



COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Literature and the Anthropocene Literatūra ir Antropocenas	

Lecturer(s)	Department(s) where the course unit (module) is delivered
Coordinator: Dr. Rūta Šlapkauskaitė	English Philology Faculty of Philology

Study cycle	Type of the course unit (module)
MA	

Mode of delivery	Period when the course unit (module) is delivered	Language(s) of instruction
Seminars		English

Requirements for students	
Prerequisites: A very good command of English	Additional requirements (if any): The students should be competent in modern critical theory and the English literary tradition.

Course (module) volume in credits	Total student's workload	Contact hours	Self-study hours
10	300	48	252

Purpose of the course unit (module): programme competences to be developed		
<p>This reading-intensive course is organised around the nature/culture dialectic in literary discourse as explored through the intellectual encounters between material ecocriticism and literary history. Taking its premise from the lived experience of the current environmental emergency, on the one hand, and the intellectual urgency to reflect upon it, on the other, the course aims to call the students' attention to the complexity of literary representations of nature and the material and affective bonds, which enmesh humans and nonhumans in a shared world of material-semiotic relations. To that effect, though grounded primarily in literary studies, this course asks its students to think as global citizens – across national and disciplinary boundaries – so as to open up new ways of interpreting both the current ecological crisis and its discourses, whether poetic or political.</p> <p>The students should develop the following generic competences (as per the aims of the English Studies programme):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ability to find, analyse, synthesise and evaluate data needed for studies, professional, cultural, and creative activities; integrate knowledge, apply the acquired knowledge in practice, recognise problems and propose possible solutions; 2. ability to generate ideas and knowledge, independently find appropriate forms of expressing them, seek new knowledge and skills and apply them in solving tasks in a new environment and in the implementation of innovations. 3. ability to identify differences between one's own and others' cultural identities and attitudes, explore others' ideas despite cultural differences, express one's ideas in ways that are understandable and acceptable to different people; 4. ability to understand and value the common public interest, work in a team to achieve a common goal, cooperate with people of various cultures, take responsibility for the quality of one's own and the team's activities and its improvement. 5. ability to set realistic goals, identify all the steps and effective strategies needed to fulfil such goals within the time available; meet deadlines, make necessary decisions, and flexibly adapt to the circumstances; 6. ability to take initiative and carry out one's activities, rationally assess the strengths and weaknesses of one's work, reflect and be responsible for one's decisions and actions, be aware of the impact of one's activities and their outcomes on society and the environment. 		
Learning outcomes of the course unit (module)	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Subject-specific competences (as per the aims of the English Studies programme): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ability to comprehend literary and cultural studies as independent yet interconnected disciplines and define their objects of inquiry; become acquainted with 	The course follows the logic of a seminar. The methodological approaches are problem-oriented; historical-cultural; analytical;	Formative assessment Cumulative grade The final grade will consist of three written midterm assignments (30% + 40% + 30%).

<p>literary and cultural theories, their historical development and the socio-cultural factors involved in that process; be able to define and use appropriate terminology within the fields of literary and cultural studies;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. comprehension of the intricacies of the anglophone literary canon and British culture as highly complex phenomena; be able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the development of anglophone literature and the factors involved in that process; will be able to discuss comprehensively the processes and problems of contemporary literature; 3. ability to analyse and evaluate anglophone literary and cultural texts of various genres in relation to their historical, social, and other contexts; 4. ability to independently formulate a relevant research question in linguistics, literature, culture or interdisciplinary studies and design a research study; ability to critically evaluate the application of research methods and approaches and selection of the theoretical framework(s), methodology and empirical material; 5. ability to conduct a research study by adopting innovative methods of data collection and processing, interpret findings of the study, draw conclusions and evaluate the results of the research within the context of other studies; 6. ability to present the results of research in writing and orally to a variety of audiences and demonstrate the ability to provide logical arguments in discussions. 		
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Content: breakdown of the topics	Contact hours							Self-study work: time and assignments	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Exercises	Laboratory work	Internship/work placement	Contact hours	Self-study hours	Assignments
<p><i>Anthropocene</i> and its Others: climate change, global warming, environmental emergency. Scale and agency: the dialectic of <i>global/planetary</i>, <i>history/deep time</i>, <i>natural contract/social contract</i>. <i>Anthropocene</i> as a 1) boundary category, 2) signifying system, 3) historical subjectivity, 4) ethos, and 5) hermeneutic frame. Dipesh Chakrabarty's four theses. Species extinction as an object of imagination. Jennifer Wenzel's "reading for the planet": 1) the literary as an environmental praxis; 2) the planet as an interpretive rubric. "Quarantines of the imagination" and "the gentrification of the imagination".</p>			8				8		<p>Carolyn Merchant, <i>The Anthropocene and the Humanities</i> (p. 1-25);</p> <p>Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses" (p. 197-222)</p> <p>Jennifer Wenzel, "Reading for the Planet" (1-46);</p> <p>Ursula Heise, <i>Imagining Extinction</i> (p. 1-18)</p> <p>Greg Garrard et al., <i>Climate Change Scepticism</i> (p. 1-40)</p> <p>Reading task: a literary sample.</p>
<p><i>Anthropocene</i> and the social formation. <i>Slow violence</i>. Fossil capitalism, (post)industrial modernity, and the economy of extraction. <i>Anthropocene</i> as a scene of material inscription: colonialism, geology, and race.</p>			4				4		<p>Rob Nixon, <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i> (p. 45-63)</p> <p>Kathryn Yusoff, <i>A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None</i> (p. 1-22)</p>

