ES 183: Films of the Natural and Human Environment
University of California, Santa Barbara, Spring 2018
M 5:00-7:50 pm, W 5:00-5:50 pm, GIRV 1116
Instructor: Jen Martin, Bren 4011, jamartin@history.ucsb.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays, 1:00--3:00 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 progressive or declensionist narratives). How should we define environmental film? How should we talk about issues and evaluate problem-solving in film? What do environmental films actually do out in the world? 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. I would like you to walk out of our classroom with the background knowledge and analytical skills to answer these questions.

Readings and films outside of class: You should complete all of the assigned reading and film watching before each class meeting. Please bring that day’s reading and your notes (either digital or hard copy is fine) to class, so that we can discuss the text together. All readings assignments are available on Gauchospace in an effort to reduce costs for students. Some of the films will be on reserve at the Davidson library, and other films you will have to rent through your streaming provider of choice—Amazon, iTunes, Hulu, others.

Assignments and Grades

Grade Breakdown
In-class participation and informal writing: 20 %
Multiple choice exam on key terms: 10 %
Exam on readings and films: 25 %
Critical film review essay: 20 %
Take-home essays: 25 %

***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 a classmate is talking during a discussion and your head is buried in a laptop or smart phone without looking up or taking any notes, I will assume that you are not paying attention, so your grade for that day’s participation will reflect that fact.

Multiple-choice exam on film terms: There will be a 50-question multiple choice exam on key terms based on the glossary in Timothy Corrigan’s Short Guide to Writing About Film. Please bring a full-page bubble test answer sheet to class that day. This glossary is available on Gauchospace. This exam will be on Wednesday, April 11.
Exam on readings and films: There will be a multiple-choice exam based on the content, arguments, evidence from the readings and films shown in and outside of class. Please bring a full-page bubble test answer sheet to class that day. We will discuss what the questions might look like in class beforehand. This exam will be on Wednesday, May 23.

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 may be difficult to access, so you may need to use the interlibrary loans services available in the library. Please plan ahead. Your review must be 7 pages (2100 words) in length, typed, 12-point font, double-spaced, with word count, page numbers, and proofread. In the first part of the review, you should 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? 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 Wednesday, May 16.

Take-home essays: You will prepare essay responses to 2 out of 3 questions based on the course materials. Each essay will be at least 7 pages (2100 words) 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 6 pm on Monday, June 11. I will be holding extended office hours in week 10, so that I can offer feedback on your drafts or you can turn in the hard copy of your take-home essays to me earlier if you wish.

Other policies
Crashing: If you are not yet registered, during week one you should sign the waiting list at the end of class.

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. 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:

1.2 W, April 4 What elements should we notice when we watch films?: On taking notes

PAST NATURES

2.3 M April 9 Finding Eden in Wilderness
In-class Presentation: Episode 2: “The Last Refuge (1890–1915),” in Ken Burns’ National Parks, 2009

2.4 W April 11 Multiple-choice exam on film terms

3.5 M April 16 Ecological Indians Part 1
In-class Presentations: Ecological Indian PSA, 1971; Avatar, 2009

3.6 W April 18 Ecological Indians Part 2
Watch at home: Imaging Indians, 1992, available on UCSB library from an UCSB IP address.

4.7 M April 23 Green Imperialism
In-class Presentation: King Kong, 1933

4.8 W April 25 New Deal Natures
In-class Presentation: The Plow That Broke the Plains, 1936; The River, 1937

5.9 M April 30 Disney Postwar Fantasies
In-class Presentations: Bambi, 1942
Watch at home: Nature’s Half-Acre, 1951

PRESENT AND FUTURE NATURES

5.10 W May 2 Pulling back the curtain
Watch at home: “Islands” episode of the BBC’s Planet Earth II series
Reading: Chris Palmer, Shooting in the Wild: An Insider’s Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2010), 1-7, 52-77, 154-166.
6.11 M May 7 Hunting the Hunters
In-class Presentation: Jaws, 1975

6.12 W May 9 Why do we look at animals?
Watch at home: Sharkwater, 2006

7.13 M May 14 End Times of Ecology?
In-class Presentations: Soylent Green, 1973; Children of Men, 2006

7.14 W May 16 Light against Darkness
Watch at home: A River Below, 2017

**Critical Film review essay due in class today**

8.15 M May 21 Industrial Sublime
In-class Presentation: Manufactured Landscapes, 2006

8.16 W May 23 Exam on readings and films

9.17 M May 28 No UCSB classes

9.18 W May 30 Turning inward
Watch at home: Greenlit, 2010.

Take-home essay questions distributed today in class.

10.19 M June 4 Whose Future?
In-class Presentation: Sleep Dealer, 2008

10.20 W June 6 Wrap-up

**Monday, June 11 Take-home essays due by 6 pm in Bren 4011.**
Film Options for Critical Film Review Essay

1922 Nanook of the North
1940 Grapes of Wrath
1966 Namu: My Best Friend
1972 Deliverance
1974 Chinatown
1979 Alien
1982 Blade Runner
1988 Gorillas in the Mist
1992 Lessons of Darkness
1997 Princess Mononoke
2000 The Return of the Navajo Boy
2004 Darwin's Nightmare
2007 Into the Wild
2008 Milking the Rhino
2010 Birdemic: Shock and Terror
2013 Pandora’s Promise
2014 I Am Chut Wutty
2015 Racing Extinction
2015 Salt of the Earth
2016 Embrace of the Serpent
2016 The Seasons in Quincy
2017 Okja
2017 Trophy
2017 Rat Film