Course Description
This course provides an overview of Anglophone environmental literature of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, focusing specifically on texts and cultural histories that may inform our understanding of current environmental problems. Taking the term “environment” in the widest sense possible (i.e., as referring to human as well as more-than-human environments), we’ll consider how environmental concerns have shaped literary innovation, and how literature has conversely come to influence environmental discourse. To this end, while tracking shifting attitudes toward “nature” and the “environment,” we’ll read foundational and lesser-known works associated with British romanticism, American transcendentalism, wilderness and conservation literature, New Deal-era progressive politics, postcolonial critique, the modern environmental movement, environmental justice, cli-fi, and eco-poetics. We will also bring to bear on these works vital sociological and theoretical frameworks foregrounding Black, Indigenous, queer, trans, women’s, and working-class thought and experiences.

The schedule of readings is intended to accomplish multiple things simultaneously. First, it is a more or less chronological survey covering important moments in environmental history, principally in the United States. Second, it is an examination of cultural logics that have driven environmental degradation and the marginalization of environmental justice communities. Third, it is an exploration of alternative ecologies that may offer valuable counters to these logics. And fourth, it is a literary pre-history of the climate crisis that concludes with a look at thinking in the field of climate-change communications about the ways literary techniques and genres might contribute to the green transition.

Along with reading responses, quizzes, and a brief in-class presentation, students will be expected to submit a final paper on a topic of their choosing, but relating to course themes. This final project may have a critical or creative orientation.

Course Goals
-practice analyzing, discussing, and writing about environmental literature
-gain familiarity with ecological thought in the Anglophone humanities
-understand the importance of race, gender, sexuality, and class to issues of environmental justice
-explore the relation between environmental literature and histories of colonialism, capitalist extraction, and (neo)liberalism
-apply knowledge and methods to consideration of current environmental problems
**Required Texts** (*please get these exact editions by using the ISBN*)


**Optional Purchases** (*pdfs of these texts will also be supplied. Purchase is optional*)


**EXPECTATIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Grading**

- In-class Participation: 10%
- 10 Reading Responses: 30%
- Midterm & Final Quizzes: 20%
- Presentations: 10%
- Final Paper: 30%

**Assignments, Examinations, & Participation**

**In-Class Participation/Preparation (10%).** This is a reading-intensive seminar or discussion course. In large part, it will be up to you and your peers to direct and sustain the conversation. Doing so is part of the skillset you will hone over the course of the semester. To this end, your active and consistent engagement are essential. Be prepared to contribute to the conversation every week, and to do so generously. Come with thoughts and questions sketched out in your notebooks. Identify specific passages you will point us to in discussion.

The best way to ensure your preparedness is to plan ahead to give yourself enough time to complete the often difficult or lengthy reading assignments carefully and thoughtfully (analyze and annotate as you read). It will frequently take you more than one day to do the readings for any given class meeting. Print or take stock of the next week’s readings on Wednesday following class so you can get the lay of the land. Mark out time to complete the assignments in your calendars. Aim to finish ALL of the reading no later than Sunday evening so you can process and produce weekly responses before Monday night’s deadline.

Please do all reading in print (not on screen) so that you may take notes and avoid distractions. **You must bring all books and/or print copies of texts to class each day**, as failure to do so will result in your being marked late or absent. Unless they are on the list of required books,
readings will be posted to NYU Brightspace. As for participating: asking questions, wondering out loud, expressing confusion, making connections to contemporary popular culture, addressing your personal response to texts, or simply noticing things are all great ways to contribute. You don’t need to chime in with a perfectly formed idea or argument.

