

Fall 2018
ENGLISH 4765/5765: MATERIAL CULTURES
Thematic Title: Environmental Protection
T/Th 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM
Cudahy Hall 108

Professor Gerry Canavan
Marquette Hall 244
gerry.canavan@marquette.edu
Office Phone: 414-288-6860
Office Hours: T/Th 8:45 AM – 9:15 AM
Th 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM
or by appointment

Recently, “sustainability” has become a powerful concept in both academic discourse and popular debate; however, since the time of Heraclitus in Ancient Greece philosophers have recognized that change is inevitable and that there is always tension between what we should preserve and what is disposable. This course will use interdisciplinary scholarship to probe the central question underlying all environmental protection: what should we value enough to pass on to future generations? It will ask students to confront this dilemma by interrogating what precisely makes a natural resource sufficiently valuable to cherish and keep. In our time, the concept of “value” is dominated by economic language, but this view is crucially incomplete: what gives objects value is *not* their exchangeability but the fact that humans care about them and are willing to preserve and maintain them. A park is just open land, after all, until someone declares it worthy of protection. Establishing and asserting these sorts of *non-economic* values has long been a defining characteristic of study in the humanities, which have always appreciated how shared heritage links us to the past, creates meaning and relevance in the present, and allows us to shape our collective future. In that spirit we will examine a wide variety of political, philosophical, and aesthetic questions around sustainability, and environmental protection, and develop a framework for engaging pressing contemporary debates about the preservation of our shared natural heritage.

LEARNING GOALS

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical, and political contexts in which various projects of environmental protection (both real and imagined) have been undertaken;
- Apply techniques of critical analysis as appropriate to diverse cultural archives and documents;
- Participate and intervene in contemporary public debates over environmentalism and environmental protection;
- Use literary and cultural study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;
- Read and discuss a variety of literary and nonliterary texts on the levels of both form and content.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the BookMarq on 16th Street)

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Always Coming Home*

Richard McGuire, *Here*

Naomi Oreskes and Eric M. Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*

Jeff Vandermeer, *Annihilation*

A previous version of this syllabus included Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as a required text; this book is no longer required.

ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance, Participation, Possible Quizzes	20%
Discussion Inauguration Day	10%
D2L Forum Posts	20%
Papers	50%

Students in this class can choose between doing three smaller papers (4-6 pages) or one larger seminar paper (12-18 pages). A detailed description of the two writing assignment options is available on the last page of this syllabus.

Grad students will have slightly different expectations; we can discuss this one-on-one.

GRADING

Grades will follow the following rubric:

- * To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.
- * To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.
- * To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.
- * A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.
- * **A-, B+, B-, C+ (and so on) grades** fall in the gaps between the above categories.

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Your D2L posts and discussion inauguration will be graded on an extra-credit / pass / low-pass / fail basis:

- Fulfilling all the requirements of the assignment will earn you full credit;
- Failing to do so will earn you half-credit (at best) or no credit (at worst);
- Going beyond the terms of the assignment in an especially ambitious or creative way can earn you extra credit.

QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a very reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Your final paper should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your name* in it, for example, yourlastname-finalpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even forum comments. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments.

Please give your final paper an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page.

All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.

PAPER SUBMISSION

The final paper should be submitted via D2L Dropbox by 10 AM on Wednesday, December 12. **Because this is a final exam, late final papers cannot be accepted.**

Your other written work will be submitted via D2L Dropbox or via the D2L forums. These papers will have variable due dates driven by your own interests and responses, as well as whether you have chosen to write three smaller papers or one larger paper. **It is thus your responsibility to make sure you are properly keeping up with this portion of the course in a timely fashion.**

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take

into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Consequently, attendance in this class is mandatory. You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>.

