

ENGLISH 596.01

T, 12:30-3 pm, New North 311

Nineteenth-Century Ecologies



Recycling: Henry Mayhew, from *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851)

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Student Open Hours: T 11:00-12:00, & on Zoom by appt

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The Victorians invented ecology. The term first entered English usage in 1875, in a British science journal, and while the word had been coined in German a few years before, that term had itself been adapted from Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Even earlier, British scientists, economists, and literary writers, among other thinkers, had begun to imagine human life as intimately related to other forms of being, and these entangled groupings to be themselves related to yet other entities across vast swaths of prehuman time. This course surveys England's most modern century, the nineteenth, to track how the conceptual dilemmas of a world newly understood (in Darwin's terms) as evolving, relational, and holistic generated dilemmas of aesthetic presentation. By what figural means could one hope to represent, in a coherent literary or artistic work, an entire ecosystem, where no single thing can be abstracted from that system of mutual codependence? Our readings will touch on nineteenth century scientific, literary, and political writing from across the period of early fossil-fueled industrialization; of special concern to us will be the vastly exploitative hierarchies enabled by the interplay of race and gender in this period, in particular as those categories played out in what is arguably the central institution of the British nineteenth century, the Empire. Coordinates will come from a volume of scholarly essays, *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire*; new and forthcoming work in the field, by rising scholars in particular, will inform our proceedings. Primary readings will include writing by Mary and Percy Shelley; Charles Dickens; Thomas Hardy; Charles Darwin; George Eliot; Christina Rossetti; Gerard Manley Hopkins; and others; theory and criticism from Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing, Timothy Mitchell, Gillian Beer, and others.

Required Texts:

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford World's Classics): 9780198834786

Emily Bronte, *The Complete Poems*, Janet Gezari, ed. (Penguin Classics, 1993): 978-0140423525 [note this book is out of print, and will be provided in PDF form if you're not able to secure it]

Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (Oxford World's Classics): 978-0199219223

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Penguin Classics, Hugh Haughton ed, 2003): 9780141439761

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Oxford World's Classics): 9780198815518

Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Major Works* (Oxford World's Classics): 978-0199538850

Optional Texts:

These are books from which we'll read significant sections. Relevant sections will be available as PDFs but if you're serious about continuing this line of inquiry I recommend you own them. Used is cheapest.

Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (Verso): 978-1784781293

William Wordsworth, *The Major Works* (Oxford World's Classics): 978-0199536863

Additional Readings:

A substantial amount of our semester's reading will be posted on our course Canvas page; these readings are marked on the syllabus with an asterisk (*). You should plan to budget at least \$50 for printing these files in the required hard copy format. If you need them printed for free, see me in office hours and I'll run them off for you. It may seem counterintuitive to be asked to print the readings for a class on ecology, but we need to write with pencils on our readings; unless you have a reading device that accepts stylus-input annotations, you are expected to **print the PDFs in hard copy; read everything on printed paper; and (of course) bring all secondary texts to class.** Readings marked "supplementary" are just that: not required (formally or informally) but available to you should you desire further guidance, detail, or nuance for a given session.

Assignments:

Formal Course Work (70% of final grade)

Close reading assignment. (2 pages, single-spaced, 1,000 words.) Details for these exercises in minute and sympathetic attention will be provided, but essentially this is an assignment in the hyperbolically slow, close, and intimate apprehension of a literary artifact. (We will discuss these metaphors.) Your task will be to take time to understand and thus appreciate this object in all its dynamic and concrete specificity: terms, tips, and helpful suggestions will be provided. You are not meant to argue but to *read*; the job is to notice everything. Details to be announced.

Conference abstract. (500 words) You will use one of the resources posted on Canvas to find a conference in either (a) Victorian studies; (b) your chosen field of specialization; or (c) the interdisciplinary field of Environmental Humanities, and then write a proposal for that conference. Guidelines forthcoming.