10 Weekly Reading Responses (30%). Unless otherwise noted, these will be 500-750 word responses to one or more of the assigned readings. They must be emailed to me as Microsoft Word attachments by Monday at midnight before the corresponding class. Please put the correct week # in the subject line of your email (see the course schedule for #s). These responses should engage material assigned for that meeting (not materials assigned for a previous one), though they can refer to other texts and forge links to topics previously addressed. It’s your job to take note of any specifications I make (for example, about which text to address) regarding a week’s reading response. I’ll mark your responses and may ask you to share them with the class. If your response is inadequate or incomplete, I’ll let you know and may ask you to meet to talk about how to improve. These responses will be graded as 0 (if missing, late, or insufficient), check minus, check, or check plus. No extensions. Late Reading Responses will not be accepted.

*You may skip 4 weeks of Reading Responses (for a total of 10 responses due over the semester). However, if you do up to 2 additional responses, I’ll drop your lowest grades.

These weekly writing assignments are intended to give you a starting point for discussion, a space to develop your critical thoughts about the day’s readings, and a means of practicing active and critical textual analysis and writing. A good way to go about these responses is to choose a passage that you think important, that offers a point of access to the text’s larger concerns, or that presents you with a question, contradiction, surprise, puzzle, or problem. Use this passage as a jumping off point for your thinking and be ready to bring us to it in discussion. Always ground your discussion in textual evidence, citing page numbers (a page number in parentheses at the end of your sentence will do) and quoting directly from key passages. Note that long quotations from texts, especially when used as epigraphs, do not count toward the word limit.

Because you have at least 500 words, there may be room in these responses for you to very briefly summarize the reading or aspect of the reading you will be addressing. However, you don’t need to do so. In any case, you should always quickly get to the heart of the matter: your original analysis or argument. Here is a great example of a set of opening sentences for a response to a theoretical or critical text (phrasing may be different when dealing with literary works): “In X text, author Y argues that Z. According to this argument, W should be understood as V.” Soon after a brief analytic paraphrase like this one, which ensures you and your readers are on the same page, you would then go on to make your own point or frame your question (if you pose a question, you should definitely attempt to answer it). Don’t waste time with general or irrelevant background information, as in the following opening: “Author X is one of the most important thinkers in the field of Q.” And don’t merely narrate your personal reaction or experience of interest/confusion while reading, as in the following: “I really liked X text because
I thought it was so interesting," or, “I didn’t like X text because it was dense and confusing.” On the other hand, critical reflection on the relation between a text’s position or assumptions and its historical context, on the way it may be shaped by the subject-position of its author, and on its resonance or dissonance with your personal, social, and material experience, are welcome.

Ultimately your goal is to offer something arguable or discoverable about the text—something that intelligent readers like your peers might be able to argue over, might need to be convinced about, or might not otherwise see. Your response should potentially spark conversation among your classmates, hence controversial, counterintuitive, or critical directions are encouraged. Do try to avoid BS or substituting clear thinking with jargon.

A note on revising: your ideas are more important than your writing style in this case, but be sure to revise these responses, cutting out the language that may have been helpful for your thinking process but that doesn’t need to go in the final submission. You are also generally encouraged to think across more than one text, both within and beyond single class periods, especially as the works we’ll read may be in conversation with one another.

Presentations (10%). At the start of the semester, you will sign up for a presentation day on which you will serve as a discussion catalyst. Two students will pair together for each day, and may work collaboratively or separately. Your job will be to add something new to class discussion that will inspire enthusiastic conversation and possibly debate. To this end, in addition to preparing to serve as an expert on the assigned readings, you will need to do outside research so that you can bring something new—another text, media object, fact, or critical perspective—to the table. You don’t need to give a formal presentation in class, but will be expected to speak up where appropriate with your well-formed comment or question, generally during the second half of the class period. Your grade will be based partly on the quality and intensity of the discussion that your contribution inspires.

For example, in a class on John Locke’s Second Treatise, you might distribute a handout with language from the book of Genesis concerning man’s commandment to “subdue” nature, in order to initiate a conversation about the religious underpinnings of Locke’s ideas about the environment and property.

Midterm Quiz (10%). A brief passage-identification and short-answer quiz on course texts from the first half of the semester. Keep up with reading and class discussion and you will do well.