You are allowed **three unexcused absences** over the course of the fall semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by half a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence.** Upon the seventh unexcused absence, you may receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

Merely being present in class is insufficient for an “A” in class participation. Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

DISCUSSION INAUGURATOR

Beginning with Week 3, each member of the class will have one day in which they are expected to inaugurate our discussion based on the readings for that day. The requirements for this are necessarily very loose, as each day of the course will have a very different type of text to be discussed; in general, however, the discussion inaugurator will be asked to (1) succinctly describe the project of this part of the text; (2) articulate a brief critical response to the material; and (3) direct our collective attention to one or two problems in, questions about, or particularly important moments in the text. I expect this introductory role to take approximately five minutes.

A signup sheet for this role will be distributed in class next week.

D2L DISCUSSION FORUMS

This course will make extensive use of the forums on D2L, where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over.

The forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading it before every meeting of the course and I ask you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates.

Before class on Thursday, September 6, every student is required to upload a picture of their face to their D2L profile and respond to at least one of the texts we have discussed thus far.

After that, students must write **four short comments (approximately 250-400 words that move beyond plot summary)** responding to any of the texts across the remainder of the course. This is approximately one post every third week. Post your comment in the open thread for that day of class. These comments should ideally be completed either by 9 AM before one of the class discussions devoted to that text or by 9 AM the night before the following class. Roughly half of the posts should be completed before Fall Break.

I encourage you to think of your blog comments as possible “seeds” for your papers; feel free to begin to develop your thoughts there.

You are also highly encouraged to kill two birds with one stone by posting a forum comment on the day you are scheduled to be the discussion inaugurator.

Up to two additional posts beyond the required four will count towards extra credit on your final grade. Additional posts beyond that number, and posts that respond substantively to other students’ arguments, will be looked upon very favorably when I calculate your final grade

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once a day, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night before they are due and expect an immediate reply.

LAPTOP POLICY

In-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. is permitted for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. **Please do not abuse this privilege or distract your fellow students.** I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. Except in unusual cases of personal emergency, cleared with me at the start of class, no use of cell phones will be permitted during class time; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

CONFERENCES

All students are asked to meet with me in a short one-on-one conference at my office at least once during the semester to discuss the course and your work within it. Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss work-in-progress in excess of this requirement, as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly office hours, or see or email me to set up an appointment.

OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Class will be cancelled on Thursday, October 4, so the class can tour behind the scenes at the Milwaukee County Zoo. I understand making this trip may not be possible for everyone, but I will do my best to find a time at which as many people as possible can go.

On the last day of class we will discuss the 2018 film adaptation of Jeff Vandermeer's *Annihilation*. I will offer a screening of the film one evening on-campus, at a time to be determined; students who cannot attend this screening should watch the movie on their own.

FLEXIBILITY

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

WRITING CENTER

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center, located in Raynor Library Room 240, at any stage of the writing process. Please visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.marquette.edu/english/writingcenter/> to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio's online resources.

ACCOMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met.

I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting Marquette University's Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building).

ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at ods@marquette.edu.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue.

Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*

- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette’s academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

RESPECT

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here.

Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** negatively impact your class participation grade.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!

I want this class to be a meaningful and valuable experience for you, both in its own terms and in service of the development of your larger college experience. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or concerns about the way things are going, my door is always open.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.
Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

T	Aug 28	FIRST DAY OF CLASS Charles Stross, “Designing Society for Posterity” (Web)
Th	Aug 30	Naomi Oreskes and Eric M. Conway, <i>The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future</i> (Chapters 1-3, plus epilogue)
T	Sep 4	Johan Rockstrom et. al, “Planetary Boundaries” [D2L] John Bellamy Foster, “Ecology against Capitalism” [D2L] Naomi Klein, “Climate Rage” [Web]
Th	Sep 6	Nathaniel Rich, “Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change” [Web] Responses to Rich from Robinson Meyer, Naomi Klein, Alyssa Battistoni, and Matto Mildemberger and Leah C. Stokes [Web]
T	Sep 11	Ernest Callenbach, <i>Ecotopia</i> (first half)

