ES 183: Films of the Natural and Human Environment
Summer Session B 2016
University of California, Santa Barbara
TR 6:30-8:40 pm, GIRV 2128
Instructor: Jen Martin, Bren 4011, jamartin@history.ucsb.edu
Office hours: Thursday 4-6 pm and by appointment

Introduction: Welcome to ES 183: Films of the Natural and Human Environment! In this course, we will study how film—documentaries, features, shorts—have shaped our ideas about nature from the early 1900s to the present. We will learn to think about film beyond simple stories of triumphs or tragedies (or of progressive or declensionist narratives). How should we understand the role of film in environmentalism? How should we talk about issues and evaluate problem-solving in film? How should we understand the relationships among art, objectivity, and advocacy in environmental films? We will explore these questions and others in ES 183 as we reflect on the power of film to change how we look at the natural world and how we choose to live there. I would like you to walk out of our classroom with the background knowledge and analytical skills to answer these questions.

Readings: You should complete all of the assigned readings before each class meeting. Please bring that day’s reading and notes (either digital or hard copy is fine) to class, so that we can discuss the text together. All assignments are available on GauchoSpace in an effort to reduce costs for students.

Assignments and Grades

Grade Breakdown
In-class participation and informal writing: 27 %
Key terms quiz: 14 %
Critical Film Review Essay: 26 %
Take-home Essays: 33 %

***For every 24 hours that any assignment is late, the grade will drop by one letter. That means, for example, an A paper turned in 30 hours late will become a C paper.***

Participation: The success of this course depends on your good-faith participation. This means coming to every class prepared to contribute. I will make every effort to learn your name, and I might call on you to contribute to a discussion even if you do NOT raise your hand. All classes will have a mixture of lectures, discussions, selections from films, informal in-class writings, and other exercises, so there will be a number of different ways for you to participate. Participation can mean something as simple as asking or emailing a question! Almost every class I will ask for short, informal written responses about that day’s readings, lecture, or film in order to encourage you to keep up with the readings and to evaluate how well you understand the course’s content and themes.

If you need to miss a class for a personal, medical, or religious reason, you must notify me in advance. Neither exemptions nor extensions will be granted after the fact. Please check your email regularly. Please do not use your electronic devices during class for any reason except for note-taking. This is especially important during film screenings as the bright lights will be distracting to your neighbors. If someone is talking during a discussion and your head is buried in a laptop without looking up or taking any notes, I will assume that you are not
paying attention to the issues at hand, so your grade for that day’s participation will reflect that.

**Key terms quiz:** I will give you a list of seven key terms on **Thursday, August 11** from the glossary in Timothy Corrigan’s *Short Guide to Writing About Film*. This glossary is available on Gauchospace. You will define each term as closely to Corrigan’s language as you can.

**Critical Film Review Essay:** Choose any film listed at the end of the syllabus and write a critical review of that film. I will post a grading rubric to Gauchospace for this assignment. Some of the films are difficult to access, so you may need to use the interlibrary loans services available in the library. **Please plan ahead.** Your review must be 5-6 pages in length, typed, 12-point font, double-spaced, with page numbers, and proofread. In the first part of the review, you should try summarize and evaluate the film. You should assume that your reader has NOT seen the film. What did you like or not like? Why? What are its themes, narrative, characters, plot, point of view, sound? Use the key terms you learned from Corrigan. In the second part of the review, you should identify at least two ways that the film succeeded and at least two ways that the film did not succeed in shaping your ideas about nature. How did the film make you feel or think differently about the environment? In what ways did the film tackle an issue and/or evaluate problem-solving? In what ways, if at all, did your film address the relationships among art, objectivity, and advocacy in environmentalism? Don’t forget an introduction and a conclusion. **Please turn in a hard copy of your critical film review essay at the beginning of class on Thursday, August 25.**

**Take-home essays:** You will have eight days to prepare essay responses to two out of three questions based on the course content and skills. Each essay will be about 3-4 pages in length. You must use lectures, discussions, presentations, and readings to craft your essay answers. **You must turn in the hard copy of your essays to me at my office by 12 pm on Friday, September 9.** I will be holding extended office hours during week six, so that you can turn in the hard copy of your take-home essays to me earlier if you wish. Please do not slide your essays under the office door.

