ENG 4----

Environmental Literatures and Culture

Sample Syllabus

3 credit hours



**Blood and Oil: A Secret History**

Gold and Ivory. Coal and Copper. Oil and Water. Resource extraction has ruled our history and promises to dominate our future, and yet its story remains mainly a dirty secret known only to insiders. In this class, we will unearth that secret and follow the story across continents and centuries. We’ll track it from memoirs about gold-hungry conquistadores to novels on the nineteenth-century ivory frenzy to films on the surreal battles over West Virginia coal to soap operas about the current Dakota oil boom. In the process, you will gain insight into extraction mythologies and aesthetics, how they have developed and why, and how they’re subtly and powerfully influencing the way we think of ourselves and our world.

**Course Goals**

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Track how extraction narratives have developed and how extraction industries have impacted important literary movements, national identities, and aesthetics.
2. Identify key ideas, persons, texts, and events that shaped extraction narratives.
3. Read literary texts closely on your own and in class discussion, with particular attention to how they use literary techniques to shape arguments about extraction and gender, race, power, economics, environment, etc.
4. Research, produce, and revise a short research paper that investigates one form of extraction or extraction narrative.
5. Produce a creative group project (a short film or dramatic scene) that engages creatively with extraction narratives.

**Course Requirements**

1. Class Participation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 10%
2. Quizzes. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 25%
3. Tests . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 30%
4. Research Paper . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 20%
5. Short Film or Dramatic Scene . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .15%

**Absence and Late Paper Policy**

You are allowed 2 absences without penalty. After that, your final grade will drop by half a letter with each absence. Leaving early or coming late to class is counted as half an absence. Late assignments will incur a grade penalty of one half a letter grade for each 24 hours overdue.

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\_for\_students/csc.asp).

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own: It includes the unacknowledged word for word and/or paraphrasing of another person’s ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Please see me if you are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism.

**Required Texts**

Emile Zola’s *Germinal* (Penguin, 978-0140447422)

Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (Norton, 978-0-393-92636-1)

Nawal El-Saadawi’s *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* (Saqi Books, 978-0863563379)

Reza Negarestani’s *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (re.press, 978-0980544008)

You can find the rest of the readings posted on Carmen.

You can find the films and TV shows on youtube.com, Secured Media, Amazon, or hulu.com (as indicated on the course calendar).

**Explanation of Assignments**

1. **Class Participation.** Participation includes attendance, thoughtful contribution to class discussion, and completion of readings and small individual and group assignments.

2. **Quizzes.** I will give pop quizzes that cover characters and plot points, as well as “take-home quizzes” to help you prep for discussion.

3. **Midterm and Final Exam.** The midterm will cover material from the first half of the class, and the final will cover material from the second half of the class. They will both consist of two types of questions: 1) definition of terms/identification of key events, people, etc. and 2) identification and analysis of passages from our readings. For passage identification and analysis, you will need to identify the author, title, and year of publication and then write a short paragraph first noting the literal meaning of the text (i.e. what’s going on) and then explaining the significance of the passage in relation to class themes and concepts. Before I make up the midterm and the final, you will need to go to Carmen and post one term, event, etc. and one passage that you think should be on the exam.

4. **Research Paper (at least 6 full pages).** You will write a short research paper that investigates a particular form of extraction or type of extraction narrative, etc. This paper is an original piece of detective work that answers a genuine question by combining close analysis of a literary text or texts with research (on what other critics have said about the work/figure, on the author(s), on the surrounding history and culture and science if applicable, on other works that influenced the authors or literature you’re examining, etc.). **[Note: Page count does not include title page or works cited, illustrations, etc.]**

5. **Short Film or Dramatic Scene.** As a final group project, you will craft your own short film or dramatic scene (approximately 8-10 minutes) focused on extraction narratives. During our final exam period, you will present your film or perform your scene and then analyze your interpretation: Explain to the class what you did and why. What argument are you making—both with your form and content? Why did you want to make this argument? What arguments/texts are you responding to?

