



## EGL 390.01

Department of English  
SUNY Stony Brook University

# THE MODERN VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENT

*-Provisional Syllabus subject to change-*

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Instructor:	Sophie Lavin	Term:	Spring 2014
Office:	Humanities 1088	Class Meeting Days:	T/R
Hours:	T/R 11:30-1:00, and by appt.	Class Meeting Hours:	10:00-11:20
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### I. Welcome!

This is an upper-level English course investigating literature and the environment. At the end of this course, you will have a firm grounding in ecocritical analyses of Victorian novels and be able to discuss how these nineteenth-century texts have mapped onto contemporary concerns about global environmental change.

### II. Course Overview

This course interrogates the intersections of literature, nature, and culture in the long nineteenth-century, asking “how did the environment function in Victorian society?” The Victorian era saw the rise of rapidly changing landscapes—from the industrial city and global land colonization, to the scientific study of plant and animal species, atmospheric processes, reforestation projects, and ecologic systems. Efforts to “improve nature” developed, such as public sewers to quell the “Great Stink” of 1858, as well as public gardens and horse derbys designed for human use and pleasure. So, how did this environmental discourse manifest in literature? In our study of novels, poems, and film adaptations, we will track the literary tensions and adaptations from pastoral to urban, noting how authors such as Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and H.G. Wells responded to environmental challenges and changes over the long nineteenth-century. Alongside our study of texts, we will survey the visual culture of the era, including J.M.W. Turner and Constable, rustic naturalism, graphic cartoons, and how that culture is represented today *via* contemporary film adaptations. Our literary analysis will include surveying legal reforms, religious movements, and environmental movements—such as animal rights and ecotourism—that complicated rules of sustainable, biodiverse environments. We will also examine the relationships between the anthropogenic (human priority over nature) and ecogenic (all life forms interrelate and connect) systems, referencing contemporary ecocritics such as Heise, Buell, Snyder, and Soper. Finally, we will query whether the Victorian era saw *nature* as an *elegy*, and/or *environment* as a *bildungsroman*. Requirements include weekly quizzes and/or reading responses, a presentation, one 5 to 6 page paper, and one 7-8 page paper. EGL 204 and 206 are recommended prerequisites.

### III. Course Objectives

- Gain a basic understanding of several Victorian genres.
- Possess knowledge of environmental themes manifested in literature during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- Develop competency of the critical *and* ecocritical debates in the field.
- Utilize critical/ecocritical analysis to interpret poems and novels, and demonstrate these analyses through two written essays.
- Research an aspect of the environment in Victorian culture and convey an interpretation through a class presentation.

**IV. Required Text Editions (in most cases I have chosen the LEAST expensive editions. The below editions are required as they include critical appendices)**

- Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, Modern Library Ed. (ISBN-10: 0375757856)
- Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*. Norton Critical Ed. (ISBN-10: 0393975606)
- Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, Modern Library Ed. (ISBN-10: 0375761144)
- George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Oxford World Classics Ed. (ISBN-10: 0199538484)
  
- Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Norton Critical Ed. (ISBN-10: 0393959031)
- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, Norton Critical Editions. (ISBN10:0393927938)
- H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Dover Thrift Ed. (ISBN-10: 0486290271)
  
- All books/printouts are required and **must be brought to class** on the day they are discussed.
- Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard

**V. Recommended Texts and Materials**

- Greg Gerrard's *Ecocriticism*, Routledge. (ISBN-10: 9780415667869)
- The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (ISBN-10: 0521720907)

**VI. Grading Policy:**

- Paper #1: Review—20%/200 points
  - Paper #2: Critical—30%/300 points
  - Presentation--15 %/150 points
  - Response papers or quizzes—20%/200 points
  - Attendance, Participation and Group Work—15%/150 points
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- Total Percentage=100%/1000 points

Grades assigned for this course will be based on the percentage of total points earned and are assigned according to the following scale (as are grades for individual assignments):

