Literature, Memory, and the Environment
EGL 603.S02 Fall 2014
Professor J. Santa Ana
Office: 1094 Humanities
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30pm – 3:30pm, and by appointment.
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The class meets in 2094 Humanities at 1:00 – 3:50pm on Thursdays.

Course description:
This course focuses on some of the ways in which contemporary literature represents the environmental changes and losses that have already occurred, that are upon us, and those in the future. By reading history and criticism as well as narrative and nonfictional prose, we will examine environmental experience and literary depictions of the environment as features of remembering in the contexts of postcolonialism, diaspora, and globalization. We will address why and how the study of memory in literature and criticism enables us to consider environmental crisis as an injustice of colonial oppression, imperialism, poverty, and social marginalization. We will investigate these concerns in relation to questions at the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race as they apply to discourses in eco-politics, environmental activism, and the collective memory of violence and human casualties that have occurred under colonialism, imperialism, and economic processes of globalization. Some of the questions we will address are: how do literary representations of environmental crisis and catastrophe help us to recover the suppressed bodies of colonial and economic violence? How do these writings “remember” centuries of Western imperialism as a decolonization critique of environmental degradation—of an environmental crisis caused by global climate change that is largely the consequence of Western powers? Recently the eco-critic Rob Nixon has asked us to consider “slow violence,” but how do we critically assess environmental crises that evade historical contexts in imperialism and span beyond readily imagined temporal periods? In what ways can our grief, memory, and memorialization drive visions and enactments of alternative futures? The course will address these and other questions through four thematic units: 1) Theorizing Memory in Literature and Environmental Criticism; 2) Memory and the Natural World in a Postcolonial Context; 3) Memory and the Natural World in a Queer Studies Context; and 4) The Gender (Masculinity) Politics of Remembering and Environmental Apocalypse.

Required primary texts:
*Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko
*Solar Storms*, Linda Hogan
*A Tale for the Time Being*, Ruth Ozeki
*Dream Jungle*, Jessica Hagedorn
*Claire of the Sea Light*, Edwidge Danticat
*O Pioneers!*, Willa Cather
*Cereus Blooms at Night*, Shani Mootoo
*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy
*The Dog Stars*, Peter Heller
Required texts in environmental humanities and memory studies:

- *Theories of Social Remembering*, Barbara Misztal
- *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell
- *Ecocriticism* (The New Critical Idiom), Greg Garrard
- *The Ecological Thought*, Timothy Morton
- *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon

Recommended texts (please note that I will make available in Blackboard copies of chapters from this text):

- *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg

Course website:

I will post the syllabus and reading materials (articles and book chapters) in our course website on Blackboard.

Work requirements:

**Participation and leading class discussion with a posted question in our course website**
We will include in each seminar meeting questions presented by members of the class. On the evening or morning before we begin each seminar, one or two class members will formulate a detailed question about the readings. We will use the questions to initiate and lead discussion. Be sure that your question refers to specific passages in the readings. In your question, you are required to comment on the reading in a way that expresses your analysis of it in relation to the topics in our class. You can pose a question that will lead the seminar to examine closely the language in the reading or compare it to other critical readings in the seminar. Your question can also express what you find most intense, meaningful, or puzzling about the reading. If you like, you can include audiovisual materials (e.g., a video in YouTube or in The Weather Channel, a news item on a website, images available on Google Images or in a blog, etc.) in your posted question. I will screen your question in seminar on the day you are to present it. Each person will take turns formulating and posting a question throughout the semester based on the alphabetical order of last names.

**Oral presentation (at least 20 minutes or as long as you need beyond that), and a written copy (3-4 pages): 35%**
You will give one oral presentation of an argument (thesis) about a primary text in our class. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for you to choose a text or film for the oral presentation.

