**Hong Kong Shue Yan University**

**Department of English Language & Literature**

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

2019-2020

**Course Title** : Critical Animal and Plant Studies

**Course Code** : ENG 516

**Number of Credits** : 3

**Duration in Weeks** : 15

**Contact Hours Per Week** :Seminar (3 Hours)

**Pre-requisite(s)** : NIL

**Prepared by** : Prof. Wong Kin Yuen

**Course Aims**

Following the innovative guidance of Donna Haraway’s feminist treatment of animals in *When Species Meet* (2008), Cary Wolfe’s posthumanist’s view in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (2003), and the all-out argument for the wellness of animal by Peter Singer (2009), this course sets out to expose, and to offer critical responses to the subjection and exploitation of animals, under the general conceptualization of the human-nonhuman relationship in ecological criticism. Such an effort expands onto the area of the newly developed “critical plant studies.” Wendy Wheeler (2016), Michael Marder (2013), Stefano Manuso and Alessandra Viola (2013) have all ventured into the project of granting plants a position of agency, intelligence, learning, memory and communication. Both critical animal studies and plant studies touch on basic issues relating to areas such as ecolinguistics, ecopsychology as well as environmental humanities. Hence this course also aims at a comparative perspective under the so-called “Elemental Ecology,” one that brings in the Western culture of water, air, soil and fire to be placed alongside the Chinese philosophy of *yin-yang*, *wu-xiang* (five elements) in *I-Ching* where *mu* (plant, wood) is a unique element as a classical Chinese cosmology.

**Course Outcomes, Teaching Activities and Assessment**

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| **Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)** | |
| Upon completion of this course students should be able to: | |
| **CILO1** | delineate the most updated concepts and theories on critical animal and plant studies; |
| **CILO2** | apply the concepts and theories in reading and interpreting cultural texts; |
| **CILO3** | formulate a posthumanist ethics that takes animals, plants and nonhuman others into account; and |
| **CILO4** | develop an East-West comparative perspective in Elemental Ecology. |

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| **Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)** | |
| **TLA1** | Discussion – the course will adopt the format of a seminar, with students take turn to lead discussion on the required readings |
| **TLA2** | Presentation – students are required to apply the concepts acquired in the course in analyzing cultural texts. They are encouraged to make use of cultural texts from both East and West. |

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| **Assessment Tasks (ATs)** | | |
| **AT1** | Presentation  *Students are required to deliver an oral presentation in which s/he should demonstrate the ability to apply the theories and concepts acquired in the course in analyzing cultural texts.* | 30% |
| **AT2** | Participation  *Students are highly recommended to finish the readings before class and take an active role in discussion.* | 20% |
| **AT3** | Term Paper  *Students are to write a term paper on a selected topic in which s/he should demonstrate the ability to construct a theoretical framework to argue for a thesis with illustration from cultural texts.* | 50% |
|  | TOTAL | 100% |

**Alignment of CILOs, TLAs and ATs**

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| **Course Intended Learning Outcomes** | **Teaching and Learning Activities** | **Assessment Tasks** |
| CILO1 | TLA1, TLA2 | AT1, AT2 |
| CILO2 | TLA1, TLA2 | AT1, AT2 |
| CILO3 | TLA2 | AT1, AT2, AT3 |
| CILO4 | TLA2 | AT1, AT2, AT3 |

**Course Outline**

**Week 1 Introduction: Posthumanism and Human-Nonhuman Ecologies**

Simone Bignall and Rosi Braidotti. (2019) “Introduction,” *Posthuman Ecologies: Complexity and Process After Deleuze*. Ed. Rosi Braidotti and Simone Bignall. New York & London:Rowan & Littlefield. pp.1-16

Simon P. James. (2015) “Biocentrism and Ecocentrism,” *Environmental Philosophy: An*

