HUM 002A: Global Environments
Summer Session, UC Davis
Instructor: Ted Geier

What makes the cornfield smile; beneath what star
Maecenas, it is meet to turn the sod
Or marry elm with vine; how tend the steer;
What pains for cattle-keeping, or what proof
Of patient trial serves for thrifty bees-
Such are my themes.

-Virgil, Georgic I (29 BCE)

This course is an introduction to human cultural expression and thought addressing the environment. We will engage diverse works including music, philosophy, art, film, literature, technology, and recent media forms such as television and the internet. Students will encounter landmark environmental works from ancient through contemporary periods and will also track intersections of important social justice, postcolonial, and critical responses to hegemonic environmental studies approaches in the humanities. This will include some thinking about the very idea of the environment and of ecology, which will be investigated in comparative relation to the history of human thought and artistic expression of the human place and role in their relationships with nonhumans around the world.

Through these studies, we will encounter nonhumans like mountains and animals as well as contemporary cultural expressions of ecological disaster. The course introduces students to key human values and the ideas expressed about these issues, enabling students to themselves identify and critically engage the forms of expression we call Environmental Humanities in the pivotal human context of global environmental experience. We will proceed at times chronologically and at other times by focusing on a specific humanistic discipline in multiple historical contexts. Students will learn basic formal and thematic terms from these discrete disciplines, such as narrative, perspective, dissonance, reverence, dualism, and more.

NB: This is not a class on environmentalism. Environmentalism is an important genre of environmental thought, and we will consider ethical and political responses to ecology, to be sure, but we will be building a much longer and more diverse sense of human environmental expression while thinking about the shared world and its multiple lives.

Assignments
1. Weekly short writing assignments (200-300 words) to be posted on our class website and commented on by other students. Further details will be distributed in class.
2. Each student will comment on at least two other posts per week.
3. Two 500+ word critical responses to two different works from class. Students may choose which work they will respond to and the week they will submit these responses, but each response must engage a different formal medium (i.e., one on film, the other on art, etc.). Further details to be available in course resources on the website.
4. Students will produce a collaborative final project in which they organize their own working groups and compose analyses of several works form different media according to the divisions of labor and intellectual objectives of the project. Students are encouraged to develop this project, which will have an 8-10 page narrative component, with an eye toward public humanities online communications formats (link archives, for example). Projects will be shared on the course’s shared website. I will give examples of project outlines early in the term, but these might be projects that might fit in museum or educational settings or that present a historical overview of how humans dealt with specific events or conditions in the world through cultural expression.

5. Several smaller in-class collaborative projects throughout the term will help students develop their abilities discussing and writing about Environmental Humanities topics, communicating to a diverse audience, and working in realistic social and professional settings, producing a set of general skills and aptitudes students can use in future work in any major discipline or future professional role. These will be part of class attendance and participation expectations.

**Grading Breakdown**
1. Attendance & Participation (20%)
2. Weekly writing/comments (20%)
3. Critical Responses (20%)
4. Final Collaborative Projects (40%)

**Required Materials**
The majority of class readings will be available via course SmartSite, under Resources. Films will be made available for viewing via library reserves, but all are available online through various methods if you have, for example, a Netflix account or Hulu+. I will also provide links to a number of artworks and other key items that are available in the public domain (good reminders for the class of the ubiquitous Media Ecology we all shape and are affected by).

Students will be required to purchase one book:

**Week 1: Environmental Humanities Introduction**
What are the Humanities? What is Environmental? How do I know?
What is ecological coexistence and why should I care?
Reading: *Genesis* selections, flood narratives, and The Hymn to Inanna
Leopold, “The Land Ethic”
Carson, *Silent Spring* (selections)

**Week 2: Art and Environment**
Reading: Kant, “Of the Distinct Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime”
Carroll, “On Being Moved by Nature”
Viewing: Burtynsky, *Manufactured Landscapes* (film)
Works of Solari Douglas Camp (Nigerian - online)
Hudson River School (American landscape art - online)

Resources: http://greenmuseum.org

Week 3: Religion and Environment
Primarily through non-Western foundational religious and spiritual texts, we will consider human religious ideas of the natural world and its inhabitants.
Reading: Selections from the Gita, Dao De Ching, and the Quran
Review of Genesis
White, “The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”
Resources: http://www.nrpe.org
(National Religious Partnership for Environment)
http://fore.research.yale.edu
(Forum on Religion and Environment, Yale U)

Week 4: Environmental World Literature
Addressing the problem of economic, racial, religious, and other chauvinisms in environmental thought and literature through comparative world literary study.
Anzaldúa, La Frontera (selections)
Smith, African American Environmental Thought (selections)
Grace, Potiki (novel – we will start this book earlier in the course)

Week 5: ecoTunes and World Music: The Music of Nature
Is there environmental music? How does music making affect the environment?
UN Music & Environment Initiative; World music and global justice; Woodstock
Reading: “Music Festivals Are Environmental Disasters” (Village Voice)
“The environmental impact of streaming music” (Wired)
Listening: Traubeck’s tree rings; Aeolian harps
Resources: http://www.musemusic.org

Week 6: Ecotheories and Post-Environmentalism?
Introductions to several key philosophical approaches to environment
Reading: Gruen and Gaard, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health”
Bookchin, “What is Social Ecology?”
Morton, Hyperobjects (selections)
Viewing: Haynes, Safe