the work of virtually all our scholarly texts, and key to understanding how "nature acts as a tool of power" (Sturgeon 11).

3. Media Ecology: at the heart of the idea of media ecology is the concept of "relationality"-- the idea that the significance and effects of a cultural practice or text are defined by the complex set of relations that surround, permeate, and shape the text itself. This means we pay attention to a text's material history, its audience, traditions, and aftermath.

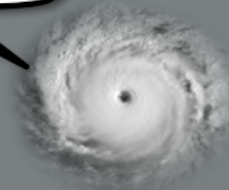
How will we do this?

Step 1: Equip ourselves with a toolkit from environmental cultural studies

Week One Highlight: "Ideology" by James Kavanaugh-- A tough but entirely rewarding (or earth-shattering) reading that will equip you to understand the power of pop culture and your own analysis of pop culture. Also, I practically invented the word ideology.



Week Three Highlight: We'll look at how disasters are "naturalized" and also how images of catastrophe intersect social struggle.



Step 2: Interpret a wide variety of pop cultural "texts" for nature and the natural

film, ads, tv, journalism, documentary, social media, short story, music, zoos, movies about zoos, games, video games, fashion.

With all of us contributing to "the archive project," we'll examine a vast universe of cultural texts. What power do themes of the natural hold across these different media and genres?



Course Goals:

We all have three main goals:

- We must learn to interpret the world with insight and critical understanding.
- We must learn to share our interpretation of the world with others.
- We must learn to share the world and to change the world.

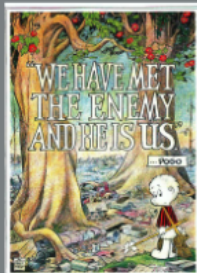
ENVS 410 Specific Goals:

1. Provide a working definition of popular culture and an explanation of what we gain from studying popular culture representations of nature and the environment.
2. Analyze the depictions of nature and the environment in television shows, films, advertisements, and other popular culture texts.
3. Describe and provide examples of the way ideas about social power, and particularly race, gender, ability, and sexuality are communicated and contested through depictions of nature and the environment in a variety of media and genres.
4. Make research contributions, as new scholars of popular culture, in the live, meaningful debates surrounding depictions of nature, the environment, and environmentalism.
5. Locate and reflectively examine one's own position a citizen, consumer, and student in relation to the studies and struggles we explore.
6. Reflect on how you learn as an individual and through the Socratic discussion-style seminar we build together.



Iron Eyes Cody, an Italian actor known for playing Native American Indians in Westerns, played "the Crying Indian" in the highly successful public service announcement produced by Keep America Beautiful.

Keep America Beautiful is an anti-littering group founded by industries that produce disposable containers like glass bottles and aluminum cans. The Crying Indian ad adroitly moved public concern away from polluting industries and towards irresponsible consumers in the early 1970s, when states like Vermont tried to ban disposable bottles.



This is one of the most iconic images from the first Earth Day. Wait Kelly (1970). The odd word choice is a riff on Admiral Perry's famous missive to General Henry Harrison after the U.S. defeated the British in the Battle for Lake Eerie in 1812: "We have met the enemy and they are ours..." In 1969 images of the Cuyuhoga River aflame, which enters into Lake Eerie near Cleveland, adds to the line's provocative and enduring resonance.



How will we meet these goals?

What to expect from your instructor: You can expect me to work hard to help you learn and succeed in this course. Specifically, I'll be available to help you in and outside of class. I will communicate clear expectations, criteria, and feedback for your efforts, and demonstrate the value of course activities and requirements (always feel free to ask about why we're doing each activity or assignment), and guide you in the completion of tasks in a timely manner so you can demonstrate your achievement. This course grapples with the complex intersections of economic, political, environmental, social, and historical forces in culture and systems that organize and empower or disempower people's lives. I believe these are vital issues to investigate, and consequently I love talking about all the issues we'll be examining over the next few weeks and I am here to help you explore these ideas. If I don't know answers to your questions that you're asking, I'm positive that I can help you find those answers.