Grade	Percentage	Performance
A	94% – 100%	Excellent Work
A-	90% – 93%	Nearly Excellent Work
B+	87% – 89%	Very Good Work
B	84% – 86%	Good Work
B-	80% – 83%	Mostly Good Work
C+	77% – 79%	Above Average Work
C	74% – 76%	Average Work
C-	70% – 73%	Mostly Average Work
D+	67% – 69%	Below Average Work
D	64% – 66%	Poor Work
F	63% or below	Incomplete/Failing Work

**VII. Course Policies & Course Components**

- **Attendance and Professionalism:** Please be on time. Attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will result in a grade drop. If you cannot attend a class, you should notify me in advance. It is department policy that more than four absences results in course failure. Per university policy and classroom etiquette; mobile phones, iPods, *etc.* **must be silenced** during all classroom lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to leave the classroom immediately so as to not disrupt the learning environment. Students who habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, *etc.*, and have been warned may suffer a reduction in their final class grade.
- **Hospitality:** you may bring a beverage to class, but no eating please.
- **Participation:** We are all readers and writers and speakers. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material and actively participate in discussions, take notes, and contribute to group work.
- **Group Work:** A portion of each class will be devoted to literary analysis in small groups. Everyone must take part in the group work, and, when graded as a reader response, all members will receive the same score.

- **Presentation:** You will be required to give one ten-to-twelve minute presentation (sign up on BB) to enhance our discussion of a particular text. You may lecture, use Powerpoint and/or handouts, and show images or other visual culture materials. You may choose to treat a particular theme (cultural/historical/scientific/artistic/gender, etc.) in your presentation.
- **Response papers or quizzes:** Short weekly response papers are required and will be collected on **Thursdays**. I may opt to give quizzes in place of response papers in any given week.
- **Writing Requirements:** You will write and submit two papers over the course of the semester. Both should be in MLA format, thesis-driven, critical, and require close reading; outside research (both historical and contemporary) will be encouraged.
  - Your first paper will be a review of one of the novels we read during the first half of the semester, and must respond directly to one of the historical critical reviews we read during the first weeks of the semester. It should be between 1,500 and 1,800 words (approx. 5-6 pages), and is due by MIDNIGHT on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, through SafeAssign on BB ( an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you will be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. After the assignment is processed, as instructor I receive a report from SafeAssign that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment).
  - I will look at rough drafts *in office hours* through Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>.
  - The second paper will pose a critical argument that situates itself within the context of the novels read during the second half of the semester. You may incorporate revised portions of your first paper, but must also expand on those readings in order to support your argument. You will be required to address the claims of **two critical articles, and two primary texts**. It should be between 2,100 and 2,400 words (approx. 7-8 pages), and is due by 11:20 a.m., Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> through SafeAssign on BB. I will look at rough drafts *in office hours* through Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### X. Presentation Guidelines

**Goal:** Throughout your careers you will be required to give presentations, whether on Grand Rounds or at a business meeting. The goal of this exercise is to have you develop a ten to twelve-minute professional presentation that includes *original information* (not just points we have discussed in class) that will enhance our discussion of the texts. For instance, if you are presenting on Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, tell us something about the sanitation conditions in the nineteenth-century. Who was responsible for sifting through the dust heaps? Were there any governmental reforms? Try to distinguish how the nineteenth-century was different from our own. Relate your theme back to the author and text at-hand. How does this theme manifest in our novel? Cite specific passages in the novel that we can all close read together. You may want to provide a historical background.

You may wish to use a PowerPoint presentation to help guide your project. Additionally, I encourage you to utilize handouts, pictures, PowerPoint, images, artworks, quotes, video, audio, etc. I have created a list of **approved** web resources on BB that you may wish to use. The Library also has many resources you may wish to consult. The ArtStor database gives you access to many nineteenth-century paintings and images too.

