
CONCEPTS OF ECOLOGY IN WRITING STUDIES

THEORY, METHOD, OBJECT



Professors	Dr. Julia Romberger Dr. Daniel P. Richards
Term	Summer Doctoral Institute 2018
Dates	June 25—July 6 / Asynchronous July 9—July 20 / MTWRF 9:30am—10:50am July 23—August 3 / Asynchronous
Location	BAL 2019
Website	sites.wp.odu.edu/conceptsinecology
Office Hours	By appointment only

OVERVIEW

That's the problem with people, their root problem. Life runs alongside them, unseen. Right here, right next. Creating the soil. Cycling water. Trading in nutrients. Making weather. Building atmosphere. Feeding and curing and sheltering more kinds of creatures than people know how to count.

A chorus of living wood sings to the woman: If your mind were only a slightly greener thing, we'd drown you in meaning.

The pine she leans against says: Listen. There's something you need to hear.

—Richard Powers, *The Overstory* (2018)

Scope

This class will focus on the concept of ecology and how it permeates writing studies. We will start by looking at ecological thinking as an epistemological concept, and then explore the history of ecology within the field, including recent use of ecology as a foundational metaphor and also as a way of reconsidering *ethos* from a feminist standpoint. The course explores how ecology as a concept has influenced our way of developing methodologies from work with activity, Actor-Network, and new materialist theories that use ecological concepts in work on literary analysis, environmental case studies, technical and risk communication, and rhetorics of sustainability and environmentalism. The course culminates with a critical look at ecology as pedagogical influence through the trends of ecocomposition, environmental service-learning, and visual rhetoric.

Goals

Understand how ecology as both metaphor and materiality pervades the epistemologies and ontologies of writing. *Identify* key trends, objects of study, and sites of (in)action where ecology as a conceptual or practical forces resides. *Locate* yourself in relation to these forces. *Create* an artifact that productively responds to the situation at hand.

Books

Bennett, J. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke UP, 2010.

Dobrin, S. I., ed. *Ecology, Writing Theory, & New Media: Writing Ecology*. Routledge, 2012.

Haraway, D. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke UP, 2016.

Morton, T. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. Columbia UP, 2018.

Weisser, C. R., & Dobrin, S. I., eds. *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. SUNY Press, 2001.

PROJECTS

20% | Reading Logs

For each of the first 20 days (weighted 1% each), students will post reading logs to the course website. These reading logs should focus more on synthesis and connection than personal, immediate reaction. As such, these daily posts are *critical*—they must establish, unless otherwise noted, two of the following: (i) an internal tie to other readings, (ii) an external tie to projects or a larger academic conversation, and/or (iii) an additional tie to mainstream culture. Each post must be 300 (+/- 20) words and be written to your peers and professors as audience, as they will all be public, posted as responses to each day's prompt on the website. Students must use their Old Dominion email address when posting.

Due: 9:00am each day over the first four weeks.

20% | Class Participation

As a Ph.D. course, engagement in class discussion and productive facilitation of challenging, critical conversation among peers is the expectation. It is suggested that students participate each and every class; students are encouraged to come prepared with specific passages of the course texts to unpack. Questions, alternative perspectives, close readings, and synthesis between points raised by peers are all effective ways to participate.

Due: Each class.

20% | Visualization

Visualization is a useful way to understand relationships and situatedness. The process of composing a visual can help identify relationships in ways that purely textual exposition or analysis at times cannot. As such, each of you will create—using a technology, broadly understood, of your choice—a visual representation or concept map of a topic, object of study, or theory relevant to the course.

In essence, we'd like you to create a *mindmap* connecting concepts (or noting disconnects between concepts) between the readings. Focus on concepts and disciplines, particularly. When developing connections think about things like: Who influences whom? What are the commonalities and differences? How are terms used across these readings? An attached rationale must also be included, with an approximate length of 1500 words.

Due: Friday, July 20.

40% | Artifact

We use the word “artifact” here to describe your major project because theories and ideas are just that: concrete tools used for practical purposes. The length of this project will vary but it might be useful to think of it in terms of a 10-12 page paper (3000-3600 words) in terms of the expected research and writing workload. Students will meet with either professor during week four to discuss the trajectory and scope of the artifact; they must bring a one-page proposal of work to the meeting to guide discussion. Students will select one of the following five options detailed below.

Annotated Syllabus: This option is suggested for those students who are drawn to ecology as a topic and analogy for the teaching of writing. This artifact option asks student to craft a syllabus for an undergraduate writing course, complete with course description, learning objectives, course texts, schedule, and robust descriptions of three substantive projects. The syllabus should outline a class relevant to the topic of ecology. The syllabus itself should be 5 pages in length. The remaining 7 pages (2100 words) will include a detailed rationale outlining the specific choices made in the creation of the course and how the themes, objectives, projects, and texts connect to form a meaningful academic experience for students. All course texts must be original, found outside those provided by the professors.

Research Proposal: This option is suggested for those students who are interested in pursuing a larger research project on the topic of ecology. Given the shortened semester, students cannot be expected to produce a full-length, research-based essay but can provide detailed proposal for preparation for a dissertation prospectus, publication project, or public outreach initiative. This proposal must have a clear vision of methodology and a detailed description of research methods, research questions, literature review, and statement of relevance to the larger research body as a whole. The proposal should be 3500 words.