*Introduction.* Cambridge: Polity Press. pp.43-63

**Week 2 Human-Animal Ethics**

Danielle Sands. (2014) “’Beyond’ the Singular? Ecology, Subjectivity, Politics,” *The Animal Catalyst: Towards A Human Theory*. Ed. Patricia MacCormack. London & New York: Bloomsbury. pp.49-65

Joanna Bourke. (2011) “Talking Animals,” *What It Means to be Human: Historical Reflections from the 1800s to the Present*. Berkeley: Counterpoint. pp.29-60

Peter Singer. (2003) “Not for Humans Only: The Place of Nonhumans in Environmental Issues,” *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*. Ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Roston III. Oxford: Blackwell. pp.55-64

Reference:

Tom Regan (2015) “Animal Rights: What’s in a Name?” *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*. pp.65-73

**Week 3 Critical Animal Studies**

Dawn McCance. (2013) “Feminist Contributions to Critical Animal Studies,” *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Suny Press. pp.87-103

Jakob von Uexküll,. (2010) “Introduction,” *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Human*. Trans. Joseph D. O’Neil, Minneapolis. London: University of Minnesota Press. pp.44-52

Vinciane Despret. (2012) “Do Animals See Themselves as We See Them?” *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions*? Trans. Brett Buchanan. Minneapolis. London: University of Minnesota Press. pp.29-35

Reference:

Richie Nimmo. (2015) “Apiculture in the Anthropocene: Between Posthumanism and Critical Animal Studies,” *Animals in the Anthropocene: Critical Perspectives on Non-human Futures,* Ed. Human Animal Research Network Editorial Collective. Sydney: Sydney University Press. pp.177-199

**Week 4 Animal and Philosophy**

Brian Massumi. (2014) *What Animals Teach Us about Politics*. Durham & London Duke University Press. pp.1-54

Reference:

Marie-Dominique Garnier. (2011) “Animal Writes: Derrida’s *Que Donc* and Other Tails,”

*Demenageries: Thinking (of) Animals after Derrida*. Ed. Anne Emmanuelle Berger and Marta Seqarra. Amsterdam. New York: Rodopi. pp.23-40

Peter Singer. (2005) “All Animals are Equal,” *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. 4th Ed. Ed. Michael E. Zimmerman et al. London: Pearson, Prentice Hall. pp.25-38

**Week 5 Becoming -Animal**

Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari. (1987) “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible,” *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: Athlone Press. pp.232-309

Lori Gruen. (2018) “Introduction,” *Critical Terms for Animal Studies*. Ed. Lori Gruen. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press. pp.1-14

**Week 6 Biosemiotics**

Morten Tønnessen and Jonathan Beever. (2015) “Beyond Sentience: Biosemiotics as Foundation for Animal Environmental Ethics,” *Animal Ethics and Philosophy: Questioning the Orthodoxy*. Ed. Elisa Aaltola and John Hadley. London & New York: Rowman & Littlefield. pp.47-62

Wendy Wheeler. (2011) “The Biosemiotic Turn: Abduction, or the Nature of Creative Reason in Nature and Culture,” *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Ed. Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby. London: University of Virginia Press. pp.270-282

**Week 7 Reading Week**

**Week 8 Biosemiotics continues**

Wendy Wheeler. (2016) *Expecting the Earth: Life, Culture, Biosemiotics*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. pp.26-81

William Homestead. (2014) “The Language That All Things Speak: Thoreau and the Voice of Nature,” *Voice and Environmental Communication*. Ed. Jennifer Peeples and Stephen Depoe. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp.183-204

**Week 9 Critical Plant Studies**

Wendy Wheeler. (2014) “Tongues I’ll Hang on Every Tree”: Biosemiotics and the Book of Nature,” *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*. Ed. Louise Westling. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.121-135

Wendy Wheeler. (2017) “How the Earth Speaks Now: The Book of Nature and Biosemiotics as Theoretical Resource for the Environmental Humanities in the Twenty-First Century,” *Environmental Humanities*. Ed. Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino. London & New York: Rowman & Littlefield. pp.295-311

