**ENGL 663: Shakespeare**

**“Shakespeare in the Anthropocene”**

Fall Semester 2017

Instructor: Lowell Duckert

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Meeting Time: 4:00-6:50 pm W

Meeting Place: Colson Hall G10

Office: Colson Hall 131

Office Hours: 11:30 am-2:30 pm W and by appointment



(Proposed “Container Globe” made from re-purposed shipping containers)

<http://www.thecontainerglobe.com/>

In his foreword to *Ecocritical Shakespeare* (2011), Greg Garrard announces outright: “[E]nter Shakespearean ecocriticism. By that I do not mean only the application of pre-existing ecocritical approaches to Shakespearean texts, but rather the possibility . . . that ecocriticism itself might *be Shakespearean*.” More recently (2015), the geologists Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin identify the start of the Anthropocene era (the “Age of Man”) with what they call the “Orbis Spike” of 1610: a dip in global carbon dioxide coinciding with the commingling of peoples of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. In doing so, they locate William Shakespeare (1554-1616) in an epoch of human influence upon geology. But what does it mean to experience Shakespeare in this context? How do his genres express themes associated with anthropocenic existence? What role did he play in shaping post-human awareness of interconnected eco-aesthetics? How does his art react to, and potentially alter, our uncertain geopolitical scene? In sum, and in response to Garrard’s original declaration: *why* Shakespeare, right *now*?

**Learning Objectives:**

1. to consider the multiple ways Shakespeare represented his messy and material world (collapsing the ecological spaces of Globe and globe); to ask how he historically understood his environment (or failed to do so) by drawing upon pseudo-scientific theories, for example, like geohumoralism; and to examine the “storied matter” (plays and poetry) that eventuated.
2. to put early modern literature into conversation with the environmental criticism of today and its ecotheoretical trajectories – such as queer ecology, ecofeminism, vital materialism (“new materialism”), and object-oriented-ontology – simultaneously interrogatingtheir terms and expanding their horizons.
3. to think about how he speaks to, confronts, and even redresses environmental issues of the past (“The Little Ice Age”) as well as the present (the Anthropocene), thereby refusing to set historicism and presentism antagonistically apart.
4. to critique anthropocentricity in order to imagine a posthumanist ethics that accounts for love as well as strife, carefully, with human and nonhuman companions who matter: how his mediations might offer alternative futures besides unmitigated catastrophe.

**Required Books:** (available from the WVU Bookstore)

1. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; *As You Like It*; *King Lear*; *King* *Richard II*; *Titus Andronicus*; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *The Winter’s Tale*; *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Pericles*; *The Tempest*; and *Hamlet*. Although the plays are available in other formats, it is recommended that you have the Arden editions (3rd series) in order to follow along.
2. Craig Dionne, *Posthuman* Lear*: Reading Shakespeare in the Anthropocene* (punctum books: 2016). Available in print as a free e-book (donation suggested): <https://punctumbooks.com/titles/posthuman-lear/>.

**Requirements:**

1. Expect plenty of *reading*, from challenging secondary readings in ecological theory to the plays themselves. Be prepared to *participate*: I want us to grapple with the readings, pose more questions than answers, and engage in spirited discussions. (The challenge, I assure you, will be mutual.) Robin Goodfellow once “put a girdle round about the earth / In forty minutes” (2.1.175-6); we will try to match his pace.
2. *Matter scenes* are weekly responses (approximately one double-spaced page and uploaded onto eCampus every T by 11:59 pm) in which you will meditate on the physical relationship between place and the imagination. I would like you to pick a scene that you witness in your average day-to-day experience – a congested intersection, the broken vegetable drawer in your refrigerator, those pesky spider webs on the porch – and track the changes (if any) that you observe. How does the un/predictable nature of this event make you think differently (or not) about how bodies (both stories and texts) are performed? Be creative; feel free to be personal. In general, your responses are meant to ask intelligent questions about that week’s reading, generate ideas for your papers, and, I hope, enlarge your own sense of material enmeshment.
3. *A short paper* (5 pp.) on either *MND*, *AYL*, *KL*, or *R2*; one week’s secondary readings (respectively: deep ecology, queer ecology, post/sustainability studies, and political ecology); and a material form of your choice.
4. *A midterm paper* (10 pp.) that places one play in conversation with one or more ecotheoretical modes and a current environmental issue of your choice.
5. *A final paper* (20-25 pp.) of article length that builds on your midterm research.