Multispecies Ethnography. (4-5 pages, double spaced.) Guidelines are forthcoming for this exercise, which will ask you to use advanced descriptive techniques to examine carefully and with technical specificity a given relational ecosystem or part of one. The object of your analysis need not be “natural,” but must account for relations among human and nonhuman actors at multiple scales. This is an exercise in faithful and detailed descriptive writing.

Seminar paper or final public humanities project. (13-16 pp. or equivalent) This final project will take one of two forms (your choice). One option is a sustained academic argument that follows the format of a published scholarly article, if shorter. For this you are encouraged to expand on your close reading into a longer, more developed and fully-researched analysis; you are also free to generate an entirely new argument about new text(s). The other option, more amorphous, is a public humanities project. This you will devise in consultation with me, and can take almost any form: a website, an art installation, an exhibit, a happening. The work put into this should be the equivalent of that for a 15-18 pp. paper, or more.

Other Work (counted as part of participation grade, which is 30% of final grade)

Weekly posts to our Canvas discussion page. Each week every seminar participant will make a brief but focused contribution to the class discussion page. These posts can take almost form, so long as they (1) demonstrate familiarity with the readings for the week and (2) help push us collectively to new ideas. Posts might take the form of short essays making an argument about the week’s reading(s); close readings of single passages with questions appended; or sets of discussion questions in dialogue with other posts. You may also gather and present a piece of writing, art, science, or mass culture that you see as relating to what we’ve read. (In this case a word about the relation you see would be appropriate.) I encourage you to vary the form of your entries, moving from criticism to questions to creative posts and remediations of archival objects. **Posts are due the night before class, no later than midnight. All class members are required to read all posts.** *Note that each seminar member gets two (2) non-post passes, when you don’t make a post—no explanation necessary.*

Informal research presentation. At the end of the term you may be asked to present in brief a snapshot of the research you have conducted for your final project. Guidelines for this informal presentation will be forthcoming.

Policy on Late Work:

Respect for our shared academic endeavor means that lateness is strongly discouraged. Blog posts, papers, and other assignments will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade for each day beyond their due date, with the first 24 hour period beginning immediately. Please see me in advance if extraordinary circumstances arise.

Course Grading Policy:

Your final grade for this course will reflect the quality of written work you produce (70%); it will also reflect the quality of your participation in the collaborative labor of the course (30%). Thus, your thoughtful responses to the texts, your active participation in class discussions, and your level of commitment to our shared undertaking will all contribute crucially to your final grade. The central component of your grade is your final project. Responsible collegiality is mandatory.

Absence and Tardy Policy:

The seminar-style nature of this course makes your presence in class imperative. See me *in advance* if a situation arises that will result in an absence. Do not come to class late. Repeat absences (i.e. more than one) will result in a lowered grade; same with tardies (more than two). In all cases it is your responsibility to make up missed class material.

Values in the Classroom:

Our class is guided by the principle of mutual respect and an ethic of care. Our classroom is a space where debate of ideas and substantive disagreement are enabled by the fact that this mutual respect is unquestioned. In keeping with this, I ask that you please inform me of your preferred name and pronouns and I will, of course, use them. Mine are he/him. The Department of English has adopted [a statement of principles](#) that states, in part: “The Department of English at Georgetown University stands united in its commitment to the fundamental equality and inherent dignity of all human beings. These values are the foundation of our work in the humanities and transcend political affiliation. They are also embedded in our University’s mission and the Jesuit tradition of seeking social justice. As humanists we are committed to the practices of principled argumentation, free inquiry, careful consideration of evidence and fact, and sustained, contemplative engagement. A prerequisite for those practices is respect.”