**Week 10 The Language of Plants**

Monica Gagliano, John C. Ryan, and Patricia Vieira. (2017) “Introduction,” *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*. Ed. Monica Gagliano et al. Minneapolis. London: University of Minnesota Press. pp.vii-xxxiii

Michael Marder. (2017) “To Hear Plants Speak,” *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*. pp.103-125

**Week 11 Plants and Literature**

Erin James. (2017) “What the Plant Says: Plant Narrators and the Ecosocial Imaginary,” *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*. pp.253-272

Ursula K. Le Guin. (2015) “Direction of the Road” *The Wind’s Twelve Quarters & the Compass Rose*. London: Orion. pp.247-253

**Week 12 Plants and Literature continues**

John C. Ryan. (2017) “In the Key of Green? The Silent Voices of Plants in Poetry” *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature*. pp.273-296

Louise Glück, Selected poems from *The Wild Iris*.

**Week 13 Plants, Literature (language) as Ecosystem**

Arran Stibbe. (2015) *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*. London & New York: Routledge. pp.1-21; 161-182

Hubert Zapf. (2016) *Literature as Cultural Ecology: Sustainable Texts*. London & New York: Bloomsbury. pp.89-121

**Week 14 Chinese Plant-Ideograms as a Cultural-Ecosystem.**

Essay by K.Y. Wong will be provided.

**Week 15 Reading Week**

**Supplementary References**

1. **Environmental Humanities, Cultural Ecology and Biosemiotics**

Clark, Timothy. (2015) *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. London & New York: Bloomsbury.

Hoffmeyer, Jesper. (2998) *Biosemiotics: An Examination into the Signs of Life and the Life of Signs*. Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press.

Kirksey, Eben. (2015) *Emergent Ecologies*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Levin, Simon A. Ed. (2009) *The Princeton Guide to Ecology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Morton, Timothy. (2016) *Dark Ecology: For A Logic of Future Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Radkau, Joachim. (2011) *The Age of Ecology: A Global History*. Trans. Patrick Camiller. Cambridge: Polity.

Vaugham-Lee, Llewellyn. Ed. (2013) *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*. California: The Golden Sufi Center.

Westling, Louise. (2014) “Language is Everywhere.” *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language.* New York: Fordham University Press.

1. **Critical Animal Studies**

Baker, Steve. (2000) *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books.

Haraway, Donna. (2008) *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lorimer, Jamie. (2015) *Wildlife in the Anthropocene: Conservation after Nature*. Minneapolis. London: University of Minnesota Press.

Martel, Yann, (2002) *Life of Pi*. Edinburgh: Cannongate.

Morell, Virginia. (2013) *Animal Wise: The Thought and Emotions of Our Fellow Creatures*. New York: Crown.

Philo, Chris & Wilbert Chris Ed. (2000) *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-animal Relations*. London & New York: Routledge.

Tønnessen, Morten et al Ed. (2016) *Thinking About Animals in the Age of the Anthropocene*. London. New York: Lexington Books.

Wolfe, Cary. Ed. (2003) *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*. Minneapolis. London: University of Minnesota Press.

1. **Critical Plant Studies**

Applegate, Katherine. (2017) *Wishtree*. New York: Feiwel & Friends.

Diffenbaugh, Vanessa. (2011) *The Language of Flowers: A Novel*. New York: Ballantine.

Hall, Matthew. (2011) *Plants As Persons: A Philosophical Botany*. New York: Suny Press.

Irigaray, Luce & Marder, Michael. (2016) *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Karban, Richard. (2015) *Plant Sensing and Communication*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Kohn, Eduardo. (2013) *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human.* Berkeley. London: University of California Press.

Mancuso, Stefano & Viola, Alessandra. (2013) *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*. Trans. Joan Benham. Washington. London: Oisland Press.

Marder, Michael. (2014) *The Philosopher’s Plant: An Intellectual Herbarium*. New York: Columbia University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ (2013) *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Nealon, Jeffrey. (2016) *Plant Theory: Biopower & Vegetable Life*. California: Stanford University Press.