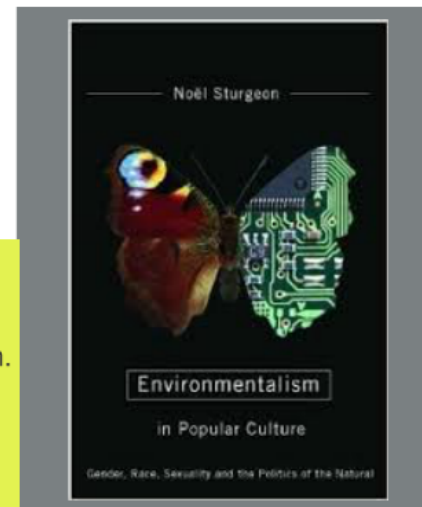
What your instructor expects from you: You are expected to be present for every class, complete class readings and assignments on time and in the manner required, check for announcements on your email regularly, and participate vigorously and often in class discussions and activities – meaning you will share your ideas openly, relate course concepts and skills to your interests and real world experiences, and work to synthesize information from a variety of sources. In addition, you are required to comply with the course policies and ask me questions when things get confusing (and I guarantee they will, because confusion and some level of disturbance is the first step towards learning anything worth learning).

All of us are expected to respect each other's voice; listen to, read, reflect upon, and comment on each other's contributions; challenge each other to clarify our ideas; and encourage each other to deepen our mutual learning. We are extremely lucky to have a chance to work together in an intimate summer seminar. Let's make the most out of it!

Required texts:

Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of the Natural. by Noël Sturgeon.

all other readings are located as pdf files on the course website. Please print all the readings and bring them to class.



Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Being a good "classroom citizen" means that you meet the expectations laid out in this syllabus. This means that a portion of your grade will come from how well you prepare for and participate in classroom discussions and respond to your peers. The course journal is a running log of your engagement with course material and ideas. It is also the principle way you'll prepare for class each day. Typically, course journal entries will take between 15-30 minutes to complete, and there will be 2-3 journal entries each week.

Full descriptions of assignments are on the course website!

100-97.5 A+	79.9-77.5 C+
97.4-92.5 A	77.4-72.5 C
92.4-90.0 A-	72.4-70.0 C-
89.9-87.5 B+	69.9-60.0 D
87.4-83.5 B	59.9-00.0 F
83.4-80.0 B-	



The Prospectus will be a multi-part final project in which you'll propose an extended research project. By doing this you'll prepare to meaningfully contribute to the scholarship and wider conversation/ civic action surrounding nature and environmentalism in popular culture. The format of the prospectus is similar to the requirements for a senior honors thesis in environmental science/ studies.

Prospectus Project

Classroom Citizenship and Course Journal

35%

Other forms of participation may include activities such as active listening and discussion in class, responding to "pop" quizzes, in-class writing assignments, meetings in office hours, and other activities.



20%

Mid Term Exam

This "Three-Part" exam occurs at the end of the second week. You'll work on the first part of the exam individually, the second part individually or in groups, and the final part is an optional challenge to questions you believe you got "wrong" due to inaccuracies or flawed questions in the exam itself.

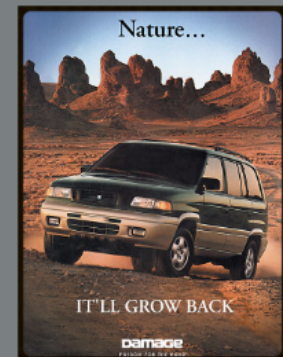
15%

With a partner you'll find a topic, figure, or problem not covered in our course readings or larger discussions. The group's task is to creatively and effectively teach the class about this additional topic and facilitate a short discussion of the topic's relevancy to the course; how what you've learned changes how we understand the field of green media and popular culture. Each group will meet with Shane before their presentation. You will sign up for a group and presentation date in class.

Pop Culture Provocation

ok, so we'll talk about "adusting," aka "brandalism" or "subvertising" a bit, but it could make a great "provocation" topic. The instructions give you some ideas.

30%



You'll take this course as:

What you "get" from this course is based on how deeply you engage not only with the ideas of the course, but with the rapidly-growing field of environmental cultural studies.



Yes, this was a real comic in the 50s. Briefly. Really Briefly.

Imagine you're on a beach, and the ocean is this course. Explore as deeply as you dare!