Th	Sep 13	Ernest Callenbach, <i>Ecotopia</i> (second half)
T	Sep 18	S.B. Banerjee, “Necrocapitalism” [D2L] Arundhati Roy, “The Greater Common Good” [Web] Vandana Shiva, “Earth Democracy” [Web]
Th	Sep 20	Clare Kendall, “A New Law of Nature” [Web] Mihnea Tanasescu, “When a River Is A Person” [Web] Manuela Picq, “Can the Law Prevail Over Chinese investments in Ecuador?” [Web]
T	Sep 25	<i>case study: Mars</i> Kim Stanley Robinson, <i>Red Mars</i> 2-3, 94-96, 133-158, 168-179 [D2L] Chris McKay, “Does Mars Have Rights?” [D2L]
Th	Sep 27	Daniel Quinn, <i>Ishmael</i> (first half)
T	Oct 2	Daniel Quinn, <i>Ishmael</i> (second half) Lisa Wells, “The Blaze” [Web] FIRST PAPER MINI-WORKSHOP
Th	Oct 4	<i>CLASS CANCELLED FOR MILWAUKEE COUNTY ZOO TOUR</i>
T	Oct 9	Kathy Rudy, “Where the Wild Things Ought to Be” [D2L] Kim Stanley Robinson, “Empty Half the Earth of Its Humans. It's the Only Way to Save the Planet” [Web] FIRST PAPER DUE
Th	Oct 11	<i>FALL BREAK—NO CLASS</i>
T	Oct 16	Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History” [D2L] McKenzie Wark, “Critical Theory after the Anthropocene” [Web] <i>film</i> (in class): Ramin Bahrani, “Plastic Bag”
Th	Oct 18	Daniel Hartley, “Against the Anthropocene” [Web] Margaret Atwood, “Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet” [Web] Ted Chiang, “The Great Silence” [Web]
T	Oct 23	Richard McGuire, <i>Here</i>
Th	Oct 25	Richard McGuire, <i>Here</i> SECOND PAPER MINI-WORKSHOP
T	Oct 30	Graeme Wood, “Re-Engineering the Earth” [Web] Eduardo Porter, “To Curb Global Warming, Science Fiction May Become Fact” [Web] Adam McGibbom, “There Is No Quick Fix for Climate Change” [Web] Phil Torres, “Engineering the atmosphere: Is it possible? And would it prevent catastrophe, or cause it?” [Web] Alexander C. Kaufman, “The King of Climate Fiction Makes the Left’s Case for Geoengineering” [Web] Peter Frase, “Geoengineering for the People” [Web]

Th	Nov 1	<i>case study: refreezing the Arctic</i> Robin McKee, “Could a £400bn plan to refreeze the Arctic before the ice melts really work?” [Web] SECOND PAPER DUE
T	Nov 6	Kim Stanley Robinson, introduction to <i>Future Primitive</i> [D2L] Ernest Callenbach, “Chocco” [D2L] 99% Invisible, “Ten Thousand Years” [Web] Sarah Zhang, “The Cat Went Over Radioactive Mountain” [Web] Alan Bellows, “This Place Is Not a Place of Honor” [Web] WIPP Exhibit, “Message to 12,000 A.D.” [Web]
Th	Nov 8	Ursula K. Le Guin, <i>Always Coming Home</i>
T	Nov 13	Ursula K. Le Guin, <i>Always Coming Home</i>
Th	Nov 15	Ursula K. Le Guin, <i>Always Coming Home</i>
T	Nov 20	Ursula K. Le Guin, <i>Always Coming Home</i>
Th	Nov 22	THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS
T	Nov 27	Jeff Vandermeer, <i>Annihilation</i>
Th	Nov 29	Jeff Vandermeer, <i>Annihilation</i> FINAL PAPERS/PROJECTS MINI-WORKSHOP
T	Dec 4	Jeff Vandermeer, <i>Annihilation</i> <i>film</i> (out of class): <i>Annihilation</i> LAST DAY OF CLASS
Th	Dec 6	CLASS CANCELLED DUE TO INSTRUCTOR TRAVEL
W	Dec 12	FINAL PAPERS/PROJECTS DUE BY 10 AM VIA D2L DROPBOX

FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH!