Powers, Richard. (2018) *The Overstory*. London: William Heinemann.

**Assessment Rubric for Participation**

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| **Criteria** | **Exemplary** | **Satisfactory** | **Developing** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Preparation** | Arrives fully prepared at every class session | Arrives mostly, if not fully, prepared (ongoing) | Preparation is  inconsistent | Rarely or never  prepared |
| **Initiative** | Questions asked focus, clarify and summarize discussion | Occasionally ask good questions | Raise questions only when asked by lecturer | Demonstrates a  noticeable lack of interest |
| **Response** | Quality of response reflects knowledge, comprehension and application of readings | Quality of response reflects knowledge, and some comprehension of readings | Quality of response occasionally reflects knowledge of readings | Quality of response shows a lack of knowledge of readings |
| **Discussion** | Quality of response extends the discussion with peers and reflects analysis, synthesis and evaluation | Quality of response extends the discussion with peers | Quality of response is poor | Unable to participate in discussion |
| **Group**  **Dynamics** | Group dynamic and level of discussion are  often better because of candidate’s  presence | Group dynamic and level of discussion are occasionally better, but not worse, because of candidate’s presence | Group dynamic and level of discussion are  sometimes disrupted  by candidate’s  presence | Group dynamic and level of discussion are  often disrupted by candidate’s presence |

**Assessment Rubric for Presentation**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Exemplary** | **Satisfactory** | **Developing** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Communication Skills** | Consistently speaks with appropriate volume, tone, and articulation. | Generally speaks with appropriate volume, tone, and articulation. | Has difficulty speaking with appropriate volume, tone, and articulation. | Does not speak with appropriate volume, tone, and articulation. |
| Consistently employs appropriate eye contact and posture. | Frequently employs appropriate eye contact and posture. | Employs infrequent eye contact and/or poor posture. | Makes no eye contact. |
| Adheres to prescribed time guidelines. | Adheres to prescribed time guidelines. | Violates prescribed time guidelines. | Violates prescribed time guidelines. |
| Employs creative use of visual aids that enrich or reinforce presentation. | Employs appropriate visual aids that relate to presentation. | Employs ineffective visual aids. | Uses no visual aids. |

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| **Content and Coherence** | Effectively defines a main idea and clearly adheres to its purpose throughout presentation. | Adequately defines a main idea and adheres to its purpose throughout presentation. | Insufficiently defines a main idea and adheres to its purpose throughout presentation. | Does not define a main idea or adhere to its purpose. |
| Effectively illustrates the ideas with critical analysis of cultural texts. | Adequately illustrates the ideas with critical analysis of cultural texts. | Insufficiently illustrates the ideas with critical analysis of cultural texts. | Fails to illustrate the ideas with critical analysis of cultural texts. |
| Employs a logical and engaging sequence which the audience can follow. | Employs a logical sequence which the audience can follow. | Employs an ineffective sequence confusing to the audience. | Lacks an organizational sequence. |
| Demonstrates exceptional use of supporting details/ evidence. | Demonstrates sufficient use of supporting details/ evidence. | Demonstrates insufficient supporting details/ evidence. | Demonstrates no supporting details/evidence. |
| **Responses to questions** | Confidently, politely, and accurately responds to instructor’s or classmates’ questions and comments. | Politely and accurately responds to instructor’s or classmates’ questions and comments. | Ineffectively responds to instructor’s or classmates’ questions and comments. | Unacceptably responds/does not respond to instructor’s or classmates’ questions and comments. |