									Reading task: N.K. Jemisin, "Emergency Skin" (p. 1-33)
Ecology and the sublime. Wetlands. William Cronon's critique of the wilderness discourse.			6					6	William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (p. 1-24) Reading task: literary samples.
Students' research.			4					4	Glenn, A. Albrecht, "Solastalgia" (p. 27-61) Richard Powers, <i>Bewilderment</i> .
The material turn in critical theory. Material ecocriticism and the phenomenology of matter. Distributive agency vs. human intentionality. Critique of dichotomous ontology and anthropocentrism. Body-discourse enmeshments. Human-nonhuman interlockings. Matter <i>as</i> text and matter <i>in</i> text. The dynamics of transcorporeality: social constructions, scientific practices, ethical attitudes. "Narrative scholarship" and "diffractive reading". Interpretation as a practice of entanglement. Christine Marran's critique of cultural humanism. Ecological imaginaries and the enclosures of cultural identity. Social and environmental precarity. The concept of the <i>biotrope</i> . Ethnic environmentalism. Robert Kroetsch's petropoetics.			4					4	Serpil Oppermann, "Stories Come to Matter", from <i>Material Ecocriticism</i> (p. 1-16) Christine L. Marran, "Introduction" from <i>Ecology Without Culture</i> (p. 1-25) Reading task: Robert Kroetsch, "The Stone Hammer Poem" Reading task: literary samples.
Animal representations and critical discourse. The problem of <i>anthropocentrism</i> and <i>anthropomorphism</i> . John Berger: animals and the visual register, the dynamics of the gaze. Animals as metaphors vs. symbionts. Donna Haraway's notion of "companion species". Species, <i>specere</i> , <i>respecere</i> . Interspecies entanglements: subjectivity as "becoming with". Embodiment, precariousness, and the ethics of care. Vulnerability as 1) a universal mode of exposure and 2) a dimension of beauty.			6					6	John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" (p. 3-28) Eduardo Viveiros de Castro "Exchanging Perspectives" (p. 463-484) Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Learning the Grammar of Animacy" (p. 48-59) Donna Haraway, <i>When Species Meet</i> (p. 3-42) Reading task: literary samples.
Students' research.			4					4	Joseph Meeker, "The Comedy of Survival" (p. 11-17); Carla Gunn, <i>Amphibian</i> .
Genre as 1) a dimension of textuality and strategic intention; 2) a condition of meaning; 3) an aesthetic structure of affective expectation. Genre and the production of knowledge and value. Framing the ecological crisis: tragedy, comedy, fantasy, history. Climate fiction and the dynamics of affect: denial, detachment, empathy, fatigue, solastalgia, indifference, misanthropy. The Anthropocene and the pressures on the cultural imaginary. <i>Anthropocene</i> and the aesthetics of fear.			4					4	Simon Estok, "Painful Material Realities, Tragedy, Ecophobia" from <i>Material Ecocriticism</i> (p. 130-140) Mark McGurl, "The Posthuman Comedy" (p. 533-553) Reading task: literary samples.
Aesthetic frames of the Anthropocene: the ecological <i>sublime</i> , the <i>fantastic</i> , the (new) <i>weird</i> . 'Wyrd' and the Anglo-Saxon sense of fate. Speculative realism and environmental disaster. Veer ecology and vegetation. The			4					4	Catriona Sandilands, "Vegetate", from <i>Veer Ecology</i> (p. 16-27)

fantastic and nonhuman agency. Hesitation and the ethical thrust. Precariousness and the <i>vegetariat</i> . Algernon Blackwood's vegetative weird.								Christopher Hitt, "Toward an Ecological Sublime" (p. 603-623) Suzanne Simard TED Talk "Nature's Internet". Reading task: Algernon Blackwood's <i>The Willows</i> .
Students' research.			4				4	Jeff VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> .
Total			48				48	252

