

University of Alberta
 Department of English and Film Studies
ENGL 122-B02 Winter 2015: Texts & Contexts
 (Not to be taken by students with *6 credits in approved junior English)

Time: MWF 9:00 – 9:50
 Office: HC 3-72

Classroom: HC 2-11
 Office Hours: by appointment

Instructor: Dan Harvey
 dharvey@ualberta.ca

Representing Environment/Anthropocene/Catastrophe

No, said the priest, you don't need to accept everything as true, you only have to accept it as necessary.

Kafka, 1915

Dear future generations: Please accept our apologies. We were roaring drunk on petroleum.

Kurt Vonnegut, 2006.

The future will be about old people in big cities who are afraid of the sky...

Bruce Sterling, 2012.

Course Description

This course introduces students to post-secondary studies in English by focusing on a specific literary theme in a cluster of related texts. Students may expect to encounter fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fictional prose, as well as film and other visual media. The course will enable students to explore a particular subject in depth as well as a broad range of materials, and to acquire a rich sense of contexts or intellectual landscapes that give shape to the study of literature and culture. Materials, themes, topics, and genres will vary among instructors. A minimum of 30% of our time will be devoted to writing instruction. This instruction can take many forms, including graded written assignments, informal writing exercises, writing workshops, stylistic analysis, research skills, peer editing, and ungraded but required writing (such as free-writing, ink-shedding, and writing-to-learn). You will be required to write at least two essays that will be marked and formally graded. Throughout the term, you will write a minimum of 3000 words in formal essays.

This course is not designed as an English language class; I will not assign any grammar drills, punctuation tests, spelling bees, or the like. That said, spelling, grammar, and punctuation (and other basic language skills) **do matter**; all modern word processing programs provide a decent spell-checker, and I expect that you will use this function before handing in your assignments. Further, if I notice any particular patterns of error in language use, I may provide mini lectures on appropriate topics, but only as needed. If you have concerns about your English language proficiency, I strongly suggest that you schedule **regular appointments** at the Centre for Writers (which is described further below). All of this is just to say that I am more concerned with your ability to read, reason, argue, and communicate than your ability to define modal verbs, the subjunctive mood, restrictive relative clauses, and the like.

To this end, the **Objectives for this Course** are as follows:

- For you to become more discerning and more articulate thinkers, readers, and writers;
- To expose you to a range of literary and cultural texts, with a focus on environmental literature and apocalyptic works;
- To understand the ways that nature and the environment, climate change, and catastrophe are represented in popular culture;
- To investigate current questions about, and debates around, the relationships between the environment, economics, politics, and culture;
- To develop your close-reading skills through literary and cultural texts;
- To engage with one another in productive dialogue, discussion, and (at times) argument.

Required Texts:

There are four required books for this course:

- Philip K Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968)

- Ursula K Le Guin, *The Word for World is Forest* (1976)
- David Eggers, *Zeitoun* (2009)
- Lester Faigley, Roger Graves, & Heather Graves, *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, 3rd Canadian Ed.

All other texts are out of copyright or otherwise available online, and I will provide links or pdfs on the course eClass site.

We will also be watching several films this semester. Some will be screened in class; you are responsible for watching the others outside of class time. If there's enough interest, I might arrange on-campus screenings for those.

- *Blade runner* (1982), dir. Ridley Scott
- *Avatar* (2009), dir. James Cameron
- *Beasts of the southern wild* (2012), dir. Benh Zeitlin

Assignments:

<u>Term Grade</u>		
Informal writing:		30%
Daily questions		10%
Quizzes		5%
In-class writing		15%
Formal writing:		70%
Response paper	(2 @ 12.5% each)	25%
Journal entries		20%
Final assignment		25%

Note: The **Term Grade** for this course will be calculated as worth 70% of the final Course Grade; the **Final Examination** will be calculated as 30% of the final Course Grade.

<u>Course Grade</u>		
Term Grade (100% x 0.70):		70%
Final Exam (100% x 0.30):		30%

*****The date for the final exam is not yet available. You are responsible for confirming the date, time, and place of the final exam via BearTracks.*****

Assignment descriptions:

In-class writing: Throughout the semester we will often engage in in-class exercises, individually and in small groups. I will take the written work at the end of the class, and grade you on a complete/incomplete basis; that is, as long as you thoughtfully respond to the writing prompt, you will receive 100%. These writing exercises must be completed in-class and cannot be made up. Cumulatively, this will account for **15% of your course grade.**