**Grading:**

Participation and attendance in class 20%

Eco-journals (matter scenes) 20%

Short paper 10%

Final paper (includes midterm) 50%

Total 100%

**Experiential Learning Component:**

Because one of our learning objectives is to think about how early modern drama can influence current environmental policy, we will travel to the Elizabeth’s Woods Nature Preserve (just south of Morgantown) and meet with a representative from the West Virginia Land Trust who is currently developing the area for public use. Class on W 10/4 will be held in this location. If you have any reservations about this conversation, or feel unable/unwilling to join for *any* reason, I will easily assign you a different task. Please do not hesitate to tell me. <http://www.wvlandtrust.org/rec-access/elizabeths-woods/>

**Folger Theatre Performance:**

I have reserved tickets for all of us to attend the 2:00 pm matinee performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC on Sunday 10/15. Transportation will be provided. Tickets are $19.00/each; you may reimburse me at any point during the semester. (Same as above: please let me know as soon as possible if you cannot, or wish not, to attend.) <http://www.folger.edu/events/antony-and-cleopatra>

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is mandatory. Late work will not be accepted. If you foresee a scheduling conflict, please notify me as soon as possible. Incompletes will be considered only if you apply to me before the end of the term; once I agree, we will negotiate the conditions under which the grade of “I” will be changed to a letter grade and sign a contract. Incomplete work will be submitted before the last day of class of the following semester (at the latest).

**Academic Integrity:**

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/

coursecreditstermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

**Inclusivity Statement:**

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Any attempt to disrupt the nondiscriminatory environment of this class will not be tolerated. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu> .

**Affirmation of Values:**

We, the members of WVU’s Department of English, believe that critical and creative reading and writing constitute acts of radical love. We ally ourselves with a multitude of departments, student bodies, and dedicated individuals across the country and the world who refuse to remain silent within a climate of hatred and violence: be it from sexism, racism, classism, ableism, nativism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, or Islamophobia. We are committed to building communities, not dividing them. Colson Hall and our classrooms campus-wide are spaces where students, faculty, and staff may safely voice their concerns and where we may, together, foster futures more just. We aim to raise the status of those suppressed by the status quo; in assembly with human and nonhuman beings, we protest all types of environmental degradation, especially those prescribed at the expense of inhabitants’ health. Our research and syllabi affirm the core values of compassion, inclusivity, and care that a diverse humanities program holds for everyone. By telling stories of those who suffer under oppression in any form, past and present, we honor the ability of language and other means of communication – in each area of study we offer – to redress these wrongs, urge unity, and pursue peace. To those who seek shelter or wish to expand its scope, we welcome you; we thank you; we are with you.

**Adverse Weather Commitment:**

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use their best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Students who cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions must contact their instructors as soon as possible. Similarly, instructors who are unable to reach the class location will notify their students of any cancellation as soon as possible, through the many means at their disposal, to prevent students from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If students cannot get to class because of weather conditions, instructors will make allowance relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests or quizzes. Safety should be the main concern.

**Contact:**

I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours (information above), and feel free to email me at any time. Never hesitate to ask a question, express a doubt, or request clarification. Make sure that your MIX email address is operational: I might decide to focus upon specific acts/scenes for a given day, and I will occasionally post documents online.

**Schedule of Readings (subject to change, like every scene):**

**8/16** Introductions

**8/23** And / Shakespeare

Todd A. Borlik, “Shakespeare’s Mulberry: Eco-Materialism and ‘Living On’” in *The*

*Shakespearean International Yearbook* 15 (2015)

Greg Garrard, foreword to *Ecocritical Shakespeare*

Randall Martin, “Ecological Modernity in Shakespeare: an overview” from *Shakespeare and*

*Ecology*

Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, “Stories Come to Matter” in *Material Ecocriticism*

William Shakespeare, Sonnets 15-18

Julian Yates and Garrett Sullivan, introduction to “Shakespeare and Ecology” in *Shakespeare*

*Studies* 39 (2011)

**8/30** Ecology / *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Gabriel Egan, “Gaia and the Great Chain of Being” in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*

Robert N. Watson, “The Ecology of Self in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*” in *Ecocritical*

*Shakespeare*

**9/6** Trees / *As You Like It*

Madhavi Menon, “Queer Shakes” in *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of*