I have adapted this section of the syllabus from a superb history syllabus of Dr. Hangen at Worcester State. Thanks to Dr Tona Hangen for this helpful metaphor and approach!



Waders

You are getting a basic understanding of where and what "nature" appears in popular culture. You learn working definitions of key terms, and work to understand the arguments put forward by the scholars we read and those articulated by the teacher.

You tend to see the texts and lessons as pretty much reinforcing one another and you are able to find corroborating textual evidence in pop culture around you.

There's no shame in staying in the shallows-- especially if this is your first or only environmental cultural studies course and most of this is brand new. "Waders" are most interested in learning WHAT nature in popular culture looks like.



Snorkelers

You have a grasp on how to "read" cultural "texts" and can use history, politics, economics, and other lenses to help you identify and interpret themes of "the natural" operate across a range of media and genres.

You are connecting what you're learning to other classes and experiences you've had-- maybe you've even taken a pop culture or environmental literature or media studies course before.

"Snorkelers" notice inconsistencies between different readings and theories we examine, and challenge the assumptions we bring to our studies. You are interested and learning HOW and WHY nature/ the natural is a tool of social power.



Divers

You want to go deep into popular culture; want to grasp the epistemologies, ideologies, and histories that shape our lives. You are critically thinking about all aspects of the course material and are thinking like a scholar of environmental cultural studies.

You are well aware of how specific histories construct a particular moment. You're constantly seeking context.

"Divers" don't take much for granted. You see-- and fill-- the gaps in the syllabus. You are working not only to master what is put before you in the readings and activities, but to add to the class' collective learning. You are interested in WHY ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURAL STUDIES MATTERS.



Shane is still listed in the American Film Institutes 100 greatest films. We'll discuss the importance of "frontier myths" in depictions of nature and American environmentalism throughout this class. Please don't mimic the annoying kid at the end of this movie if you want to get my attention during class.

Instructor info:

Name: Shane Hall
Education: Doctoral Candidate, UO Environmental Studies, English Department focus
Office: 240 Columbia Hall
Contact: shaneh@uoregon.edu (preferred contact)
240-434-3726 (emergency contact)

My research explores the intersections of climate change, militarism, and environmental justice in contemporary literature and culture. My dissertation, "War by Other Means: Environmental Violence in the 21st Century," details different ways modern war weaponizes environments against vulnerable populations and communities. I am the co-editor of the anthology, Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities (2016), and work in UO's Teaching Effectiveness Program.

I was born and raised in Lancaster, PA, and went to college at St. Mary's College of Maryland, a public, liberal arts school on the Chesapeake Bay. I am pretty fanatical about fishing, hiking, and reading.

Archive Project

As a part of your course journal, you'll periodically be asked to find good "texts" that support or counter arguments about nature in popular culture we read. But I'd love us to be constantly looking for interesting "nature pop culture" (NPC) texts. On the course blog there are instructions for adding new songs, sites, blogs, films, etc. to the Archive Project.

There's incentives to post: anyone who posts 15 or more archive entries will have their final grade raised by 2.5% points. That's the difference between a C+ and B-, or B+ to A-. What more, **whomever enters the most high quality Archive Project will have their final grade raised 5%.**

Resources for your success and well-being:



The TLC offers lots of services to UO students, including 1-on-1 meetings with Learning Specialists, Math, Writing, and other subject tutoring, and ongoing workshops and courses. Check them out in the basement of PLC (72) and/or the 4th floor of the library. <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/services/>



Environmental Studies Office: In Columbia Hall 144 you'll find the "Eco-Peers" and Undergraduate Coordinator, Taylor West, who can help advise you about any ENVS/ESCI related issues. Want to change your major? Or see if you have the right classes to satisfy requirements and graduate on time? They're the folks to go see.



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
Libraries

Your final project (the "prospectus") requires substantial research. The library has the resources you'll need! In particular I'd like to plug "subject librarians" like Dean Walton (ENVS) and Elizabeth Peterson (English), who are there to help students like us navigate the daunting world of stacks, databases, and special collections. I can also give you some tips about getting the most out of the library-- it's a far more powerful research tool than "googling it."