In your presentation, you must provide a close reading of at least 3-4 passages (block quotes) in your selected text that shows how it both generates your argument and supports it. Also, it’s important that you make central to your argument topics and concepts in memory studies and the environmental humanities (e.g., memory in relation to any issues or topics in environmentalism, such as postcolonial ecologies; representing “slow violence” in literature; ecofeminism; queer ecologies; ethnicity and race in animal studies; narrative structure or theory in environmental literature; modernism/postmodernism and environmentalism; etc.) As part of your analysis, you can provide any background elements that will enhance our understanding of the book (e.g., genre, author’s gender, historical period, biographical information about the author; and where you situate and critique the book in literary theory or critical theory). You will conclude your
presentation with at least one strong question for the class that will allow us to discuss the text in relation to your presentation as well as topics and issues we’ve discussed in previous seminar meetings. You may include supplemental visual materials or audio recordings to enhance your argument and analysis. However, be sure not to let these supplemental materials make you lose focus on analyzing your chosen text.

After your presentation, you will turn in a written (typed and double-spaced) copy of it. The written copy should be a coherent narrative of your presentation. However, when you give your presentation in class do not just read it from your written copy. Instead, please try to give it as a discussion while looking at and talking directly to everyone in the seminar.

You may use your presentation to help formulate either your midterm essay or your final paper.

**Midterm analytical essay (5-6 pages): 25%**
Write a short analytical essay that focuses on one of the primary texts (Ceremony and Solar Storms) from the first half of our course. I’m not assigning specific topics; however, your analysis of the text must include focus on our course topic (memory and environmentalism). You do not need to include secondary critical sources in this essay. However, you may do so, if you like, as long as your reference to secondary materials does not subordinate your close analysis of the primary text. Your paper should follow MLA style (including parenthetical citations in the text, informational notes where necessary, and a Works Cited).

**Final paper (10-12 pages): 40%**
A research and analytical paper on our course topic (memory and environmentalism) that can, if you like, focus on any of the primary texts in the course (including the text in your oral presentation, but not the one in your midterm essay.) I’m not assigning specific topics; however, your analysis of the book must include focus in memory studies and the environmental humanities (see oral presentation). You are to refer to some secondary materials (i.e., articles, essays, book chapters) to support your analysis of the primary text. In other words, you will draw on the secondary readings that we will read in the seminar for part of your paper’s context, and supplement these readings with additional, relevant sources. Your paper should follow MLA style (including parenthetical citations in the text, informational notes where necessary, and a list of Works Cited).

**Tentative class schedule:**
Please be ready to discuss all readings on the days listed below. I may have to change or cut some of these readings, depending on what’s manageable for our seminar. I will inform the seminar of these changes or cuts in advance.

* This reading is available for you to download and print in PDF format in the course website on Blackboard. Look for “Articles and Book Chapters in PDF Format” in Blackboard.

(R) This reading is recommended only.

**PQ:** One or two seminar members will post questions about the readings for discussion.
Week 1:

1. Some Foundations: Theorizing Memory in Literature and Environmental Criticism

Th, 8/28
Introduction to the syllabus and course mechanics:
The Weather Channel, “Proof Change Is Really Happening” and “Global Warming: Here and Harmful” (27 Aug. 2014. Web.)

Discussion of the following handouts:
Barbara Misztal, Introduction to Theories of Social Remembering (1-6)
Rob Nixon, Introduction to Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor (10-16)
Linda Hogan, Prologue to Solar Storms

Week 2:

Th, 9/4
PQ: Barbara Misztal, Theories of Social Remembering: Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 1-74)
Pierre Nora, “Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory” in The Collective Memory Reader (pp. 437-441)*

Lawrence Buell, The Future of Environmental Criticism: Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 1-96)
Timothy Morton, The Ecological Thought: Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-58)
Greg Garrard, Ecocriticism: Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 1-65)
Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor: Introduction (pp. 1-44)
Gina Apostol, “Surrender, Oblivion, Survival” (NYT Op Ed on Typhoon Haiyan’s destruction of Tacloban City, Philippines)*

Week 3:

Th, 9/11
PQ: Misztal, Theories of Social Remembering: Chapter 3
Buell, The Future of Environmental Criticism: Chapter 3
Morton, The Ecological Thought: Chapter 2 (pp. 59-97)
Garrard, Ecocriticism: Chapters 3 and 4

Ceremony (up to p. 130)

Week 4:

Th, 9/18
PQ: Misztal, Theories of Social Remembering: Chapters 4 and 5
Garrard, Ecocriticism: Chapter 6
Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor: Chapter 1 (pp. 45-67)

Ceremony (have finished the book)
Week 5:
Th, 9/25  
PQ: Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*: Chapter 5  
Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*: Chapters 4  
Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*: Introduction (pp. 1-29) (R)*  

_Solar Storms_ (up to p. 255)  

Week 6:  
Th, 10/2  
_Solar Storms_ (have finished the book): **oral presentation**  

_PQ_: Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*: Chapter 6  
Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*: Chapter 5  
Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, “Cosmopolitan Memory” (pp. 23-38) (R)*  

*A Tale for the Time Being_ (up to p. 135)  

Week 7:  
Th, 10/9  
Midterm analytical essay due  

Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*: Chapter 6  

*A Tale for the Time Being_ (up to p. 258)  

Week 8:  
Th, 10/16  
*A Tale for the Time Being_ (have finished the book): **oral presentation**  

2. Memory and the Natural World in a Postcolonial Context  

_PQ_: Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*: Chapter 8  

_Dream Jungle_ (up to p. 113)  

Week 9:  
Th, 10/23  
_Dream Jungle_ (have finished the book): **oral presentation**  

_PQ_: Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, Introduction to *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (pp. 3-35)*  
DeLoughrey, “Heliotropes: Solar Ecologies and Pacific Radiations” in *Postcolonial Ecologies* (pp. 235-251) (R)*  

_Claire of the Sea Light_ (up to p. 119)  

Week 10:  
Th, 10/30  
_Claire of the Sea Light_ (have finished the book): **oral presentation**
3. Memory and the Natural World in a Queer Studies Context

**PQ:** Robert Azzarello, *Queer Environmentality: Ecology, Evolution, and Sexuality in American Literature:* Chapters 1 (pp. 1-28) (*R*) and 2 (pp. 81-100) (*R*)

*O Pioneers!* (up to Part III “Winter Memories”)

**Week 11:**
**Th, 11/6**  
*O Pioneers!* (have finished the book): **oral presentations**

**PQ:**  
Stacy Alaimo, “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals” in *Queer Ecologies* (pp. 51-68) (*R*)  
Timothy Morton, “Guest Column: Queer Ecology” from *PMLA* (*R*)  
Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, Introduction to *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (pp. 1-39) (*R*)  
David Bell, “Queernaturecultures” in *Queer Ecologies* (134-144) (*R*)

*Cereus Blooms at Night* (up to p. 126)

**Week 12:**
**Th, 11/13**  
*Cereus Blooms at Night* (have finished the book): **oral presentation**

4. The Gender (Masculinity) Politics of Remembering and Environmental Apocalypse

**PQ:**  
Garrard, *Ecocriticism:* Chapter 5 (pp. 93-116)  
Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor:* Chapter 4 (pp. 128-149)  
Frederick Buell, Chapter 9 in *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* (pp. 261-295) (*R*)

*The Road* (up to p. 130)

**Week 13:**
**Th, 11/20**  
*The Road* (have finished the book): **oral presentation**

Morton, *The Ecological Thought:* Chapter 3 (pp. 98-135)  
Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor:* Chapter 7 (pp. 128-149)

*The Dog Stars* (up to p. 108)

Rob Nixon and Anne McClintock at Stony Brook to give lecture “Environmental Justice and the Anthropocene” at 4:00pm in Humanities 1008. We will attend this lecture after class.

**Week 14:**
**Th, 11/27**  
Thanksgiving holiday
Week 15:

Th, 12/4  Final paper due

_The Dog Stars_ (have finished the book): **oral presentation**

PQ from everyone: Peter Heller visits our class via Skype