**Other policies**

*Crashing:* If you are not yet registered, during week one you should sign the waiting list at the end of each class. Please see the instructor.

*Equal Access for All Students:* If you have any learning or medical condition that requires accommodation to complete the course work, please ensure that the Disabled Students Program (DSP) is aware of your disability and that you are familiar with your DSP responsibilities. See [http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/Index.aspx](http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/Index.aspx). I am committed to work with you and DSP to find the appropriate accommodations.

*Plagiarism:* UCSB takes plagiarism and other academic misconduct very seriously. If you turn in any work that fails to acknowledge the contributions of others, it may result in failure of the assignment or the course itself. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please ask. We will discuss plagiarism in detail.

*Incomplete Grades:* Incompletes will not be given for this class, except in the most extreme circumstances, such as a debilitating illness or death in the immediate family.
Copyright: All of the materials you receive through this course are subject to federal copyright laws and university policies. Distribution of these materials, such as posting them online or selling them to third party businesses, are strictly prohibited.

Schedule:

Week One

T, Aug. 2: Introductions: Who Are We in the Environmental Movement?
Presentation: A Fierce Green Fire: The Battle for a Living Planet, 2012

PAST NATURES

R Aug. 4: Finding Eden in Wilderness

Week Two

T, Aug. 9: Ecological Indians
Presentations: Ecological Indian PSA, 1971; Avatar, 2009

R, Aug. 11: Green Imperialism
Presentation: King Kong, 1933

Key Terms Quiz Today, Thursday, August 11

Week Three

T, Aug. 16: New Deal Natures
Presentation: The Plow That Broke the Plains, 1936; The River, 1937

R, Aug. 18: Disney Postwar Fantasies
Presentations: Bambi, 1942; Nature’s Half-Acre, 1951
PRESENT NATURES

Week Four

T, Aug. 23: Hunting the Hunters
Presentation: Jaws, 1975; Grizzly Man, 2005


R, Aug. 25: Fishing the Oceans
Presentations: End of the Line, 2009; Leviathan, 2012
Reading: Callum Roberts, “Mare Incognitum,” and “Ecosystems at Your Service,” In The Ocean of Life, 213-40.

Critical Film Review Essay Due Today, Thursday, August 25

Week Five

T, Aug. 30: Politics of Food
Presentation: Food, Inc., 2008

FUTURE NATURES

Presentations: Manufactured Landscapes, 2006; Forgotten Space, 2010

Week Six

T, Sept. 6: Energy
Presentation: China Syndrome, 1979

R, Sept. 8: Knowing Climate Futures: Or Will there be any happy endings in the future?
Presentation: Merchants of Doubt, 2014

Take-Home Essays Due By Friday, September 9, 12 pm, in Bren 4011.
## Film Options for Critical Film Review Essay

1922 *Nanook of the North* (Ecological Indians)
1934 *Man of Aran* (Fishing the Oceans)
1940 *Grapes of Wrath* (New Deal Natures)
1953 *Bear Country* (Disney Postwar Fantasies)
1958 *White Wilderness* (Disney Postwar Fantasies)
1960 *Harvest of Shame* (Politics of Food)
1972 *Deliverance* (Hunting the Hunters)
1974 *Chinatown* (New Deal Natures)
1979 *Alien* (Hunting the Hunters)
1982 *Blade Runner* (Industrial Sublime)
1988 *Gorillas in the Mist* (Green Imperialism)
1992 *Lessons of Darkness* (Industrial Sublime)
1997 *Princess Mononoke* (Will there be any happy endings in the future?)
2000 *The Return of the Navajo Boy* (Ecological Indians)
2004 *Darwin’s Nightmare* (Will there be any happy endings in the future?)
2007 *Into the Wild* (Finding Eden in Wilderness)
2008 *Milking the Rhino* (Green Imperialism)
2011 *If a Tree Falls* (Introductions: Who Are We in the Environmental Movement?)
2013 *Pandora’s Promise* (Energy)
2014 *I Am Chat Wutty* (Introductions: Who Are We in the Environmental Movement?)
2014 *Wild* (Finding Eden in Wilderness)
2014 *Mission Blue* (Fishing the Oceans)
2014 *Food Chains* (Politics of Food)
2015 *Under the Dome* (Energy)