On Facebook (page): www.facebook.com/marquettefame

On Facebook (group): www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194

(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

On Twitter: @MarquetteFAME

I will also be inviting you to events in the pop culture and pizza series I run periodically during the fall and spring semesters. I hope you can attend!

ENGLISH 4610 ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST (THREE PAPERS)

Discussion Leader Date / Topic _____

D2L Posts

- Mandatory Post #1
- Free Post 1
- Free Post 2
- Free Post 3
- Free Post 4
- Extra Credit Posts

These public discussion forum posts are intended to articulate some concrete, critical response to some element of the work under discussion on a given day of the course. They should be approximately 250-400 words long, and may overlap with your discussion inauguration presentation and/or your final project. Additional posts will count towards extra credit.

First Paper (4-6 pages; workshop Oct. 2, due Oct. 9; 15% of final grade)

suggested topics: ecological futurity; ecological crisis; utopia and ecotopia; apocalypse; activism

Second Paper (4-6 pages; workshop Oct. 25, due Nov. 1; 15% of final grade)

suggested topics: enclaves; animals; geo-engineering; the Anthropocene; grief and despair

Final Paper (4-6 pages; workshop Nov. 29, due Dec. 12 by 10 AM; 20% of final grade)

suggested topics: posthumanity; post-America; weird ecology; science fiction and ecology; hope

I cannot stress enough how open I am to your personal interests and approaches; I am genuinely open to any topic, any method, and any form that seems urgent and interesting to you (provided of course that it is the intellectual-labor equivalent of a 4-6-page scholarly paper, more or less). I sincerely want these papers to be something you are excited about and enjoy writing, *not* an unpleasant chore. I can't wait to read them.

ENGLISH 4610 ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST (ONE PAPER)

Discussion Leader Date / Topic _____

D2L Posts

- Mandatory Post #1
- Free Post 1
- Free Post 2
- Free Post 3
- Free Post 4
- Extra Credit Posts

These public discussion forum posts are intended to articulate some concrete, critical response to some element of the work under discussion on a given day of the course. They should be approximately 250-400 words long, and may overlap with your discussion inauguration presentation and/or your final project. Additional posts will count towards extra credit.

Final Project “Pitch” (due in-class on Oct. 2; ungraded)

For the Oct. 2 workshop all I ask is that you have a basic idea for what you think you might want to write your seminar paper on.

Final Project Prospectus (due in-class on Oct. 25; 10% of final grade)

The prospectus is a formal, half-page anticipation of the major thrust of your final project as you anticipate it taking shape. Generally speaking, it should lay out the aspect of environmental protection that you plan to discuss, and articulate a *central claim* which clearly and succinctly describes your planned intervention into the ecological humanities. It should also provide five-to-ten primary or secondary sources you expect to draw on for your project.

Creative or curational projects still need to be “pitched” and still need to provide a prospectus.

Final Project (due to D2L Dropbox by Dec. 12 by 10 AM; 40% of final grade)

I cannot stress enough how open I am to your personal interests and approaches; I am genuinely open to any topic, any method, and any form that seems urgent and interesting to you (provided of course that it is the intellectual-labor equivalent of a 12-to-18-page scholarly paper, more or less). I sincerely want this paper to be something you are excited about and enjoy writing, *not* an unpleasant chore. I can’t wait to read them.

ENTRANCE SURVEY

NAME

YEAR

MAJOR

HOMETOWN

FAVORITE NATURAL PLACE

What drew you to this course?

Do you have any graduate school or career aspirations dealing with environmental science, environmental politics, and/or the ecological humanities that you'd be interested in discussing with me? Thinking creatively: how might modified versions of the paper assignments help you achieve these goals?

Are there any particular topics or incidents of environmental protection you're hoping we might tackle, outside the categories I've already laid out?

Having had a half hour or so to think over the big research project in the course, do any particular texts, topics, or archives spring to mind that you think you might be interested in writing about?

When is your next class after this one on Thursday?

What is your schedule like on Fridays?

What is the largest continuous block of time you have, 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday?