

# **ENGLISH 486.01: ADVANCED STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT (Winter 2020)**

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Class meets Tu/Th: 2:00 to 3:15  
Classroom: SA 109  
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“I start the engine of my car. Liquefied dinosaur bones burst into flame. I walk up a chalky hill. Billions of ancient pulverized undersea creatures grip my shoes. I breathe. Bacterial pollution from some Archean cataclysm fills my alveoli—we call it oxygen. I type this sentence. Mitochondria, anaerobic bacteria hiding in my cells from the Oxygen Catastrophe, spur me with energy. They have their own DNA. I hammer a nail. In consistent layers of ore, bacteria deposited the iron in Earth’s crust. . . . I walk on top of lifeforms. The oxygen in our lungs is bacterial outgassing. Oil is the result of some dark, secret collusion between rocks and algae and plankton millions and millions of years in the past. When you look at oil you’re looking at the past.”

■ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects*

## **Course Description:**

Eco-theorist Christopher Manes, critiquing the environmental damage made possible in part by anthropocentrism, observes that “To privilege intellect or self-consciousness [or language], as opposed to photosynthesis, poisoned fangs, or sporogenesis, may soothe ancient insecurities about humanity’s place in the cosmos, but it has nothing to do with evolutionary theory and does not correspond to observable nature.” In this course we will explore the emerging field of multispecies studies, a field in which anthropocentrism is shown to be inconsistent with the discoveries of modern science, ecological networks and “companion species” are revalued, and the category and nature of life itself is being rethought. We will rethink the nature of and relationality between and among animals, plants and humans. Topics for analysis may include corporeality (bodies), species, inter-species encounters, animals and animality, wildness, post-humanism, biophilia, plant-thinking, extirpation and extinction, indigenous relationships with more-than-human animals, interdisciplinarity, new materialism, animism, and more. For instance, if, as science demonstrates, trees communicate and cooperate with other trees and care for their offspring, how does this scientific knowledge change how we view the world and how we view plants? How can the subject-object binary be rethought? What were the lives of our Neanderthal ancestors like? How do we transform western ideologies such as humanism and individualism to take into account not just human Others but the entire rest of the living, breathing, transpiring, gurgling, howling, trumpeting world? How does it *feel* to be alive? How can we open ourselves to the vital possibilities of multispecies communities?

### **Required Books:**

Gail Anderson-Dargatz, *The Spawning Grounds*

Richard Powers, *The Overstory*

Claire Cameron, *The Last Neanderthal*

Additional required course materials will be available via the U of Calgary Library and the internet. They are all listed on the Class and Reading Schedule. Please download it from D2L and save it to your computer.

### **Your Assignment Portfolio:**

Short theory paper (4 – 5 pp. including works cited, due February 13<sup>th</sup>): 20%

Analytical research essay (9 – 12 pp. including endnotes and works cited, due March 19): 20%

Multispecies research-creation project (due weeks 12 and 13, April 7): 40%

Final registrar-scheduled, ~~closed-book~~ open-book examination: 20%

TOTAL 100%

### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

**STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE AND SUBMIT ALL OF THE ABOVE ASSIGNMENTS IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR A PASSING GRADE IN THE COURSE.**

**Please download from D2L and save to your own computer or tablet both 1) this course syllabus and 2) the class and reading schedule** for easy reference throughout the term and so that you can access it at any time. Consult the class and reading schedule weekly so that you know which text(s) to bring to class each week and when assignments are due. You do not need to bring all of the course texts to each class, just the one(s) we are studying that class.

**Variety and coverage.** The theory paper, analytical research paper and multispecies research-creation project will each be on a different text or topic for the sake of course coverage.

**Research-creation project.** Students will propose, design and carry out a multispecies research-creation project. Each student must write a one-paragraph proposal and then arrange a one-on-one consultation with the professor about the proposed project so I can make sure that the scope of the project is adequate, neither too large and ambitious to comfortably handle during the term nor of too little potential to merit 40% of the coursework, and so that I can offer guidance, resources and project mentorship. An additional information sheet, project ideas and inspirations and a project timesheet will be distributed and discussed during the first couple of classes.

**Research-creation** is "an approach to **research** that combines creative and academic **research** practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation." SSHRCC

**Google alerts.** This is just a suggestion, but you might want to set google alerts for each of our primary literary texts on the course. It is a handy way of having research come to you.

**Spelling, grammar, punctuation, style, and other formal elements of writing** will be assessed with respect to all assignments for the course, not just specific assignments. There really is no instance in which incorrect or very poor writing is desirable, not even in casual emails or text messages.

**Active learning:** The classes will be conducted as a mixture of lecture, class and small-group discussion, group work, field work, workshop, and other forms of learning. A combination of various learning activities provides better absorption and integration of materials and stimulates further thought and insight. Group discussion or group activities of any kind are not time fillers. Participation in all such activities, not just lectures, is compulsory. A crucial part of intellectual work is being able to speak about it with others. In short, students will be expected to assume the role of active participants in the co-construction and dissemination of knowledge rather than that of merely passive consumers of it. This includes participation in discussion and other credit-free assignments and activities carried out during class time.

Regular and punctual attendance of classes, the taking of extensive notes, and studying are all essential to learning.

**Attendance:** A strong commitment to class attendance, completing the assigned readings in advance of the class for which they are scheduled, avidly participating in your own and others' learning, demonstrating respectful, accountable and open intellectual engagement with the course materials and with fellow students and the professor are very important components of learning. Think of a course as a community, a group of living, breathing, thinking, responding, feeling, knowledge-creating beings -- not unlike you yourself. A course is a kind of workplace or think tank, in effect. Intermittent attendance (more than a couple of absences per term) *always* results in losing one's place in terms of the material and in lower grades.

**Taking notes:** Research studies have shown that handwritten class notes are markedly superior in terms of acquiring a more thorough understanding of course material and for retention of material in one's memory.

Keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to take notes. In other words, notes are not given but taken. Sometimes people assume that only when there is a PowerPoint Presentation on the screen should notes be taken, but this is not true. Take notes whenever good observations, ideas or insights are on offer, on screen, in dialogue or in lecture.

Along similar lines, I highly recommend that you **annotate and underline** the course texts. Don't try to preserve pristine copies of your books for resale to other students who will underline and annotate and therefore may do better than you did in the course! Underlining and annotating in the margins are the best ways of acquiring and consolidating your knowledge of textual material. If you 'make tracks' in your text (though not, of course, in any library books ever), you will be far more likely to take ownership of the knowledge we will be co-creating in the classroom. It is also far more efficient when it is time to study for a test to study your notes, marginalia and underlining in the text than to re-read the books!

**Exam:** Anything and everything we study in the course and for which you are responsible outside of class (e.g., completing the reading of the texts, the watching of videos and films, activities, etc.) may be test material.

**Final exams in general:** Registrar-scheduled exams are not scheduled by individual instructors, and instructors have no input or choice as to when or where they are held. As per university regulations, students must be available for examinations up to and including the last day of the examination period.

**Terminology:** Only booklength works of fiction are called novels. Novels are works of the imagination. Works of nonfiction are not fiction: therefore they are not novels. You can call them nonfiction, literary nonfiction, creative nonfiction, or you can refer to them as books or texts. Genre is key to the reading and accurate comprehension of texts. **In other words, the word "novel" is not synonymous with "book."**

**Formatting:** All type-written assignments must be double-spaced in 12-point font with 1" margins on all four sides of the page.

**Times New Roman** is the default font for work in English literature, though you may use another easily readable font such as **Arial, Cambria, or Garamond**. No fun fonts, please.

**Late penalties** will be deducted for late assignments. Late penalties can and sometimes do result in a failing grade on an assignment so students will want to start assignments well in advance of any due date. **The late penalty for assignments is one mark per day late.** That is, if an assignment merits a 20/25 (80%, A-) but comes in two days late, the mark will drop two marks to 18/25 (76%, B). This measure is in place in order to ensure a level playing field for everyone in the course and to facilitate timely completion both of your assignments and my marking. Timely completion is made possible by starting your assignments well in advance of their respective due dates.

**Technology:** The instructor reserves the right to outlaw the use of phones, tablets, computers, or other distractions in class. **Surfing the web, checking email or social**

**media, taking phone calls or texts during class is strictly forbidden!! Taking calls or texting by leaving the classroom is not allowed either.** Walking into class late or leaving early is not advised. Such behaviour is far more disruptive and distracting to you, the people near you and the professor than you probably imagine.