Assessment strategy	Weight, %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
A cumulative grade consisting of the grades for three midterm assignments.	30+40+30	As scheduled.	Consistent participation in seminar discussions, appropriate use of metalanguage, argumentative, rigorous critical thinking, error-free academic English. The final, cumulative grade consists of the grades for the three written assignments. The adjustment of the tasks, depending on whether the assignments are held in class or online, rests with the lecturer's discretion.
<p>Students who choose not to attend the seminars accept the responsibility for mastering the course material on their own. Should there be questions related to the material or the final exam, the students have to tackle these issues before the exam date.</p> <p>The course material will be available for download at: www.emokymai.vu.lt</p> <p>N.B.</p> <p>The course instructor reserves the right to turn class assignments into home assignments in case of a conference, lecture, library visit, poor performance on the students' part or any other unforeseen circumstances.</p> <p>The contents of the course will not be measured only by the contents of the seminars. It is the responsibility of the students to "fill in the gaps" by studying the theoretical material provided in the reading list. Needless to say, any <u>reputable</u> source of theory not mentioned in the course description may be useful as well. The students should be well advised to rely on English-language</p>			<p>Each midterm assignment will consist of a set of closed and open-ended written tasks to be carried out in class.</p> <p>10- Excellent. All the tasks have been carried out in such a way that the answers show the student's academic excellence and an astute understanding of the main issues under discussion. Apt use of the necessary critical and theoretical terms. Full understanding of the relation between form and content. Solid grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. Excellent, almost effortless, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Independent and creative thinking. Fluent and error-free academic English.</p> <p>9- Very good. The tasks have been very well carried out but lack the edge of excellence. Mostly apt use of the necessary critical and theoretical terms. A very good understanding of the relation between form and content. A reliable grasp of the discursive contingencies and most of their contradictions. A consistent, though not excellent, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Independent, though not always creative, thinking. Fluent and error-free academic English.</p> <p>8 – Good. The tasks have been well carried out, but without razor-sharp intelligence or creativity. Mostly apt use of the necessary critical and theoretical terms. A good, though predictable, understanding of the relation between form and content. A limited grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. An inconsistent, and varying in degree of success, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Coherent and logical thinking derived from learned sources. Mostly fluent and error-free academic English.</p> <p>7 – Average. The tasks have been carried out selectively and without much cognitive labour. A tendency towards inept use of critical and theoretical terms. A predictable and limited understanding of the relation between form and content. An amateurish grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. An inconsistent, mostly inadequate, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Struggle with logic and coherence of thought, as made manifest in reproduction of the ideas of others. Some instances of relying on Internet sources may be detected. Lack of fluency and correct grammar in the use of academic English.</p> <p>6 – Satisfactory. The tasks have been carried out selectively and with little cognitive labour. Inept use of critical and theoretical terms. An inconsistent, and largely inadequate, understanding of the relation between form and content. A weak and amateurish grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. Lack of ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Struggle with logic and coherence of thought, as made manifest in reproduction (not always successful) of the ideas of others. Multiple instances of relying on Internet sources may be detected. Lack of fluency and correct grammar in the use of academic English.</p> <p>5 – Poor. The tasks have been carried out selectively and poorly. Irresponsible</p>

<p>sources and NOT use Internet sources (e.g. blogs, Shmoop, Wikipedia, Cliff Notes, etc.) as intellectually reliable sources.</p> <p>Should any question arise as to the authenticity of the student's paper, he or she may be asked to account for it by means of a <i>viva voce</i> defence.</p>			<p><i>and/or incompetent use of critical and theoretical terms. Lack of understanding of the relation between form and content. A poor grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. Lack of ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Struggle with logic and coherence of thought, as made manifest in poor reproduction of the ideas of others. Prevalent instances of relying on Internet sources. Poor use of academic English.</i></p> <p>4-0 – Fail. None of the tasks has been adequately carried out to show the student's intellectual competences developed in the course.</p> <p>N.B. In case of suspicion of plagiarism or authenticity of authorship the student will be asked to account for his or her research orally in the department of English Philology.</p>
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Academic integrity

In accordance with the university regulations (see article 53.2 of Study Regulations of Vilnius University (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Studiju_nuostatai_2018_EN.pdf), any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism or other form of cheating) will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, any act of academic dishonesty will result in the failure of the whole course and the student who has committed the act may be subject to the expulsion from the University.