**Assessment Rubric for Term Paper**

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|  | **Exemplary** | **Satisfactory** | **Developing/ Emerging** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Focus** | Presents an insightful and focused thesis statement. | Presents a thesis statement with adequate insight and focus. | Presents a thesis statement with minimal insight and focus. | Presents a thesis statement with no insight or focus. |
| Draws strong and clear connections between the thesis and significant related ideas. | Draws adequate connections between thesis and related ideas. | Draws insufficient connections between thesis and related ideas. | Shows no understanding  of connections between thesis and related ideas. |
| **Organization** | Effectively provides a logical  progression of related ideas and supporting information in the body of the paper. | Adequately provides a progression  of ideas and supporting information  in the body of the paper. | Provides a poorly organized progression of ideas and supporting information in the body of the paper. | Does not provide a progression  of ideas and supporting information in the body of the paper. |
| Effectively  uses transitions to connect supporting information clearly. | Adequately  uses transitions to connect supporting information. | Ineffectively uses transitions to connect supporting information. | Does not use transitions to connect supporting information. |
| Arrives at a  well-documented, logical conclusion, involving critical thinking. | Arrives at an adequately-documented conclusion. | Arrives at an insufficiently documented conclusion. | Does not arrive at a documented conclusion. |
| **Support/ Elaboration** | Effectively synthesizes complex ideas from research sources. | Sufficiently synthesizes ideas from research sources. | Ineffectively synthesizes ideas from research sources. | No evidence of synthesizing ideas from research sources. |
| Demonstrates exceptional selection of supporting information clearly relevant to the thesis and its related ideas. | Demonstrates sufficient selection of supporting information clearly relevant to the thesis and its related ideas. | Demonstrates insufficient selection of supporting information clearly relevant to the thesis and its related ideas. | Lacks supporting information clearly relevant to thesis and its related ideas. |
| Provides a meaningful presentation of multiple perspectives. | Provides an adequate presentation of multiple perspectives. | Provides a limited presentation of multiple perspectives. | Does not present multiple perspectives. |
| Effectively balances use of quotations and student paraphrasing. | Adequately balances use of quotations and student paraphrasing. | Insufficiently balances use of quotations and student paraphrasing. | Does not balance use of quotations and student paraphrasing. |
| **Style** | Exhibits skillful use of language, including effective word choice, clarity, and consistent voice. | Exhibits good use of language, including some mastery of word choice, clarity, and consistent voice. | Exhibits ineffective use of language, including weak word choice, limited clarity, and inconsistent voice. | Exhibits severely flawed use of language, including weak word choice, no clarity, and no voice. |
| Demonstrates exceptional fluency through varied sentence structure, paragraphing, flow of ideas, and transitions. | Demonstrates sufficient fluency through sentence structure, paragraphing, flow of ideas, and transitions. | Demonstrates limited fluency through sentence structure, paragraphing, flow of ideas, and transitions. | Lacks fluency through sentence structure, paragraphing, flow of ideas, and transitions. |
| **Conventions** | Demonstrates a sophisticated use of the prescribed format (MLA or APA), including title page, pagination, and citations. | Demonstrates adequate use of the prescribed format (MLA or APA), including title page, pagination, and citations. | Demonstrates limited use of the prescribed format (MLA or APA), including title page, pagination, and citations. | Demonstrates  no use of the prescribed format (MLA or APA), including title page, pagination, and citations. |
| Consistently uses standard writing conventions  in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. | Generally  uses standard writing conventions  in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. | Minimally  uses standard writing conventions  in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. | Does not use standard writing conventions in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage. |
| **Information Literacy** | Conscientiously and consistently demonstrates integrity in citing practices. | Generally demonstrates integrity in citing practices. | Inconsistently demonstrates integrity in citing practices. | Does not demonstrate integrity in citing practices. |
| Effectively employs an extensive variety of primary and secondary sources, including a significant amount of  current information. | Adequately employs a sufficient variety of primary and secondary sources including a sufficient amount of current information. | Employs a limited variety of primary and secondary sources including an insufficient amount of current information. | Does not employ a variety of primary and secondary sources and/or does not include current information. |
| Demonstrates strong evaluation skills in determining resource credibility and reliability. | Demonstrates sufficient evaluation skills in determining resource credibility and reliability. | Demonstrates limited evaluation skills in determining resource credibility and reliability. | Demonstrates no evaluation skills to determine resource credibility and reliability. |