**Requirements:** -Meet the 10-12 minute requirement, and use supplemental materials

-Address how your topic relates to the novel

-Provide *original information* and a critical interpretation that will enhance our discussion of the novel

-Submit an annotated Works Cited page, PowerPoint with Works Cited slide, or a handout with Works Cited page, etc. (you must document the sites/resources used to create the presentation).

#### **Grading Rubric (Total Points=150):**

##### **1. Meets Assignment Criteria (40 points):**

-(10 points) Addresses environmental topic in relation to novel

-(20 points) Provides historical information on topic or novel

-(10 points) Teaches us something about the novel

##### **2. Preparation (40 points):**

-(40 points) Uses a variety of original information, including handouts, PowerPoint, images, artworks or other information from a variety of sources (key word is variety).

**3. Presentation and Delivery Style (40 points):**

- (15 points) Speaks clearly and makes eye contact with audience
- (15 points) Organizes presentation into concise points
- (10 points) Addresses questions from audience

**4. Works Cited Page (30 points):**

- (30 points) Uploads annotated Works Cites page, PowerPoint with Works Cited slide or handout with Works Cited page.

**The Modern Victorian Environment: READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE**

(an asterisk \* denotes the assigned reading is on Blackboard in the Documents folder)

Date	Finish This Homework <u>Before</u> Class	Topics to be Discussed in Class
1/28	<b>INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE &amp; THE ENVIRONMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literary and Environmental Terms and Concepts: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism, Ecogenic, Nature, Environment, Ecocriticism, etc.</li> </ul>
1/30	<b>INTRODUCTION: ECOCRITICISM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ruskin's "White Thorn Blossom"</li> <li>Chadwick's "Sanitary Conditions" report</li> <li>Taylor's 1792 pamphlet "A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sanitary Conditions in Victorian England</li> <li>Public Works</li> <li>Animal Rights</li> <li>19<sup>th</sup> Century Science</li> <li>Natural vs. Built Environments</li> </ul>
2/4	<b>TRANS-CORPOREALITY AND POSTHUMANISM IN <i>FRANKENSTEIN</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> (1-128)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transforming the Human Body</li> <li>Epistolary Form,</li> <li>from Agamben's <i>The Open: "Taxonomies," "Anthropogenesis,"</i> and "Between"</li> </ul>
2/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Frankenstein</i> (129-197)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alaimo's "Trans-Corporeality,"</li> <li>from Cary Wolfe's <i>What is Post-Humanism?</i></li> <li>Kevin Connor's film adaptation</li> </ul>
2/11	<b>ENGLAND'S ECOLOGICALLY HARD TIMES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charles Dickens' <i>Hard Times</i> (1-124)</li> <li>Presentation #1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industrialization</li> <li>Factory Laws</li> <li>Speciesism</li> <li>From <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i>: Macdonald's "Ecocinema Experience"</li> </ul>
2/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charles Dickens' <i>Hard Times</i> (124-223)</li> <li>RR/Q#1 &amp; Presentation #2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The human/non-human divide</li> <li>Animality</li> <li>John Irvin's film adaptation</li> </ul>