Plagiarism:

Do not do it, ever. If you do, you will (at the very least) fail the course. See the Georgetown Honor System website for guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it: <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. Note that, as suggested above, in all matters I expect you to observe the Georgetown honor pledge: *To be honest in every academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together.*

Disabilities and Accommodations:

I am committed to providing whatever it takes to help you be successful in this course. This comes from the Georgetown Academic Resource Center: “Georgetown does not discriminate or deny access to an otherwise qualified student with a disability on the basis of disability, and students with disabilities may be eligible for reasonable accommodations and/or special services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA) of 2008. However, students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not requested an accommodation and adequately documented their disabilities. Also, the University need not modify programmatic, course, or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction.” Please consult <http://guarc.georgetown.edu/disability/accommodations/>; and do see me early in the term to discuss how I can help.

Note on Title IX:

University policy requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct or gender-based violence to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. Georgetown has a number of *fully confidential* professional resources able to provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence. These resources include: Jen Schweer, MA, LPC / Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention / (202) 687-0323 / js242@georgetown.edu / and Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist / Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) / (202) 687-6985 / els54@georgetown.edu. More information about campus resources and faculty reporting obligations can be found at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.

Guides for Further Study and Research:

Thinking in interdisciplinary ways across boundaries of science and culture is difficult. For reliable scientific information, please see the NOAA website, the International Panel on Climate Change site, and the climate coverage of, especially the *Guardian* (UK) and the *Washington Post*. The GU Library has compiled a hub for accessing interdisciplinary information about climate change: <http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/climate>. For matters of literary and theoretical terminology, your first line of defense is the *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. Second stop is the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available with a Google search. For matters of literary history, consult the *Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* or the *Columbia Guide to British Literature*. (Links to these are available the library's [19th century resources site](#).) Only after exhausting these options should you bother with Wikipedia. Please stay away from online summaries not mentioned here. And as always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about this material. We're in this together. I'm here to help.

NINETEENTH CENTURY ECOLOGIES | COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that this schedule may shift and stretch depending on our progress through the term. I reserve the right to alter the schedule as our progress demands. The authoritative schedule will be housed on our course blog / Canvas site.

Week of August 24 | Pre-Reading (No class)

Get ready. Please read as much as you can about climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and fossil fuel extraction in the contemporary moment. Prepare for day 1.

Tuesday, August 30 | Coordinates. What is the nineteenth century? What is an ecology?

Nathan Hensley and Philip Steer, *Ecological Form*, "Introduction"*

"The Victorian Age: 1830-1910"*

Victorian Literature and Culture "Keywords" essays: (1) Oak Taylor, "Anthropocene"; (2) Hensley,

"Environment"; (3) MacDuffie, "Environment"; (4) Miller, "Ecology"*

Zach Samalin, "A Map the Size of the Empire"*; from *Theories of the Nineteenth Century*

Tuesday, September 6 | **No class** (classes follow a Monday schedule this day)

Learn definitions of: "extractivism," "Great Acceleration," "Anthropocene," "fossil capitalism."

Pick any single nonhuman animal or earth system and learn how its population / range / behavior has changed since 1800.

Tuesday, September 13 | Fossil Capital, Enclosure, and the Extractive Regime

John Locke, from *The Second Treatise of Government*, "On Property"*

Andreas Malm, from *Fossil Capital**

Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, from *Extraction Ecologies**

Zach Fruit, "Enclosure"*

John Clare, "The Mores," "Remembrances," and other enclosure poems TBD.

William Wordsworth, from the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*; "The Old Cumberland Beggar," "Nutting,"

"Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," "Composed upon Westminster Bridge,

September 3, 1802," "Appendix A: "There is an active principle alive in all things"*

Tuesday, September 20 | *Wuthering Heights* I [CLOSE READING DUE]

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

Corbin Hiday, "Heathcliff Walks"*

Emily Bronte, "The Butterfly"* (skim)

Optional: AS Daley, "The Moons and Almanacs of *Wuthering Heights*"*

For fun (optional): *Better Read Than Dead* podcast: *Wuthering Heights* (nsfw)

Tuesday, September 27 | *Wuthering Heights* II

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

Karl Marx, from the *Grundrisse* (on "Primitive Accumulation")