While we can work to make sure this class is accessible for you, you might also benefit from working with the Accessible Education Center. The Accessible Education Center offers a "range of supports and services...to eligible students who encounter barriers to full access or participation in the physical, curricular, or informational environments within the university. These include academic accommodations, including exam adjustments, sign language interpretation, classroom relocation, and adaptive technology. In addition, support with academic planning and problem solving is available, as well as assistance with time management and organizational strategies. To become eligible to receive services make an appointment." You can also find them in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.



The UCTC offers individual therapy, crisis support, group therapy, as well as self-help and diversity resources. Call the Counseling Center at (541) 346-3227 or come by and tell the receptionist you would like to talk with a therapist (They're over by Oregon Hall). You can call the After-Hours Support and Crisis Line at 541-346-3227 outside of business hours for mental health support or help with a crisis.

24-HOUR HOTLINE
FOR INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

541-346-SAFE

Call anytime to speak with a counselor who can also connect you with other confidential resources

From safe.uoregon.edu: "If you are a victim or survivor of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, gender-based harassment and bullying, or stalking and need help, start here. We have staff available 24-hours a day for confidential advice and assistance. Even if you are unsure what to do, call 541-346-7233 (SAFE) and you'll be connected with somebody who will listen to you and help guide you as you figure out what you want to do next. We are here to support you and help provide the assistance and services you need."

Attendance

In this seminar we will learn as a group. This means we need to be "present" in class each day in more ways than just getting our butts in these swanky plastic seats. This course will be most fulfilling if we are all in it together... literally. To encourage everyone to maintain excellent attendance, there is one "carrot" reward for coming and one "stick" disincentive for not coming. If you come to each and every class, your Course Journal and Classroom Citizenship grade will be raised a full letter grade at the end of the term (i.e. if you got a B on your CJCC it will become an A). That's the carrot. If you miss more than one day, you're CJCC grade will be reduced 20% for each additional absence. You cannot pass the class if you miss more than a week of class. Repeatedly arriving to class late or departing class early will negatively impact your classroom citizenship grade. That's the stick.

Title IX & Reporting

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. Consequently, all UO employees are required to report to appropriate authorities (supervisor or Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity) when they have reasonable cause to believe that discrimination, harassment or abuse of any kind has taken, or is taking, place. Students seeking to discuss a situation without talking to a mandatory reporter may call 541-346-SAFE. This 24/7 hotline is staffed by confidential, trained counselors. For confidential help, students may also contact University Health Services (<http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu/>) or Sexual Assault Support Services (<http://sass-lane.org/>).

Access

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu.

Academic honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Consistent, correct citation of sources is required, and failing to adequately cite source materials will result in a final grade of "F" for the course. Refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website.

Late work

Because of the extremely compressed nature of this course, late work will not be accepted unless you seek and receive permission from me prior to the assignment's deadline in the syllabus. All deadlines are included in the syllabus, so it helps to study-up on the schedule at the beginning of the course to see if you can predict any predicaments.

Communicating

Due to the short, brutish nature of Summer term, we are all expected and required to perform at a "high-octane" level. That being said, we are human. If you are struggling with material, faced suddenly with a personal crisis, etc. please communicate with me via email or in person so we can coordinate and ensure you are able to access fully a positive learning experience (and pass the class). Coming to me a week after an assignment is due to tell me that your house burnt down is an awfully long time to wait to talk about an extension. So promptly communicate, communicate, communicate. ALSO-- I have several weekend commitments this summer which may place me away from a computer. You may text or call me if you have not received an email reply in a timely manner (or if I say, "hey y'all, I'll be away from internet").

Office hours

Everyone is required to meet with me and their provocation group outside of class the week of your presentation. I hold "office hours" in Columbia 240 each day before and after class, but we can arrange other times that are more convenient for you or your group. Continuing with the "communication" mantra of the last policy, please feel encouraged to come to office hours on a regular basis. I'll offer several "topical office hours" where anyone in the class can meet to carry a conversation further about a particular topic, or work on a certain part of their final project, etc.

Religious Holidays

Students who observe religious holidays at times when academic requirements conflict with those observances must inform instructors in advance of the holiday. Students are responsible for making up missed work according to a schedule determined with their instructor.