Final Quiz (10%). A brief passage-identification and short-answer quiz on course texts from the second half of the semester. Keep up with reading and class discussion and you will do well.

Final Paper (30%). An 8-10-page final paper on a topic of your choosing, but relating to course texts and themes. You must meet with me to discuss your topic before getting started. Stay tuned for more information about this assignment.
Formatting and Submitting Assignments. All written work must be submitted as Microsoft Word files (otherwise I won’t be able to supply comments and you will not get credit) in 12 point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and with one-inch margins all around. Essays should be submitted as attachments (not links) via email. Reading responses should also be submitted via email and by the deadline. Please put the week number somewhere in the subject line.

Receiving Writing Feedback. I will respond to your written work by giving comments using the Track Changes function in Microsoft Word. Microsoft Word is available for free download by NYU students. If you don’t see comments in the right-hand margin and at the bottom of your essay, it’s because you need to toggle options in the “Review” pane in MS Word. Go to “Review” and select “All Markup” under the “Tracking” button. Also make sure “Contextual” is selected under the “Show Comments” button. I will generally offer more commentary on your Reading Responses at the beginning of the semester to help get you up to speed with my expectations. I raise grading standards as the semester progresses and you become more comfortable with the assignment.

Course Policies
Attendance. Attendance and participation are mandatory and crucial to your success in this course. You are expected to fully attend each class and to arrive on time (a few minutes early). If you must be absent due to illness or emergency, let me know by email and get notes from a classmate. Tardiness or more than one missed class will negatively affect your grade. If you are absent in excess of this limit, your final grade will be lowered by one-third of a letter (i.e. from A to A-) for each additional absence. 3 or more absences will result in automatic failure.

Note however: if you are feeling unwell or think you have been exposed to COVID, stay home; you will not be penalized. This is a modification of the usual attendance policy. Your health and our collective health takes precedence. If you think you have COVID, report your symptoms to the NYU COVID-19 Prevention & Response Team.

Additional COVID measures: No eating or drinking (excepting occasional sips of water). Please sit in the same seat for the duration of the semester. You must wear an approved mask, covering nose and mouth, at all times (unless university policy changes). Be safe and take care of each other.

Zoom Attendance. If you are out sick and need to attend via Zoom, you must email me at least two hours before class so that I know to open a Zoom meeting. When attending via Zoom, you are required to keep your camera on for the duration of the class meeting (you’re welcome to use a background filter). You must also contribute to class discussion in a substantive way. Failure to do the above will result in an absence. Illness is the only acceptable reason for attending on Zoom. The Zoom link is at the top of the syllabus. Please don’t email to ask for it.

Talking/Listening. Be polite to your fellow students by listening and responding (often directly) to their comments, and by doing so in a way that respects everyone’s different backgrounds
and experiences. You are encouraged to talk frequently, but be aware about dominating the conversation. If you’d like a primer on engaging in class discussions, take a look at chapter 12, “‘I Take Your Point’: Entering Class Discussions,” in Graff and Birkenstein’s They Say / I Say (posted to NYU Brightspace “Content” page under the “Course Info” unit).

Note-taking. Though this is primarily a discussion and not a lecture course, taking good notes while you read at home and in class is a vital part of your engagement with your professor’s and classmates’ ideas. This will also help prepare you for the midterm and essay assignments.

Technology. Unless arranged in advance, no laptops or electronic devices are permitted in class. Silence phones and keep them out of sight at all times. Use of a phone or other device in class will negatively affect your grade.

Communication Between and Beyond Class Hours. Always feel free to come to office hours (please set up an appoint by using my “Appointments page” link at the top of the syllabus) to talk about ideas, assignments, interests, questions, or concerns. If you have logistical questions, please first consult the syllabus and any emails I have sent. If you miss a class, check in with a fellow student about any important details before emailing your professor. I will respond to email queries but may not always be able to do so within 48 hours. Avoid any last-minute emails if you want to ensure a reply.