**Instructor Contact Info**

Email: [crosby.sara@gmail.com](mailto:crosby.sara@gmail.com)

Office: 120 Morrill Hall

Office Phone: 740 725-6203

Office Hours: 1-3 (TR) or by appointment

**Other Resources**

1. **Academic Enrichment Center.** Lynda Behan runs The Academic Enrichment Center. She and other members of her staff provide free individual consultation services for Ohio State students who want help with any aspect of their writing. On the Marion campus, you can call ext. 5-6236, stop in 216 Morrill Hall, or e-mail her at [behan.4@osu.edu](mailto:behan.4@osu.edu) to set up an appointment.
2. **Disability Services**. Anyone who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the office for Disability Services on this campus, I encourage you to do so. You can call 740-725-6247 or go to the office on the first floor of Maynard Hall, room 128. You can also find more information concerning disability accommodations at the following IP address: <[http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/)>.

**Course Calendar**

T Aug 23 Introduction

**Gold**

R Aug 25 *Beowulf* (8th-11th century), line 2200-end (Carmen)

T Aug 30 *The Florentine Codex* (1590), excerpts (Carmen)

[optional: *Conquistadors*, pt. 1 on Aztecs (2000)

(http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/conquistadors/)]

R Sept 1 *Codex* continued

[optional: *Conquistadors,* pt. 2 on Incas and pt. 3 on the search for Eldorado

(2000) (http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/conquistadors/)]

Werner Herzog’s *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972) (in class)

T Sept 6 *Aguirre* continued

**Coal**

R Sept 8 Coal Miner Poetry, selections (Carmen)

PBS’s *The Mine Wars* (2016) (Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGxsPrVdqck)

T Sept 13 Emile Zola’s *Germinal*, parts 1-3(1885)

R Sept 15 *Germinal*, parts 4-5

T Sept 20 *Germinal*, parts 6-7

R Sept 22 Barbara Kopple’s *Harlan County USA* (1976) (Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa0Z8BLX1o0)

Bill Haney’s *The Last Mountain* (2011) (Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6neSdVOh\_BM)

**Ivory**

T Sept 27 Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

R Sept 29 *Heart of Darkness* continued

T Oct 4 **Midterm**

**Oil and Natural Gas**

R Oct 6 H. P. Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthulu” (1928)

Basil Gelpke and Ray McCormack’s *A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash* (2006)

(Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odCZpBPfFQk)

[optional: Al Jazeera English’s *The Secret of the Seven Sisters* (2013) (Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtYOjMmEMeg>)

And just for fun and extra credit, you could check out The Peak Oil Poet at

<http://www.oilcrash.com/articles/poems.htm>] [See South Park, Season 14

episodes 11-13]

T Oct 11 Ida Tarbell’s *The History of Standard Oil Company* (1904), excerpts (Carmen)

P. T. Anderson’s *There Will Be Blood* (2007) (Secured Media)

R Oct 13 **No Class**

T Oct 18 Thein Pe Myint’s “Oil” (1938) (Carmen)

Mohammed Hasan Alwan’s “Oilfield” (2011) (Carmen)

R Oct 20 Robert Flaherty’s *Louisiana Story* (1948) (Library)

Ash Reese’s *Geaux-Bots: The Rise of Regulatron* (2016) (Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI1pQeWFL2k) (in class)

Tim Gautreaux’s “Gone to Water” (2011) (Carmen)

T Oct 25 David Lynch’s *Dune* (1984) (Secured Media)

R Oct 27 *Dune* continued

T Nov 1 Ken Saro-Wiwa’s “Night Ride” (1986) and last words (Carmen)

R Nov 3 Nawal El-Saadawi’s *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* (2001)

T Nov 8 *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* continued

R Nov 10 The first episode of Discovery’s *Blood and Oil* (2013) (buy on Amazon) and of ABC’s *Blood and Oil* (2014) (hulu.com or buy on Amazon)

The Cutters according to the Internet (Carmen)

T Nov 15 Josh Fox’s *Gasland Part 2* (2014) (Secured Media)

Fracking Free Ireland poetry (Carmen)

**The Horror! The Horror!**

R Nov 17 Larry Fessenden’s *The Last Winter* (2006) (in class)

**FULL Draft of Research Paper Due**

T Nov 22 *The Last Winter* continued

R Nov 24 **No Class**

T Nov 29 China Miéville’s “Covehithe” (2011) (Carmen)

Reza Negarestani’s *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (2008), ix-xx, pages 1-39

R Dec 1 *Cyclonopedia*, pages 41-72

T Dec 6 **Final Exam**

T Dec 13 (11-12:45) **Presentation of Short Film/ Dramatic Scene**

**Final Draft of Research Paper Due**