Daily questions: For every class you are required to post to eClass one question pertaining to the day's reading. As we will use these questions to generate discussion, they should clearly indicate that you have done the reading, and they should be questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. Please put some thought into these, and be sure to read all the questions posted on the discussion board before you come to class. Questions must be posted **prior to 5pm the day before** each class. Though I won't grade the questions individually, the quality of your daily questions will be evaluated at semester's end for **10% of your course grade.**

Quizzes: Over the course of the term I will give quizzes based on assigned readings, films and class lectures/discussions. Quizzes are a way for me to check that you are reading and understanding the material; they will usually occur during the first ten minutes of class and cannot be made up. We will review them in-class, and they will count for **5% of your course grade.**

Response papers: You will write 2 response papers: the first is due no later than January 30th, and the second by February 27th. Please see the handout posted to eClass for a longer description of what I expect, and for examples from previous classes. (Note that the sample papers do not address material in this class: you should use them as formal models rather than focusing on their content). Each response will be worth 12.5% for a total of **25% of your course grade.** Length: **400-750 words (3 pages maximum).**

Writing journal: The writing journal assignment provides an informal setting in which you will articulate and begin to develop your own responses to the texts. Keeping the journal serves several purposes: it provides a means of recording key insights and reactions that you may wish to contribute to class discussion; it helps you probe your ideas about the text and may lead to your identifying topics on which you would like to write your other assignments; and it provides an additional incentive for you to stay caught up with the required reading and to read thoughtfully. You must write **8 journal entries** over the semester. You may write about any material covered up to time of writing; while you can write on the same text more than once, I expect you to address different aspects rather than duplicating previous work. Finally, I may occasionally assign a topic or theme for the next week's entry. Each should be between **300 and 400 words in length (one or two paragraphs)**; the **cumulative** journal will count for **20% of your course grade.** I will take in your entries at the end of each month.

Final assignment: For your final assignment you may choose from 3 options: 1) an Analytic review essay; 2) a Keywords essay; or 3) your own idea. If you choose the third option, you must meet with me to discuss the assignment a minimum of 4 weeks before the due date: failure to meet with me will result in a grade of F, regardless of the quality of the final product. For the first and second options, please see eClass for a longer description of what I expect. The final assignments should be between **900 and 1500 words (5 pages maximum)**, or equivalent, and are worth **25% of your course grade.**

Course policies:

Office hours

My office is in room 3-72 of Humanities Centre; I will be providing office hours on request. Please email me (dharvey@gmail.com) to arrange meeting times.

Grading

As per departmental requirements, your term performance will be evaluated according to the University's letter grade system, which can be found in [§23.4](#) of the Calendar.

Deadlines and assignment submission

I expect that you will hand in all work by the required date and time, and I ask that you submit all assignments **in hardcopy**. Extensions will only be given for valid reasons (illness, family emergencies, and so on), and **I ask that you inform me at least one week before the due date** if you require an extension. Late assignments will otherwise be penalized 3% for each day of lateness, including weekends. To stop the clock, you may email me a digital copy of your completed assignment, provided you give me a hardcopy on the next business day. **The administrative staff at the English and Film Studies main office will not time stamp, accept or put assignments in my mailbox.**

You can find the University's official policy on class attendance and missed assignments in [§23.3](#) of the Calendar.

Attendance and participation

Your participation in class is a required element of the course. It is your responsibility to attend all classes, and if you miss a class, to ask your classmates or instructor about missed material. Please don't do this during scheduled class time.

Texts

I would prefer that you bring a **physical copy** of all required texts to class, as this allows you to take notes, highlight, underline, and otherwise mark-up your text in ways that should prove useful for both your term essay and the final examination.

Technology

If you need to use a laptop, tablet, or other device in class, you must contact me for permission. A number of recent studies have suggested that, 1) the use of a laptop etc. in class negatively impacts not only the student using it but also other students in the class; and 2), that students who take notes digitally demonstrate reduced comprehension and retention than their colleagues who take notes by hand.¹

That said, if you do require a device, please refrain from checking email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and any other non-course related websites, apps, and programs. This is not only distracting for you, but for everyone who can see your monitor, and for me when I notice your lack of attention.

In general, cell phones should be turned off; texting, ringing, chiming, and vibrating phones are extremely disruptive to the class, and more than a little disrespectful to your fellow students (and to me!). That said, I understand that unusual circumstances can arise: if you need to keep your phone on for some valid and pressing reason (family emergencies, need to be available for childcare calls, and the like), **please let me know before or at the start of class**. If for some reason you **must** answer a call, please be courteous and leave the classroom before answering. In short, please be respectful of the class's time and attention. If your use of technology becomes disruptive, and you continue the disruptive behavior after I have asked you to stop, I will require you to leave the class.