New Media Production: This option is suggested for those students who are inspired to produce an artistic or technical artifact after encountering the course texts. This option provides students with considerable flexibility as to the technology, medium, audience, and purpose of the production. All productions must be accompanied with a rationale (1200 words), detailing the design or production-based decisions made and how the course texts, and the theory and methodologies therein, shaped specifically the production.

Conference Paper: This option is suggested for those students who wish to pursue an academic project for the purpose of the publication. In preparation for this process it is typical for researchers to present at conferences relevant to the theme and topic of the paper. This option requires that students compose an 8-page conference paper (2400 words) that produces an original argument, a new line of inquiry, or a reinterpretation of an extant theory or text. The paper ought to be accompanied with a 4-page outline (1200 words) of why the specific CFP or conference was chosen, whom the student deems the audience to be, and how the argument outlined in the conference paper ties to the nature, community, and theme of the meeting.

Book Review: This option is suggested for those students who are interested in getting a publication to their credit. Book reviews are an effective to “get your foot in the door” of the publication world. Length of review varies depending on the journal of choice, but regardless of the journal the review to be submitted for credit for this class is to be 12 pages in length (3600 words). Reviews are a summary of a recent, relevant book as well as an identification of the audience and limitations of the text. It is a critical activity, and requires that the book be situated in the field as a whole. Students pursuing this option should seek confirmation of the book for review by both the professors and the book review editor of the journal at hand.

We are allowing the final two weeks to serve as the time spent on this artifact. There are no assigned readings during weeks five and six—only further readings for your consideration based on topic area. Students are strongly encouraged to add their own found readings and texts to a shared class library in Google Drive. Whatever the artifact you choose to craft, it must be imbued with literature and ideas covered in our time together and also with literature and ideas found through your own personal, tailored research.

Due: Sunday, August 5th.

POLICIES

Attendance

Students must attend all 10 in-class meetings. More than one late will affect the student's participation grade. Excused absences or lateness must be made well in advance, and must pertain to a medical or family emergency or religious observance.

Accommodations

Old Dominion University is committed to ensuring equal access to all qualified students with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you experience a disability that will impact your ability to access any aspect of this class, please present the professors with an accommodation letter from OEA so that we can work together to ensure that appropriate accommodations are available to you. If you feel that you will experience barriers to your ability to learn in the class but do not have an accommodation letter, please consider scheduling an appointment with OEA to determine if academic accommodations are necessary. The Office of Educational Accessibility is located at 1021 Student Success Center and their phone number is (757) 683-4655. Additional information is available at the OEA website at odu.edu/educationalaccessibility.

Grading

The reading logs will be assigned a score of 1 (excellent), 0.75 (good), 0.5 (incomplete), or zero (missing). The final artifact, visualization, and class participation will be assessed using a letter grade, numerated as follows: A (92.5—100); A- (90—92.4); B+ (87.5—89.9); B (82.5—87.5); B- (80—82.4); C+ (77.5—79.9); C (72.5—77.4). Any lower is a failing grade. Incompletes will only be considered if the student has (i) 80% of the work already done and (ii) a schedule for completing the remaining work.

Late Work & Revision

Late work will not be accepted, unless accompanied with verification of a family or medical emergency or a note of religious observance. Students cannot revise for a higher grade.

Technology

Students are expected to check their institutional email on a daily basis. Daily contributions on the WordPress course website is also required for participation.

SCHEDULE

Daily Reading Calendar

The table below corresponds to the format of the website, where the rows are weeks and the columns are days. Bracketed numeration indicates chapter numbers. Note that the final two weeks (weeks five and six) have no assigned readings as students will be expected during that period to conduct research for their own individual artifact. Full bibliographic entries of each reading are accessible on the website, as are lists of supplemental readings, organized by topic or area of interest. Entries in *italics* are supplemental and not required reading. Guest speakers are noted with asterisks (*).

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1 6/25-6/29	Hay <i>Gottschalk</i> <i>Druschke & McGreavy</i>	Hallowell Sotsisowah <i>Ebert</i> <i>Deloria</i>	Spinoza (4) Collins Marshall <i>de Jonge</i> <i>Miller</i>	Plumwood (intro + 1 chapter of choice)	Rickert (1, 2)
Week 2 7/02-7/6	Haraway (2016) Haraway (2015)	Bennett (1-3) <i>Carbaugh</i>	Bennett (4-6) Richards	Morton (pp. 1-110) <i>Luke</i>	Morton (pp. 111-62) <i>or</i> Cruikshank
Week 3 7/09-7/13	Latour (2004) Latour (2005) Walsh et al.	Cooper Edbauer <i>Washell</i> <i>Lyall/Cooper</i>	Herndl/Brown Sackey* (2018) <i>Sackey (2011)</i> <i>Nixon</i>	Welling Demos Doyle	Garrard Kerridge Ryan et al.
Week 4 7/16-7/20	Weisser/ Dobrin <i>Foss</i>	Dobrin (intro + 3 chapters) Romberger	Deluca (1-3) Rivers/Weber <i>Rivers*</i>	Hutchins Fagerjord	Fleckenstein et al. Spinuzzi