Late Or Missing Work. You must complete ALL major essay assignments and the quizzes in order to pass the course. Late assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism. Any instance of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will result in an F and will be reported to the Dean for disciplinary action. You are strongly encouraged to read through NYU’s statement on academic integrity: https://bit.ly/3DJtZ7F.

Additional Info & Resources
The NYU Writing Center. The Writing Center is a place where any NYU student can get help with their writing. It is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occur, as students work closely with EWP faculty at every stage of the writing process and on any piece of writing except for exams. To make an appointment, go to https://nyu.mywconline.com/

Religious Observance. As a nonsectarian, inclusive institution, NYU policy permits members of any religious group to absent themselves from classes without penalty when required for compliance with their religious obligations. The policy and principles to be followed by students and faculty may be found here: https://bit.ly/2V44gVU.

Student Wellness. In a large, complex community like NYU, it’s vital to reach out to others, particularly those who are isolated or engaged in self-destructive activities. Student wellness (https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-programs/student-wellness.html) is the responsibility of all of us.
The NYU **Wellness Exchange** is the constellation of NYU’s programs and services designed to address the overall health and mental health needs of its students. Students can access this service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. wellness.exchange@nyu.edu; (212) 443-9999. Students can call the Wellness Exchange hotline (212-443-9999) or the NYU Counseling Service (212-998-4780) to make an appointment for Single Session, Short-term, or Group counseling sessions.

**Accommodations for Student Accessibility.** Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, and learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Please register with the Moses Center for Student Accessibility at the start of the semester and sign up with the Center in advance for exams you will take there (also let your professor know). The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, and can be reached by telephone (212-998-4980) or email (mosescsa@nyu.edu). More information is available at http://www.nyu.edu/csd.

**NYU Immigrant Defense Initiative (IDI).** The NYU Immigrant Defense Initiative (IDI) offers free and confidential legal services to NYU students and employees, and their immediate family members, on their immigration cases. IDI can assist with DACA, TPS, asylum, legal permanent residency, citizenship, employment authorization, representation in immigration court, humanitarian visas, and consultations for those who have had contact with the criminal system (i.e. arrest or conviction) or have violated their visa. IDI also provides foreign travel monitoring for those affected by the Travel Ban, or who are at risk of being denied entry to the US, Know-Your-Rights trainings, and advocacy within NYU departments (financial aid, housing, student groups). Contact IDI at immigrant.defense@law.nyu.edu or 212-998-6435 (no walk-ins). More information at: https://www.law.nyu.edu/immigrantrightsclinic/IDI

**S.P.A.C.E. (Sexual misconduct Prevention, Assistance, Counseling, & Education):** The NYU Center for Sexual Misconduct Support Services can provide confidential assistance to complainants about sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking. Support includes providing information about resources and options, accompanying a complainant to rape treatment centers, medical services and campus meetings or proceedings. Staff at The Center — which includes Crisis Response Counselors at the Wellness Exchange — are licensed health professionals who can act as your personal liaison throughout the process of accessing care and services following a sexual assault. When calling the Wellness Exchange hotline at (212) 443-9999 just ask for the CRC.
**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Note: this schedule is subject to change. Check the Brightspace “Content” page for latest info.

(parentheses enclose date composed or first published)  
[brackets enclose where to find text and page numbers]  
pdf = pdf posted to NYU Brightspace  
Recommended=optional (don’t try to read these texts if it will take your focus away from others)

*Please always do your own basic research on the author’s background and writings.
*On some occasions, pdfs include more text than what I ask you to read on the syllabus. Attend to page numbers.