Plagiarism

All students should consult the "Truth-In-Education" handbook or Website (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>) regarding the definitions of plagiarism and its consequences when detected. You should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, excessive editorial and creative help in assignments is considered a form of cheating that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences. An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to

¹ For good discussions of this, see Rockmore, "The case for banning laptops in the classroom," *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2014; Mueller & Oppenheimer, "The pen is mightier than the keyboard," *Psychological Science*, April 23, 2014, DOI: 10.1177/0956797614524581; Curzan, "Why I'm asking you not to use laptops," *Lingua Franca*, August 25, 2014.

the Associate Dean of the Faculty. Before unpleasantness occurs consult <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE>; you may also discuss this matter with your instructor.

In my experience, the most common cause of plagiarism is procrastination: students leave their essays and assignments to the last minute and, panicked, steal other's work in an effort to hand something in on time. If you leave yourself enough time to complete your assignments, this shouldn't happen. If for some reason you find yourself panicked and contemplating plagiarism, I would much rather that you contact me than try to get away with cheating. While I won't be happy, I will work with you to come up with an option other than plagiarism.

Email

If you email me, please include a subject heading beginning with the text "ENGL 122 B02." I tend to miss or ignore emails without a subject heading, so please use one. In general I will respond immediately, but reserve up to 24 hours to reply. If you send me an email Friday evening, during the weekend, or over a long weekend or holiday, I might not respond before the next business day. I may not respond to emails sent after 5:00 pm until the following day, and I **will not** answer questions about assignments within 24 hours of the due date. Finally, if your email addresses something that will benefit the class as a whole, as long as time permits I may respond in the next class rather than via email.

Term work reassessment

Should you have any grievances concerning term work grades, you must discuss your concerns with the instructor. No official, in either the Department of English and Film Studies or the Faculty of Arts, will talk to a student about a grading disagreement unless the student first talks to the instructor. If the problem is not resolved after a meeting with the instructor, students are encouraged to talk with the Department's First Year Chair.

Thank you for actually reading the syllabus! Please email me, by the 11th, the title of the last text (novel, short story, comic, poem, magazine, etc) that you read for enjoyment, and a brief paragraph describing what you liked about it: this will count as a 2% bonus grade. If a resolution is not reached with the First Year Chair, students may make an appointment with the Department Chair (if their instructor is on permanent staff) or with the Department's Associate Chair, Instruction (if their instructor is a Principal Instructor or Contract Instructor).

Please note, however, that the Department of English and Film Studies does not allow reconsideration of term work after a student writes the Final Examination.

Final examination appeals

Any request for reappraisal of the Final Examination must be made in writing to the Office of the Registrar, not to the Department of English and Film Studies.

Note: Students should consult the provided "Regulations Pertaining to First-Year Courses" for further information about appeals, reassessments, plagiarism, and external help with assignments

GFC-Mandated Statements:

"Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar."
(GFC 29 SEP 2003)

"The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University."
(GFC 29 SEP 2003)

"Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor."
(GFC 29 SEP 2003)

Week	Readings and Assignments	Due dates
1	Introduction to course Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> (excerpts) Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> (excerpts)	
2	Cronon, "A place for stories" Zizek, "The end of nature" & <i>Examined Life</i> (excerpt)	
3	Cronon, "The trouble with wilderness" Soper, "The discourses of nature"	
4	Le Guin, <i>The word for world is forest</i>	Response paper 1
5	Le Guin, <i>The word for world is forest</i> Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, "The Anthropocene" Chakrabarty, "The climate of history"	
6	Dick, <i>Do androids dream...?</i>	
7	No classes	
8	Dick, <i>Do androids dream...?</i> Freud, "Mourning and melancholia" Turner, "The age of breathing underwater"	Response paper 2
9	Spahr, "Gentle now, don't add to heartache" Bacigalupi, "The people of sand and slag" Ballard, "Deep end"	
10	Marshall, Jacobs, & Shaw, "Losing ground" Film: <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i>	
11	Nixon, <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i> (excerpt) Solnit, "Call climate change what it is: Violence"	
12	Eggers, <i>Zeitoun</i>	
13	Eggers, <i>Zeitoun</i> Hine & Kingsnorth, <i>Uncivilization manifesto</i>	Final assignment
14	St. Germain, "Midnight oil" Clover & Spahr, "#Misanthropocene" Tanumihardja, "Cit..Cit..Door...Krekek..." Spill-over and course review Exam prep	