Literature and the Environment:  
From Animal Worlds To Literary Ecologies  

Monday and Wednesday 2:00-4:55pm,  
TISC LC15, Washington Square  
Dr. Jordan Sheridan  
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Office Hours: Monday 12:00-2:00

Course Description
This course explores the relationship between concerns for the environment and animal life in contemporary transnational literature and film. We will examine the representation of animals and the environment with the aim of critically analyzing their conflicting resonances and the beliefs, values, fears, and desires that inform them. Among the questions we will investigate are: how do different representations of animal worlds frame problems of security, mobility, sustenance, and responsibility for humans and the environment? How do notions of identity and belonging—e.g. species, race, gender, sexuality, and class—shape representations of animals and the environment (and vice versa)? And, finally, what socio-ecological histories do different texts call on us to remember? What kinds of futures do they allow us to imagine?

Required Texts

*The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh  
*American Primitive*, Mary Oliver  
*Strange Bird*, Jeff VanderMeer  
*Salvage the Bones*, Jesmyn Ward  
*Salt Fish Girl*, Larissa Lai

All readings not from the required books will be available on NYU classes or online.

Assignments

Grading Criteria: This course is designed to develop close reading, critical thinking, and rigorous conceptual analysis across a range of interdisciplinary subjects and texts. Engaged, active participation alongside careful reading and analysis is required to work through assumptions, unpack prior knowledge, and build and awareness of the significance and implications of the course content. The main objective of this course is to offer you a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between animals and the environment in literary contexts. For all assignments the grading criteria seeks: comprehension, clarity in presentation and writing, and innovative, critical thinking. All written assignments must use current MLA formatting.

1. Participation (20%): Every class is mandatory. Any unexcused absences may lower your grade. Beyond simply attending class, I expect active, engaged, and regular participation in this seminar. Anecdotal, disrespectful, off-topic, or distracting participation will negatively impact your grade. In-class, verbal work, such as responding to position papers and contributing to class discussions will comprise your participation grade.
2. Response Papers (30%): I will divide the class into four groups, A, B, C and D: these groups will take turns writing and presenting short (2 page) position papers two times throughout the course. Strictly limit your paper to two double-spaced pages. You are not required to, but if you do cite any external sources, include a works cited page. Two weeks before the paper is due, I will post two “prompts” on NYU Classes based on the readings/images/topics assigned for the day your paper is due. These “prompts” will be starting points for you to analyze and unpack how ideas are attached to animals on a discursive level. When your paper is due, you will bring a hard copy to class and each member in your group will present their position, thereby sparking brilliant class discussion. You will then hand your paper in to me at the end of class and I will return it the following week.

3. Paper abstract and annotated bibliography (15%): This assignment will form the basis of our workshop. One week before the workshop you will submit the following to NYU Classes: a) a two-page, double-spaced abstract. It will include a proper title, briefly outline your proposed topic, theoretical frameworks, and texts, and explain how your paper contributes to the field of animal studies; b) an annotated bibliography that includes six external scholarly sources. Each entry should be two or three sentences: identify both the arguments the piece and significant concepts, explain why the text is useful for your paper.

4. Workshop (5%): This workshop is designed to help you write the final paper. You will submit your workshop materials one week before the workshop. I will share clean copies with the entire class so that everyone will read each other’s work in preparation for the workshop. On the day of the workshop, having read your colleagues’ materials, you will come prepared to present your proposal, as well as give and receive feedback both in small brainstorming sessions and in larger discussion groups.

5. Final Paper (30%): 10-12 page paper that builds on your proposed ideas in response to feedback from the workshop and my written feedback.

Policies

Academic Accommodation: Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980. NYU Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675 Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114 Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd.

Academic Dishonesty: You are subject to CAS’s guidelines on plagiarism: cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else’s work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source.

Email Policy: Other than coming to my office hours, email is the best way to communicate with me. I will respond to emails within two days of receiving them and may take longer over the weekends or holidays.

Late Policy: Late assignments will be subtracted one grade-point/day (including weekends) for lateness starting immediately after the due date/time. If for some reason you are unable to complete assignments on time, please reach out to me before the assignment is due. I am not a robot. I understand that life happens sometimes so please come talk to me and we may be able to work out alternative submission timelines (within reason of course).