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**Week 1**
(1) Tu. Sept 6

**Course Introductions**
- William Wordsworth, “I wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (1807) [pdf, 1]
- Kim Stanley Robinson, Ch. 1 and Ch. 6 from *Ministry for the Future* (2020) [audio, 40 min.]
- Maureen McLane, “Moonrise,” (2022) [pdf, 1]

**Week 2**
(2) Tu. Sept 13

**Week 3**
(3) Tu. Sept 20
- John Locke, from *Second Treatise of Government* (1689) [book, Ch. I-IX, or p. 7-68]
- Excerpt from United States Declaration of Independence (1776) [pdf, 1-2]
- John Locke, excerpt from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) [pdf, p. 77-79]
- Excerpt from Francis Bacon, preface to *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620) [pdf, 1-3]

**Week 4**
(4) Tu. Sept 27
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, from *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013) [book or pdf, 1-32, 39-60, 128-166]

**Week 5**
(5) Tu. Oct 4
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818) [book, 1-166]
- William Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” (1798) [pdf, 1-4]
- John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry” (1833) [pdf, TBD]

M. Oct. 10
- No Classes. Indigenous Peoples Day.

Tu. Oct. 11
- Classes follow a Monday schedule.

**Week 6**
(6) Tu. Oct 18
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature” (1836) [pdf, TBD]
- Walt Whitman, from *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1891) [pdf, TBD]
- Video clips: “It’s a Small World” and “Futurama” rides at 1964/5 Queens World’s Fair (1964)
- Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden* (1854) [pdf, TBD]

**Week 7**
(7) Tu. Oct 25
- Sonya Posmentier, “Coda” from *Cultivation and Catastrophe* (2017) [pdf, 213-227]
- Podcast episode: Kathryn Yusoff discusses her 2018 book *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2019) [43 min.; start at 15:00]

**Week 8**
(8) Tu. Nov. 1

*MIDTERM QUIZ*
- John Muir, “The Discovery of Glacier Bay By Its Discoverer” (1895) [pdf, TBD]
Rebecca Solnit, “John Muir in Native America” (2021) [pdf, 1-6]
Cleo Wölfle Hazard, from Underflows: Queer Trans Ecologies and River Justice (2022) [pdf, TBD]
Film: Jane Campion, Power of the Dog (2022) [126 min.]

Week 9
(9) Tu. Nov. 8 Muriel Rukeyser, from The Book of the Dead (1938) [book or pdf, TBD]
Film: John Ford, Grapes of Wrath (1940) [128 min.]
Video: lectures for the panel “Beyond Hagiography: Mining the New Deal Legacy” from the Designing a Green New Deal Conference, featuring Jen Light, Nancy Levinson, Nicholas Pevzner, Raj Patel, Mary Annaise Heglar, Karen M’Closkey, and Francesca Ammon (2019) [TBD]

Week 10
(10) Tu. Nov. 15 Rachel Carson, from Silent Spring (1962) [pdf, TBD]
Recommended: Priscilla Coit Murphy, “Media: One Formidable Indictment” in What a Book Can Do: The Publication and Reception of Silent Spring (2005) [pdf, TBD]
Film: Todd Haynes, Safe (1995) [120 min.]

Week 11
Amitav Ghosh, from The Great Derangement (2016) [pdf, TBD]
Julie Sze, Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger (2020) [pdf, 1-24, 76-98]
Video: Genevieve Gunther, “Communicating Climate” (2021) [28 min.]

W. Nov. 23 No classes. Thanksgiving break.
Th. Nov. 24 Thanksgiving break
Fr. Nov. 25 Thanksgiving break

Week 12

Week 13
(13) Tu. Dec. 6 Ben Lerner, 10:04 (2014) [book, 1-256]
Ashley Dawson, from Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life (2017) [pdf, TBD]

Week 14
Film: Anisia Uzeyman & Saul Williams, Neptune Frost (2021) [105 min.]

Tu. Dec. 15 READING DAY
Th. Dec. 16
-Th. Dec. 22 EXAM PERIOD

TBD *FINAL QUIZ
TBD *FINAL PROJECT DUE