*Shakespeare*

Vin Nardizzi, “Shakespeare’s Queer Pastoral Ecology: Alienation around Arden” in *ISLE*

23:3 (2016)

**9/13** Climate / *King Lear*

Steve Mentz, “Strange weather in *King Lear*” in *Shakespeare* 6:2 (2010)

Robert Markley, “Summer’s Lease: Shakespeare in the Little Ice Age” in *Early Modern*

*Ecostudies: From the Florentine Codex to Shakespeare*

**9/20** Gardens /*King Richard II*

Lynne Bruckner, “‘Consuming means, soon preys upon itself’: Political Expedience and

Environmental Degradation in *Richard II*” in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now*

Rebecca Bushnell, “Composing Gardens” from *Green Desire: Imagining Early Modern English*

*Gardens*

Sharon O’Dair, “Is it Shakespearean Ecocriticism if it isn’t Presentist?” in *Ecocritical*

*Shakespeare*

**[Short paper due F 9/22 by 6:50 pm]**

**9/27** Women / *Titus Andronicus*

Sylvia Bowerbank, “Toward a Genealogy of Ecological Feminism” from *Speaking for Nature:*

*Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*

Jennifer Munroe, “Is It Really Ecocritical If It Isn’t Feminist?: The Dangers of ‘Speaking For’

in Ecological Studies and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*” in *Ecological Approaches to*

*Early Modern English Texts: A Field Guide to Reading and Teaching*

Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche, “Ecofeminism matters” from *Shakespeare and*

*Ecofeminist Theory*

**10/4** Parks / *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Vin Nardizzi, “‘Come, will this wood take fire?’ *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in

Shakespeare’s Theatres” from *Wooden Os: Shakespeare’s Theatres and England’s Trees*

**[4:00 pm trip to Elizabeth’s Woods Nature Preserve]**

**10/11** Animals / *The Winter’s Tale*

Andreas Höfele, introduction to *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in*

*Shakespeare’s Theatre*

Karen Raber, “Absent Bodies” from *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture*

Laurie Shannon, “The Eight Animals in Shakespeare; or, Before the Human” in *The*

*Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*

**10/15 [2:00 pm performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Folger Theatre]**

**10/18** Mud / *Antony and Cleopatra*

Dan Brayton, “Shakespeare and Slime: Notes on the Anthropocene” in *Ecological Approaches*

*to Early Modern English Texts: A Field Guide to Reading and Teaching*

Edward J. Geisweidt, “‘This Nobleness of Life’: Spontaneous Generation and Excremental

Life in *Antony and Cleopatra*” in *Ecocritical Shakespeare*

Ellen MacKay, “Absorption, Uncontainment, and Cleopatra’s Barge” in *The Shakespearean*

*International Yearbook* 15 (2015)

**10/25 [No class] [Midterm paper due F 10/27 by 6:50 pm]**

**11/1** Oceans / *Pericles*

Shannon Kelley, *Pericles* and the Fantasy of Shell-Dwelling” in *The Shakespearean*

*International Yearbook* 15 (2015)

Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Shakespeare Dwelling: *Pericles* and the Affordances of Action” in

*Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now*

Steve Mentz, “Fishing: *Pericles*” and“Interlude: Toward a Blue Cultural Studies” from *At*

*the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean*

**11/8** Fens / *The Tempest*

Todd Andrew Borlik, “Caliban and the fen demons of Lincolnshire: the Englishness of

Shakespeare’s *Tempest*” in *Shakespeare* 9:1 (2013)

Dan Brayton, “Consider the Crab” and “Toward a Terraqueous Ecocriticism” from

*Shakespeare’s Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration*

Simon C. Estok, “Staging Exotica and Ecophobia” from *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading*

*Ecophobia*

**11/15** Cold / *Hamlet*

Thomas Nashe, *The Terrors of the Night* (1594)

Daryl W. Palmer, “Hamlet’s Northern Lineage: Masculinity, Climate, and the Mechanician

in Early Modern Britain” in *Renaissance Drama* 35 (2006)

Kristen Poole, “When hell freezes over: The fabulous Mount Hecla and *Hamlet*’s infernal

geography” from *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare’s England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama*

**11/29** (in) the Anthropocene / Class conclusion

Craig Dionne, *Posthuman* Lear*: Reading Shakespeare in the Anthropocene*

[**Final paper due R 12/7 by 4:00 pm]**