**Avoid this common misperception:** We are not studying literary texts simply in order to extract “the main idea” or to get “the general drift” of a text! Quite the opposite. We will be focusing on what is actually on the page. For the same reason, you MUST bring the assigned reading(s) of the day to class. If you don't bring the text of the day to class, you are completely missing the point of literary studies, which is based on close textual analysis first and foremost.

**Double-sided printing of assignments is very highly encouraged** in order to save paper and trees. Please also feel free to use factory-recycled paper or even paper that has already been used on one side (if you choose this option, obviously you would just print on the unused side). This is not only permissible but admirable. Just draw a line diagonally through material printed or written on the “wrong” side and make sure your pages are stapled in order as you would for any assignment. **Your grade will NOT suffer if you use recycled or previously used paper.**

**No folders necessary for assignments.** Please **DO NOT** use any plastic cover sheets for your assignments. They have an annoying tendency to flap shut while one is trying to read and mark them, and using plastic contributes to waste, chemical pollution and the generation of even more carbon. Just a simple staple or clamp in the upper left-hand corner of the assignment is perfect. Please fasten your work before handing it in. I do not normally tote a stapler around with me to and from class, nor are there staplers in the classrooms. Handing in unfastened work increases the chances of loss of your work, late penalties, etc., and paper clips often grab onto and attach to other papers in a pile of papers and cause pagination havoc.

**Submission of assignments.** Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates, and they must be physically handed to the instructor. At this point, unless otherwise stipulated, I cannot accept electronic submissions. If you absolutely cannot hand me your work in class, then do not shove your professional work under my (or anyone else's) office door. It can and does get trampled and muddied, lost, or put under the wrong professor's door. If your paper is late, hand it in via the English Dept. office between 8:30 and 4:30 (the office is closed from 12:00 to 1:00) or outside regular business hours via the wooden Essay Drop Box just outside the English Department office. Assignments are date-stamped by the office staff at about 4:00 so if you are close to the deadline you should submit your work before 4:00. But if you hand your work directly to me, you avoid all of these complexities.

**Feedback.** For each of your written assignments, I will give you editorial feedback on how you can improve the quality of your work. It is expected that you address any indicated deficiencies, errors or infelicities – or even if your writing is very good, you can always improve along the lines I highlight – prior to submitting your next assignment. (In other words, you don't want to make the same errors, infelicities or omissions over and over.) Save your marked assignments. Do not recycle them right away (or at all).

**Grading system:** The Desire 2 Learn (D2L) system keeps a running total of your marks, and your final grade will simply be the letter grade corresponding to the accumulated number of marks you have earned in your assignments by the end of the course. You yourself can also, of course, keep your own running total by saving your graded and returned assignments and adding up the marks as you earn them. Your final grade is simply the number of total marks you accumulate out of 100: it is not a total of percentages (i.e., it is not a total of 60% on one assignment + 76% on another, etc.).

The standard table below correlates percentages with letter grades and GPAs. This grading scale is standard across the Department.

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding up or down when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the 4-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

**Plagiarism:**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

**Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:**

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive

to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events <http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is [smecuofc@gmail.com](mailto:smecuofc@gmail.com).

**English Department Website:**

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/english>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

**Writing support:**

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

**Library and Research Support:**

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: [maboyd@ucalgary.ca](mailto:maboyd@ucalgary.ca).

Find The English Pages research guide here:

[https://library.ucalgary.ca/sb.php?subject\\_id=52619](https://library.ucalgary.ca/sb.php?subject_id=52619)

**Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:**



**Academic regulations and schedules:**

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

**Grade appeals:**

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

**Deferral of term work and final examinations:**

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

**Student Accommodations:**

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

The student accommodation policy can be found at:[ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy).

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available

at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf> .

**Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip>

**“Safewalk” Program:**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

**Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:**

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at [ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

**Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:**

[arts1@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts2@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts3@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts4@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@su.ucalgary.ca)

**Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office:** <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds/role>

### **Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):**

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses ([www.ucalgary.ca/usri](http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri)). Your responses make a difference – please participate in USRI Surveys."

### **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:
  - a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
  - b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
  - c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
  - d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request

that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see  
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT**

According to the University Calendar; <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2.html>

“The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.” This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff”. Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.