

ENG4430 Environmental Literature in English
Assessment Guidelines
Fall 2023

Examination

The form of assessment is a portfolio consisting of revised versions of 3 assignments first submitted in draft form during the semester. All 3 assignments must receive a passing grade for the portfolio to pass: assignment #1 (Short paper on ecocriticism) counts as 25% of the grade; assignment #2 (Creative/critical intervention) counts as 25% of the grade; and assignment #3 (Final paper) counts as 50% of the grade.

Assignment #1 (25%)

Short paper on ecocriticism

Key Questions to Address

- What is ecocriticism?
- What is the history of how it has been developed within U.S. literary and cultural studies?
- What have been some of the debates about what the field should be and do?

Requirements

- Engage **at least two** of the introductions from the list below (direct quotations, paraphrase, summary, synthesis with other sources);
- Include a Works Cited page and use in-text citations (PAGE NUMBERS) according to MLA guidelines:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html;
- Proofread (carefully) to avoid grammar and spelling errors;
- Formatting: 1.5-spaced, with 2.5 cm margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, no extra spaces between paragraphs;
- Additional research is optional;
- Papers should be 4-5 pages, not counting the Works Cited page.

Assessment

Papers will be marked holistically according to the requirements specified in the assignment, with no specific percentage of marks for any one aspect. The marker will thus be making an overall judgment of the quality of the piece of work as a whole. Weaknesses in one area of the criteria may be compensated for by particular skill in another. Independence of thought and evidence of analytical ability will be rewarded.

Assignment #2 (25%)

Creative/critical intervention

Background and purpose

Which of the primary texts we've read this semester inspire you most or make you want to tell others about them? What other audiences might find these texts interesting in different ways? The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to think openly and creatively

about various ways of engaging course texts as examples of environmental literature. There is considerable flexibility here for you to experiment and try something new or to hone skills you might already have developed elsewhere. The task is to pick one or more of the primary texts from the syllabus and engage with them through a short written text (1-2 pages) or another form of art, music, or media presentation (max. 5 minutes). Your piece should take one (or possibly more than one) of the following forms:

- an op-ed for a newspaper connecting your text(s) to a current environmental issue or case study;
- a piece of creative writing (essay, poem, flash fiction, screenplay abstract, etc.) that somehow engages your course text(s) and relevant environmental issues;
- an artistic, musical, and/or media piece that engages your course text(s) and relevant environmental issues;
- a book review of an academic monograph or edited book collection that could be relevant for academics (from ecocritical literary studies or other disciplines) who might be interested in your primary text(s);
- other ideas you might have (check with me first).

In order to familiarize yourself with your chosen genre (if you're not already familiar), take a look at as wide a range as possible of examples that could provide models for your own work.

Requirements and suggestions

- Engage **at least one** of the primary texts from the syllabus.
- Written pieces should total approximately 1-2 pages; pieces of other kinds should be presentable within approx. 3-5 minutes.

Assessment

Creative/critical interventions will be assessed primarily for the ways it illustrates understanding and inspiration drawn from the primary text(s), as well as how effectively and creatively it engages relevant issues within the chosen genre. Since none of these forms of creative/critical interventions were specifically taught in the course, considerable leeway will be given in the assessment. Creativity and originality will be rewarded.

Assignment #3 Final Paper (50%)

Longer paper

Background and purpose

Primary texts in this course can be read in the context of environmental issues, histories, aspirations, and scholarly debates. While they might shape, contribute to, or suggest solutions for tangible problems, they can also be read in relation to conceptual debates about how well they seem to address or persuade various kinds of readers. We can explore questions such as: How effective might different people see these texts as examples of environmental literature? What is environmental literature and what kinds of models might different examples suggest for addressing environmental problems? Why might different audiences find particular texts

less or more effective in terms of the way they are written and the perspectives they seem to support?

Your primary task with this assignment is to make a persuasive academic argument about why you think a particular text on the syllabus should be seen as ultimately less or more effective as a form of environmental literature than others might think, even though any text will have its pros and cons. In order to do so, you will need to identify your target audience as precisely as possible (postcolonial ecocritics? environmental anthropologists? philosophical posthumanists? literary scholars focusing on contemporary U.S. fiction or nonfiction and/or particular authors?). You will need to do your own research to find relevant debates in the fields you most want to address. Whether you can find academic scholarship on your specific text written by those in your target audience or not, you will need to develop an argument that addresses the concerns of that audience in ways they might find persuasive. Your argument should be debatable (i.e., some of those in your target audience could presumably disagree for particular reasons about how effectively the text in question works). Your argument should also be supportable primarily through a close reading of the text in question and engagement with relevant scholarly debates (citing particular examples and sources). The assignment is an opportunity for you to dig deeper into a text that you are particularly excited about, in order to develop and support an argument for other scholars you would really like to persuade.

Requirements

- Engage **one** of the primary texts from the syllabus (unless you check with me first);
- Additional research is required (scholarly, peer-reviewed sources);
- Use consistently an appropriate style and citation method (MLA, APA, Chicago);
- Proofread (carefully) to avoid grammar and spelling errors;
- Formatting: 1.5-spaced, with 2.5 cm margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, no extra spaces between paragraphs;
- Papers should be 7-8 pages, not counting Works Cited/Bibliography.

Assessment

Essays will be marked holistically according to the requirements specified in the assignment, with no specific percentage of marks for any one aspect. The marker will thus be making an overall judgment of the quality of the piece of work as a whole. Weaknesses in one area of the criteria may be compensated for by particular skill in another. Independence of thought and evidence of analytical ability will be rewarded.

Good:

1. Work at the highest levels will present a problem statement which is argumentative, specific and substantiated (there is evidence to support it).
2. The problem statement assumes the form of an argument which can consist of several linked questions. The student's own argument is developed in relation to adequate secondary research and engagement with relevant critical debates. There is a link between problem statement and title, and between problem statement and discussion.
3. The essay has a clear structure. The student considers the flow of the argument from paragraph to paragraph and sustains the argument throughout. The various points made are relevant to the problem under consideration in the essay.

4. The essay engages in detailed analysis, developing a critical argument about relevant texts. The student manages to present and develop his/her own ideas.
5. The essay is written in formal English of a high standard, with no mistakes of grammar or spelling.

Average:

1. Includes a problem statement, which assumes the form of an argument and is for the most part sustained throughout.
2. The problem statement is developed in relation to adequate secondary research.
3. The essay adopts a clear structure and the points made are relevant to the problem under consideration throughout.
4. The essay engages in analysis, and demonstrates some awareness of the situatedness of the texts in question. It presents and to some extent develops the student's own ideas.
5. The essay is written for the most part in correct English, with only minor mistakes of grammar or spelling.

Poor:

1. The student's problem statement is excessively general or vague, or lacks substantiating evidence.
2. The problem statement is not developed adequately in relation to secondary research, although some independent research is included.
3. The structure lacks logic, and the points made are occasionally irrelevant to the problem under consideration.
4. The essay rarely engages in analysis, limiting itself to paraphrases of the texts in question. There are few ideas presented by the student.
5. There are errors in grammar and spelling, though these do not prevent understanding of the essay text.

Unacceptable:

1. The essay lacks a problem statement.
2. The essay does not engage with secondary research.
3. The structure is illogical and confusing. The points made lack relevance.
4. The essay lacks analysis, simply providing more or less adequate paraphrases of the texts in question.
5. The essay is poorly written with numerous errors of grammar and spelling.
6. The essay does not meet the minimum length requirement.