2/18	<b>BUILT &amp; NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS IN <i>OUR MUTUAL FRIEND</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charles Dickens' <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> (1-164)</li> <li>Presentation #3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from Luc Ferry's <i>The New Ecological Order</i>: notion of the legal status of nature</li> </ul>
2/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OMF (164-298)</li> <li>RR/Q#2 AND Presentation #4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heidegger's "Building," "Dwelling," "Thinking"</li> <li>Land Ethics</li> </ul>
2/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OMF (298-422)</li> <li>Presentation #5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Morton's idea of "Ecology Without Nature"</li> </ul>
2/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OMF (422-560)</li> <li>RR/Q#3 AND Presentation #6</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bakhtin's "Aesthetic Empathizing"</li> <li>BBC's film adaptation</li> </ul>
3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OMF (560-684)</li> <li>Presentation #7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from Heise's <i>Sense of Place and Sense of Planet</i>: "Some Like it Hot: Climate Change and Eco-Cosmopolitanism"</li> </ul>
3/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OMF (684-801)</li> <li>RR/Q#4 AND Presentation #8</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patrick Murphy's <i>Transversal Ecocritical Praxis</i>: "Consumption as Addiction, Sustainability as Recovery"</li> </ul>
3/11	<b>Eco-Justice in <i>The Moonstone</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wilkie Collins' <i>The Moonstone</i> (1-154)</li> <li>Presentation # 9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>from Patrick Murphy's <i>Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies</i>: "Difference and Responsibility in Literary Alternatives to the Nation-State"</li> </ul>
3/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Moonstone</i> (154-259)</li> <li>Presentation #10 AND <b>PAPER #1 DUE</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land vs. Portable Property Rights</li> </ul>
3/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Moonstone</i> (260-390)</li> <li>Presentation #11</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From Elaine Freedgood's <i>The Ideas in Things</i></li> </ul>
3/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Moonstone</i> (390-482)</li> <li>RR/Q#5 AND Presentation #12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brantlinger's notion of "Imperial Gothic"</li> <li>Robert Bierman's film adaptation</li> </ul>
4/1	<b>Environment and Empathy in <i>Daniel Deronda</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DD (1-100)</li> <li>Presentation #13</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From Lawrence Buell's <i>The Future of Environmental Criticism</i>: "The Ethics and Politics of Environmental Criticism"</li> </ul>
4/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DD (100-193)</li> <li>RR/Q#6 AND Presentation #14</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From Ursula Heise's <i>Sense of Place and Sense of Planet</i>: Risk Theory</li> </ul>

4/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DD</i> (194-273)</li> <li>• Presentation #15</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i>: “The Aesthetics and Ethics of Eco-Film Criticism”</li> </ul>
4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DD</i> (274-369)</li> <li>• RR/Q#7 AND Presentation #16</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naess’ notion of “Ecosophy T”</li> </ul>
4/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DD</i> (369-433)</li> <li>• Presentation #17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Rowland’s <i>Ecocritical Psyche</i> “Hunting Signs”</li> </ul>
4/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DD</i> (434-524)</li> <li>• RR/Q#8 AND Presentation #18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i>: Ladino’s “Working with Animals”</li> </ul>
4/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DD</i> (530-621)</li> <li>• Presentation #19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from Livingstone and Withers <i>Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science</i></li> </ul>
4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DD</i> (621-End)</li> <li>• RR/Q#9 AND Presentation #20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tom Hooper’s BBC film adaptation</li> </ul>
4/29	<b>BIOREGIONALISM in <i>Tess of the d’Urbervilles</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tess</i> (1-100)</li> <li>• Presentation #21</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from <i>The Bioregional Imagination</i>: David Landis Barnhill’s “Critical Utopianism and Bioregional Ecocriticism”</li> </ul>
5/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tess</i> (200-300)</li> <li>• RR/Q#10 AND Presentation #22</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roman Polanski and David Blair’s film adaptations</li> <li>• From <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i>: “Working with Animals: Regarding Companion Species in Documentary Film”</li> </ul>
5/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tess</i> (300-End)</li> <li>• Presentation #23</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haraway’s <i>When Species Meet</i></li> <li>• from Vakoch’s <i>Feminist Ecocriticism</i>: “Reintegrating Human and Nature...” and “Ecofeminist Theories of Liberation...”</li> </ul>
5/8	<b>Humanism &amp; Post-Humanism in <i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>IDM</i> (1-End)</li> <li>• Presentation #24 AND <b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from Cary Wolfe’s <i>Zoontologies</i>: Alphonso Lingis’ “Animal Body, Inhuman Face”</li> <li>• John Frankenheimer’s film adaptation</li> </ul>

\* Note: The Schedule is subject to revision