Course policy regarding the use of electronic devices in class

The usage of electronic devices (e.g. laptops, tablets, cell phones, smartphones, e-readers, music players, etc.) during class is only allowed for study and research purposes, when it is required for in-class assignments (assigned by the course instructor), for contacting group members (when such need arises), or in cases of emergency. Mobile phones should be silenced and put away during the entire seminar, unless they are used for above-mentioned learning purposes and prior permission to use them from the course instructor is granted. If a student has an emergency situation which requires to keep his/her phone on, he/she must inform the course instructor beforehand. Taking photos, videos and making sound recordings in class are forbidden, unless instructed otherwise by the professor or unless students provide documents which outline the requirements for necessary accommodations of the use of electronic devices due to disability or other diagnosed health issues.

Author	Year of publication	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing place and house or web link
Compulsory reading				
Albrecht, Glenn A.	2019	<i>Earth Emotions. New Words for a New World.</i>		Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
Atwood, Margaret.	1992	<i>Wilderness Tips.</i>		Toronto: Seal Books.
Atwood, Margaret.	2006	<i>The Tent.</i>		London: Bloomsbury.
Berger, John.	1992.	<i>About Looking.</i>		London: Vintage.
Bishop, Elizabeth.	2011	<i>Poems.</i>		London: Chatto and Windus.
Blackwood, Algernon.	1907	<i>The Willows.</i>		Available at: http://algeronblackwood.org/Z-files/Willows.pdf
Chakrabarty, Dipesh.	2009	"The Climate of History: Four Theses"	<i>Critical Inquiry</i> , 35/2.	
Cronon, William.	1995	"The Trouble with Wilderness"	<i>Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature.</i>	New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
Estok, Simon.	2014	"Painful Material Realities, Tragedy, Ecophobia" in <i>Material Ecocriticism.</i>		Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Garrard, Greg et al.	2019	<i>Climate Change Scepticism.</i>		London: Bloomsbury.
Gunn, Carla.	2009	<i>Amphibian.</i>		Toronto: Coach House Press.
Haraway, Donna.	2008	<i>When Species Meet.</i>		London and Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
Heise, Ursula K.	2016	<i>Imagining Extinction.</i>		Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Hitt, Christopher.	1999	"Toward an Ecological Sublime".	<i>New Literary History</i> , Vol. 30, No. 3.	
Iovino, Serenella and Oppermann, Serpil (eds).	2014	<i>Material Ecocriticism.</i>		Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
Kroetsch, Robert.	1996	<i>Completed Field Notes: The Long</i>		Edmonton: University of Alberta

		<i>Poems of Robert Kroetsch.</i>		Press.
Lawrence, D.H.	2006	<i>Birds, Beasts and Flowers.</i>		Peterborough: Dog's Tail Books.
Marran, Christine L.	2017	<i>Ecology Without Culture. Aesthetics for a Toxic World.</i>		Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
McGurl, Mark.	2012	<i>The Posthuman Comedy.</i>	<i>Critical Inquiry</i> , 38.	
Meeker, Joseph.	1972	"The Comedy of Survival."	<i>The North American Review</i> , 257, 2.	
Merchant, Carolyn.	2020	<i>The Anthropocene and the Humanities.</i>		New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
Nixon, Rob.	2011	<i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.</i>		Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
Powers, Richard.	2021	<i>Bewilderment.</i>		New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
Sandilands, Catriona.	2017	"Vegetate" in <i>Veer Ecology. A Companion to Environmental Thinking.</i>		Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
VanderMeer, Jeff.	2014	<i>Annihilation.</i>		Basingstoke: FSG.
Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo.	2004	"Exchanging Perspectives. The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies".	<i>Common Knowledge</i> , 10: 3.	
Wall Kimmerer, Robin.	2013	<i>Braiding Sweetgrass.</i>		Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.
Wenzel, Jennifer.	2020	<i>The Disposition of Nature. Environmental Crisis and World Literature.</i>		New York: Fordham University Press.
Yusoff, Kathryn.	2018	<i>A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None.</i>		Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Optional reading				
Bate, Jonathan.	2000	<i>The Song of the Earth.</i>		London: Picador.
Clark, Timothy.	2018	<i>Ecocriticism on the Edge. The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept.</i>		London: Bloomsbury.
Garrard, Greg.	2004	<i>Ecocriticism.</i>		London and New York: Routledge.
Glotfelty, Cheryll and Fromm, Harold (eds).	1995	<i>The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology.</i>		Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press.
Morton, Timothy.	2013	<i>Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World.</i>		Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Newell, Jonathan.	2020	<i>A Century of Weird Fiction 1832-1937.</i>		Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
Todorov, Tzvetan.	1995	<i>The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre.</i>		Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Vermeulen, Pieter.	2020	<i>Literature and the Anthropocene.</i>		London and New York: Routledge.
Wheeler, Wendy.	2006	<i>The Whole Creature. Complexity, Biosemiotics and the Evolution of Culture.</i>		London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Aprašas atnaujintas 2023-08-31