



**Environmental and Resource Studies 4700Y  
Topics in Environmental Philosophy  
2010/2011**

**Environmental Aesthetics and Cosmology**

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Web site      My Learning System (WebCT)

<TBA>

This seminar will develop two different but cognate themes: the *environmental imagination* and *environmental cosmology*. Under the first theme we shall deal with the use of *artistic expression* in environmental representation, *environmental aesthetics*, the theory of *the environmental sublime*, 19<sup>th</sup> Century *Romanticism*, and *transcendental nature philosophy*. We shall trace the convergence of theories of aesthetic and political judgment in late German idealism and contemporary German and French theory, connecting this with the emergence, again in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, of the *system/environment* distinction as a conception of the *culture/nature relationship*, exploring its implications for European conceptions of scientific and political representation. In the second term we shall take these conceptions forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century to explore the emergence of *globality* as it has come to displace *modernity* as a form of Western cosmology. This interpretation of the global as globality will be understood as an *environmental interpretation of the post-modern*. The course will examine the emergence of the universal and the particular as a key element of the early modern cultural and political imagination, its displacement by conceptions of the general and the singular within post-modern culture, exploring the historical and philosophical implications for the emergence of *social and environmental movements* in late modernity.

**Format:** The course will operate as a seminar, although both the instructor - and later the students - will give short introductory lectures before the seminar discussions begin. The first term will be lead by the course instructor. The second term will be lead by students.

## Required Texts

Buell, Lawrence, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature, and the Formation of American Culture*, Belnap Press, 1996.

Grange, Joseph, *Nature: An Environmental Cosmology*, SUNY Press, 1997.

## Required eResources

To be added.

## Recommended Additional Readings

Panagia, Davide, *The Poetics of Political Thinking*, Duke University Press, 1996.

Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, 1958.

## Grade Scheme

Literature Review	20% (due end of last week in the 1 <sup>st</sup> Term)
Commentaries	10% (1 per quarter – individual due dates)
General Participation	10% (self-evaluated – due end of last week in the 1 <sup>st</sup> Term)
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Seminar Presentation	10% (dates to be assigned)
Seminar Report	10% (due 2 weeks after seminar)
Critical Essay	20% (due end last week in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term)
Commentaries	10% (1 per quarter – individual due dates)
General Participation	10% (self-evaluated – due end of last week of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Term)

## EVALUATED COMPONENTS OF THE COURSE

### Research Project and Seminar Presentation(s):

You will be required to undertake a standard research project on a topic cognate to your seminar. You should think of the seminar and the research project as an integrated assignment. What this means is that they will both be articulated around the same topical area using the same themes to organize them. Whereas the seminar will be a teaching exercise, the research report will be a critical essay that articulates your results and develops a clear and thorough argument for some thesis. You must take the view in your seminar that you are taking the material of the course forward, not simply providing supplementary information that interprets material introduced by the instructor. The pedagogic objectives of the seminar and the research objectives of the project will be thematically related, but will be differentiated in terms of writing style and emphasis.

*Research Project:* The grade for the research project will be broken down into a project management component and a critical writing component. The project management grade will be based on a documented *research plan* to be submitted at the end of the first Term. The research plan should include a clearly articulated **research strategy** and a thorough **bibliography**. The critical writing grade will be based on a *critical essay* that is written according to the usual norms, namely, the existence of a clear project that includes (1) a clear **research question**, (2) a well-articulated **argument strategy**, and (3) a clearly stated **thesis** that is identified early in the paper and expressed as a conclusion at the end of the argument.

## Seminar Presentations

In the second term each student will prepare at least one formal presentation, based on earlier readings as well as readings they have discovered themselves, subject to the normal academic standards of scholarly documentation and argument. Readings suggested by the presenter will be read by all students (including the instructor) prior to the seminar.

A written *presentation report*, emphasizing its pedagogic aspects, will be due one week after the seminar in which it is presented. The report should be between 1000 and 1500 words, written in the form of **lecture notes** with **annotated commentaries** on the **pedagogic objectives and strategies** for accomplishing them.

- You will be assigned seminar date(s) in November so that everyone may have their seminar prepared and ready to present in the second half of the course.
- The number of presentations each student must make will depend on the size of the class. As required, students may work in groups of 2 or 3 in order to cover the topics (see schedule below).
- Failure to attend at least 80% of the seminars will be penalized by reducing the seminar grade (combined presentation and report grade) by 5% per missed seminar.

