



ENGL 294-06/ENVI 294-02

## **Green Language: Transatlantic Romanticism and Nature Poetry**

W 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.  
Old Main 001

Professor Taylor Schey  
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Office: Old Main 208  
Office Hours: T & R 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (and by appointment)  
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### **Course Description**

The concept of nature that informs most environmentalist discourses would seem to designate that which is independent of human meaning and value: the wilderness, the great outdoors, that thing over there which sustains and surrounds us. And yet, like all concepts, “Nature” has a history and is tied to specific ideas about what it means to be a human. This course studies a central chapter in this history, examining the place and function of the natural world in the Romantic and post-Romantic poetic tradition. In particular, we’ll explore how writers in this tradition interrogate the relation between human beings and the natural world, and we’ll ask whether such poetry might open up an understanding of ecology that complicates some of the assumptions underwriting current environmental practices. While we’ll spend the most time at the beginning of the nineteenth century with British Romanticism, our readings in poetry will also take us across the pond and into the twentieth century. As an introduction to Romanticism, this course will also introduce you to the field of Romantic studies: we’ll read and assess a wide range of canonical literary-critical works that engage so-called Romantic nature poetry, from Geoffrey Hartman’s work on the *via naturaliter negativa* to new historicist critiques of Romantic ideology to current ecocritical theories.

## Course Objectives

- Sharpen skills of close reading
- Develop ability to discuss literature critically with others
- Develop ability to ask incisive questions about Romantic literature
- Develop ability to build a sophisticated argument based on close textual analysis
- Develop a vocabulary for discussing poetry and poetics
- Learn to tell a story about Romantic and post-Romantic poetry
- Learn to situate this poetry within broader intellectual and historical contexts
- Learn to think critically about concepts such as nature, humanity, and ecology.

## Attendance Policy

You are allowed one excused or unexcused absence. After that, your overall grade will go down one third of a letter grade for each absence (from an A to an A-, A- to B+, etc.). College-authorized absences and documented absences for college-sponsored activities are the only exceptions to this rule. Coming late to class counts as one half of an absence.

## Technology Policy

Please note that laptops, phones, tablets, and all other electronic devices are not allowed in the classroom. You are required to read all of the texts on paper and to bring them with you to class.

## Required Texts

*The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. D: The Romantic Period* (9<sup>th</sup> edition, ed. M. H. Abrams et al.)

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

These texts are available at *Highlander - The Shop at Macalester* and elsewhere; the other required readings will be available on Moodle.

## Grade Breakdown

Class Participation.....	15%
Class Presentation.....	15%
Short Response Papers.....	20%
Final Paper Proposal.....	15%
Presentation of Final Paper Topic.....	5%
Final Paper.....	30%

## *Class Participation*

This course relies on your preparation and participation. You are required to have completed all the assigned readings prior to the beginning of each class; you are also

required to bring the readings with you to class. Please note that attendance is not a part of the participation grade. While you are expected to come to every class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, it is not sufficient just to show up—you are also required to contribute actively and thoughtfully to class discussion. Participation can take different forms and is not evaluated in purely quantitative terms. An occasional insightful comment or question can often be more valuable to our discussion than non-stop chatter. At times, exercising silence to allow your peers to speak can also be a valuable form of participation.

### *Class Presentation*

Once this semester, you will be responsible for presenting and leading a discussion of the literary-critical work assigned for that week (if there is more than one assigned, then you can take your pick). Presentations should be approximately 15 minutes and should aim to accomplish two tasks: (1) to summarize the argument of the work—its central components, stakes, implications, and/or problems—in relation to the assigned poetic or primary texts; and (2) to raise questions for further discussion regarding, for example, elements of the argument that you find to be confusing, connections you see between the reading and other texts we've covered in the course, or broader implications and applications of the reading. You're free to use any visual aids you deem appropriate; just email me any files you'd like to use. You will be evaluated on your preparation and the clarity with which you present the reading.

You are required to turn in (via email, by 11:59 p.m. on the day you present) a word document of your presentation, which can be composed either in full sentences or in detailed outline.

### *Short Response Papers*

These are low-stakes writing assignments in which you formulate an open-ended question or a set of questions that was generated out of your close engagement with specific features of the poetic reading(s). Response papers are due at the beginning of class and must be one to two double-spaced pages. They will be evaluated on a scale of ✓+, ✓, or ✓-.

There are three general moves you need to make in your response papers:

- (1) Point out *specific* textual features that puzzled or interested you (e.g. rhetorical figures, grammatical ambiguities, repetitions, metrical irregularities, formal features, etc.). Please make sure to quote the text(s) you address.
- (2) Discuss these features to explain why they interested you and how you understand their function and significance.

(3) Formulate an honest question (or a set of questions) that arises from your engagement with these textual features, one that is neither unanswerable nor immediately answerable (using, say, Wikipedia). One of the ideas here is for you to gather your thoughts for our in-class discussion, so be prepared to voice as well as to discuss the question(s) that you formulate.

You may structure your response papers as you see fit. You could, for example, start with (2), noting a thought that you had about the reading(s), and then (1) point to and more closely examine the textual features that produced this thought, before (3) raising a question generated by your consideration of (1) in light of (2). In any case, the important thing is for you to connect your thoughts and ideas explicitly to the text or texts you discuss. I'm not looking for you to formulate a thesis or to make an argument; rather, the goal is for you to learn how to raise questions about poetry. In turn, such questions could provide you with a starting point for your final paper.

### *Final Paper*

Your Final Paper is a formal essay of ten pages; I will discuss the assignment in more detail later in the semester.

You are required to compose a three- to five-page proposal for your final paper topic. This will be due in my email inbox by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup>

You are also required to give a short in-class presentation (~5 minutes) of your final paper topic during our last session on Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>.

Final papers are due in my email inbox by 11: 59 p.m. on Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day late (from an A to an A-, A- to B+, etc.).

### **Essay Grading Policy**

**A:** The A paper demonstrates a superior command of syntax and organization that engages the reader and maintains pace and interest throughout. It displays a sophisticated style, a strong writing voice, and a clear sense of audience. The writer analyzes cogent and ample evidence. Transitions are used to mark turns in the argument, sentences have varied lengths and structures, and individual sentences are concise. An A paper contains very few errors in grammar or mechanics.

**B:** The B paper differs from the A paper in degree of sophistication. More than adequate, it has a clear thesis, an organizing principle, and ample evidence presented effectively. The writing is clear and coherent and the paper contains relatively few errors in grammar and mechanics.

**C:** The C paper demonstrates competency and meets the basic requirements. It has a thesis that develops throughout the paper, though the evidence and analysis are weaker than in the B paper. There may be some errors in grammar and mechanics.

**D:** The D paper has major flaws in organization, argument, awareness of audience, and grammar and mechanics.

**F:** The F paper fails to meet the minimum requirements. It may have serious flaws that render it incomprehensible, or it may be late, unfinished, or plagiarized.

## Honor Code

All written work must be your own. If you use secondary sources, cite them according to the MLA guidelines. A free and user-friendly MLA guide is available at [Purdue University's Online Writing Lab](#). Please consult the instructor if you have any questions regarding proper citation. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and suspected cases will be reported to the Director of Academic Programs. You are responsible for knowing about and adhering to the [Macalester Academic Integrity policies](#).

## Course Schedule (subject to change at my discretion)

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introductions: “A language that is ever green”</b>
W 1/25	Raymond Williams, “Nature” (Moodle)  Jonathan Bate, “Introduction” to <i>Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition</i> (Moodle)  John Clare, “Pastoral Poesy” (872)  William Wordsworth, “Expostulation and Reply” and “The Tables Turned” (280)
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>“And I awoke and found me here”</b>
W 2/1	William Wordsworth, “Lines Written in Early Spring” (280) “Nutting” (308); “The World is Too Much with Us” (347); “A slumber did my spirit seal” (307); “The Boy of Winander” (381 [ll. 389-425])  Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>The Rime of the Ancient Mariner</i> (443)  John Keats, “La Belle Dame sans Merci” (923)  Geoffrey Hartman, “Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness” (Moodle)

<b>Week 3 The Greater Romantic Lyric</b>	
W 2/8	<p>William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" (288)</p> <p>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp" (439); "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (441); "Frost at Midnight" (477)</p> <p>Percy Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind" (791)</p> <p>M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric" (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 4 Wordsworth: <i>The Prelude</i></b>	
W 2/15	<p>William Wordsworth, <i>The Prelude</i> (Book First [356-370]; from Book Second [370-378]; and from Book Sixth [384-387])</p> <p>Geoffrey Hartman, "Via Naturaliter Negativa" (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 5 The Sublime—in Theory</b>	
W 2/22	<p>Edmund Burke, selections from <i>A Philosophical Inquiry</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>Immanuel Kant, selections from <i>The Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (Moodle)</p> <p>Christopher Hitt, "Toward an Ecological Sublime" (Moodle)</p> <p>Paintings by Caspar David Friedrich and J. M. W. Turner (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 6 The Mind-Nature Problem(?)</b>	
W 3/1	<p>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni" (Moodle)</p> <p>Percy Shelley, "Mont Blanc" (770)</p> <p>John Ruskin, from <i>Modern Painters III</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man"; "The Idea of Order at Key West"; "Of Mere Being"; "Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself" (Moodle)</p> <p>Frances Ferguson: "Shelley's <i>Mont Blanc</i>: What the Mountain Said" (Moodle)</p>

<b>Week 7 Some Versions of Pastoral</b>	
W 3/8	<p>William Wordsworth, "The Ruined Cottage"; "Michael: A Pastoral Poem" (320); "The Solitary Reaper" (342)</p> <p>Jean Toomer, "Reapers" (Moodle)</p> <p>John Keats, "To Autumn" (951)</p> <p>Jerome McGann, from "Keats and the Historical Method in Criticism" (Moodle)</p> <p>Jonathan Bate, "Living with the Weather" (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 8 SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 9 Political &amp; Emotional Landscapes</b>	
W 3/22	<p>Charlotte Smith, "Beachy Head" (59)</p> <p>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "France: An Ode"; "Fears in Solitude" (Moodle)</p> <p>William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (335)</p> <p>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode" (479)</p> <p>Marjorie Levinson, "The Intimations Ode: A Timely Utterance" (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 10 Transcendentalism I</b>	
W 3/29	<p>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, selections from <i>Biographia Literaria</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Nature</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>James McKusick, "Ralph Waldo Emerson: Writing Nature" from <i>Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology</i> (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 11 Transcendentalism II</b>	
W 4/5	<p>Henry David Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> (selections TBD)</p> <p>Lawrence Buell, selection from <i>The Environmental Imagination</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>Barbara Johnson, "A Hound, a Bay Horse, and a Turtle Dove: Obscurity in <i>Walden</i>" (Moodle)</p>
F 4/7	DUE: <i>Final Paper Proposal</i> due in my email inbox by 11:59 p.m.

<b>Week 12 Animals I: Birds &amp; Bards</b>	
W 4/12	<p>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Nightingale" (Moodle)</p> <p>John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale" (927)</p> <p>John Clare, "The Nightingale's Nest" (870)</p> <p>Percy Shelley, "To a Skylark" (834)</p> <p>Thomas Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush"; "Shelley's Skylark" (Moodle)</p> <p>W. B. Yeats, "The Wild Swans at Coole" (Moodle)</p> <p>Robert Frost, "The Oven Bird" (Moodle)</p> <p>Greg Garrard, "The Romantics' View of Nature" (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 13 Animals II: Others</b>	
W 4/19	<p>William Blake, "The Lamb" (120); "The Sick Rose" (128); "The Fly" (129); "The Tyger" (129)</p> <p>Robert Burns, "To a Mouse" (171)</p> <p>John Clare, "Mouse's Nest" (880); "Badger" (Moodle)</p> <p>Herman Melville, "The Maldive Shark" (Moodle)</p> <p>Emily Dickinson, "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" (Moodle)</p> <p>Walt Whitman, "A Noiseless Patient Spider" (Moodle)</p> <p>Robert Frost, "The Most of It"; "Design" (Moodle)</p> <p>Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish"; "The Moose" (Moodle)</p> <p>Cary Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human: 'Animal Studies' and the Humanities" (Moodle)</p>
<b>Week 14 Dark Ecology; Presentations of Final Paper Topics</b>	
W 4/26	Timothy Morton, selection from <i>Ecology Without Nature</i> (Moodle)
Su 5/7	<i>PAPER 2 DUE IN MY EMAIL INBOX BY 11:59pm</i>