Catherine Hall et al. from *Legacies of British Slave Ownership**

Christopher Heywood, "Yorkshire Slavery in *Wuthering Heights*"*

Optional: Christina Sharpe, "Introduction" and "The Weather," from *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being**

Tuesday, October 4 | Emily Bronte, Poetry and the Minor

[Note: Class meets in Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Lauinger Library]

Emily Bronte, *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Bronte* (recommendations on places to focus tbd)

Watch Prof. Gena Zuroski, "A Scansion Walkthrough":

<https://zuroski.wordpress.com/selected-courses/>

Janet Gezari, "Introduction," in *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Bronte*

Saidiya Hartman, "Wayward: A Short Entry on the Possible"*

Recommended: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, The Components of Expression"*

Optional: Shawna Ross, from *Charlotte Bronte in the Anthropocene**

Optional: Virginia Jackson, from *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading**

Tuesday, October 11 | Incalculable Diffusion I

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Laura Otis, "The Webs of *Middlemarch*"*

Tuesday, October 18 | Incalculable Diffusion II

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
Gage McWeeny, from *The Comfort of Strangers**
Review "Digital *Middlemarch* Project"*

Tuesday, October 25 | The Feeling of Everything Falling Apart I [**CONFERENCE ABSTRACT DUE**]

Adrienne Ghaly, "What Does Biodiversity Loss Feel Like?"*
Guest lecture by Dr. Adrienne Ghaly (UVA): "What Does Biodiversity Loss Feel Like?"
Review nineteenth-century paintings TBD.

Optional: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Maud; Or, the Madness*
Herbert Tucker, "Tennyson and the Measure of Doom"*

Tuesday, November 1 | Incalculable Diffusion III

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Finale
Jayne Hildebrand, "*Middlemarch*'s Medium: Description, Sympathy, and Realism's Ambient Worlds"*

Zoom guest lecture by Prof. Jayne Hildebrand (Barnard College)

Tuesday, November 8 | Inhuman Time, Open Systems

Charles Darwin., *On the Origin of Species* pp. 5-100; 230-254; 303-360
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, from *In Memoriam**
John Stuart Mill, from *On Liberty**

Elizabeth Grosz, "Conclusion," from *The Nick of Time (Pls. print and read only the "Conclusion," pp. 244-261**
Gillian Beer, from *Darwin's Plots**

Tuesday, November 15 | The Feeling of Everything Falling Apart II

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
Select articles on insect dieoff
Sarah Ahmed, from *Queer Phenomenology**
Frantz Fanon, from "The Lived Experience of the Black Man"*

Tuesday, November 22 | No class; Thanksgiving recess. Please read ahead and work on multispecies ethnographies

Tuesday, November 29 | Famine and Form: The Great Game [**MULTISPECIES ETHNOGRAPHY DUE**]

Toru Dutt, selected poems, from *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan**
Rudyard Kipling, "In the Rukh"*
Mike Davis, from *Late Victorian Holocausts**
Selected photography from the Great Famine, 1876-1878
Excerpts from "[Representing the Famine](#)," collated by Amardeep Singh*

Meghna Sapui (U Florida), possible Zoom guest lecture on Anglo-Indian Culture & Postcolonial Thought

Tuesday, December 6 | Wreckage, Salvage, Redemption

Gerard Manley Hopkins, selected poems: "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "God's Grandeur," "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame," "The Windhover," "Inversnaid," "Binsey Poplars," "Ribblesdale"
Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"*
JMW Turner, selected paintings and from *The Sketchbooks**
"The Law of Salvage," online articles about maritime law, [here](#) and [here](#)

Week of December 13 | A Short Entry on the Possible

Saidiya Hartman, "Wayward: A Short Entry on the Possible"* (reprise). Class reception & informal research presentations. Is the nineteenth century now?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 12 pm. Final projects due on Canvas.