## Commentaries

You must write a total of four critical commentaries (500-750 words) on the required readings of the course. Students will be assigned individual due dates at the beginning of the course in order to manage the flow of commentaries. Each commentary will identify a theme from the readings and articulate a *critical question* suitable for further discussion in the seminar. The purpose of this assignment is to help you develop critical reading skills, including the ability to engage texts through your own strategic interpretations, and to derive from that engagement a critical perspective on the text.

## Participation:

The participation component of the grade is general and includes all seminar attendance; the grade for participation will be assigned by you, *i.e.*, you will self-evaluate. You will be asked for a brief rationale for the participation grade if that grade is to be over 65% (the default grade if you do not submit the rationale); the rationale must be handed in at the end of the term. The grade you assign yourself will not normally be challenged unless the rationale seems somehow implausible. Your rationale must include an estimate of your seminar attendance. Attendance penalties apply to this and to the report grade.

Attendance and participation in the seminars is essential. The learning opportunity in a course such as this is largely experiential and interactive. You are therefore asked to take this into account when assigning yourself a participation grade. *You should severely downgrade yourself if you have missed more than 20% of the seminars!*

**STANDARDS****Academic Integrity:**

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's Academic Integrity Policy. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more – [www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity).

**Access to Instruction:**

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, [disabilityservices@trentu.ca](mailto:disabilityservices@trentu.ca)) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

**SEMINARS**

Readings are from *The Environmental Imagination* (TEI) and *An Environmental Cosmology* (AEC)

***First Term***

1. Week 01 *Introduction*
2. Week 02 *Expressionism as an Environmental Philosophy*  
**Excerpts from *Expressionism* (Spinoza) and *Expressionism in Philosophy* (Deleuze); TEI Chapter 2**
3. Week 03 *Representation in Art and Science*  
**TEI Chapter 3**
4. Week 04 *Romanticism and Positivism as Environmental Ideologies*  
**TBA**
5. Week 05 *From Political to Aesthetic Judgment*  
**Excerpts from *The Critique of Judgment* (Kant) and *Political Judgment* (Beiner)**
6. Week 06 *Political and Environmental Thought in Europe and North America*  
**Excerpts from *One Dimensional Man* (Marcuse)**  
<Reading Week>
7. Week 07 *American Transcendental Nature Philosophy*  
**Excerpts from Emerson and Thoreau**
8. Week 08 *The North American Reception of Romanticism and Positivism*  
**TEI Chapters 5, 6, 7**
9. Week 09 *The Origins of Environmental Concepts I: Evolutionary Theory*  
**Excerpts from Darwin and Spencer; TEI Chapters 10, 11, 12**
10. Week 10 *The Origins of Environmental Concepts II: Systems Theory and Ecology*  
**Excerpts from Haeckel**
11. Week 11 *From Environmental Expressionism to Ecological Complexity*  
**Excerpts from Deleuze**
12. Week 12 *Where we have been and where we are going*

**Second Term**

13. Week 13 *What is Environmental Cosmology?*  
**AEC Chapter 1**
14. Week 14 *A Comparative Study of Mayan and European Cosmologies*  
**AEC Chapter 2**
15. Week 15 *The Global and the Local as Cosmologies of Place*  
**AEC Chapter 3; Excerpts from *Power in the Global Age* (Beck)**
16. Week 16 *Cosmopolitanism and Global Politics in the New World Order*  
**AEC Chapter 4; Excerpts from *Power in the Global Age* (Beck)**
17. Week 17 *A Philosophical/Environmental History of the Universal*  
**AEC Chapter 5; Excerpts from Aristotle and Kant**  
<Reading Week>
18. Week 18 *Environmental Thinking, Critical Interpretation, and Singularity*  
**AEC Chapter 6; selected readings from the early Frankfurt school**
19. Week 19 *Singularity in Science and Politics*  
**AEC Chapter 7; Excerpts from Foucault**
20. Week 20 *Environmental Political Aesthetics and the Emergence of Globality*  
**AEC Chapter 8; Michael Mann, “Globalizations: An Introduction to the Spatial and Structural Networks of Globality”**
21. Week 21 *Globality as Cosmology*  
**AEC Chapter 9**
22. Week 22 *Ecological Theory and World Complexity*  
**AEC Chapter 10**
23. Week 23 *Social and Environmental Movements in the Networked Community*  
**AEC Chapter 11; Excerpts from *Reassembling the Social* (Latour)**
24. Week 24 *A Farewell to the Modern*