



HL3037: THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Screenshot: Alice: Madness Returns

AY2025/2026 Semester 1

***this is a provisional syllabus subject to change**

Course Coordinator: Kai Tjoon Lim

Seminar: Wednesdays, 0930-1230; Location TBC

Course Description

This course examines how environmental thought is constructed, contested, and reproduced through cultural productions. We will consider how ecocriticism can be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective through feminist, queer, posthumanist, and decolonial discourses. We will engage with a range of fiction and media, including novels, films, video games, and short stories, to interrogate how representations of nature and ecological systems reflect, reinforce, and destabilise ideologies of power as well as planetary relations. Each medium offers distinct affordances and limitations in shaping ecological imagination, and you will critically evaluate these possibilities throughout the semester. To that end, you will develop the tools to analyse literary and cultural texts not merely as reflections of ecological crises but as active participants in shaping our collective responses to them.

Course Learning Outcomes

You will, by the end of this course:

1. Evaluate how we think about 'ecology', and what constitutes 'nature' through analysis of cultural texts
2. Employ perspectives across fields of study to consider environmental concerns.
3. Discuss complex ecological and ecocritical ideas with nuance and integrity

Required Texts:

Fiction:

- Rachel Heng, ***The Great Reclamation* (2023)**
- Helon Habila, ***Oil on Water* (2010)**
- Jeff VanderMeer, ***Annihilation* (2014)**
- Tan Twan Eng, ***The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012)**
- Excerpts from Kathleen Jamie's ***Sightlines***, Robin Kimmerer's ***Sweetgrass***, and Callum Angus's ***A Natural History of Transition*** (to be provided)

Films/Video Games:

Films:

- James Cameron, ***Avatar* (2009)**
- Yeo Siew Hua, ***A Land Imagined* (2018)**
- Andrew Stanton, ***Wall-E* (2008)**

Video Games:

- American McGee, ***Alice: Madness Returns* (2011)**
- Naughty Dog, ***The Last of Us (Part I)* (2022)**

PDFs, excerpts, and suggested secondary readings will be uploaded onto NTULearn.

Films and video games should be sourced from online platforms such as Netflix and Steam.

Assessment:

Term paper (35%)

- You will defend an original thesis about one or more of the works read in class - and do so by reading relevant passages in the work - and by reflecting on secondary material about the text and its cultural and historical context. You must engage with three or more relevant secondary sources. You will be assessed according to your ability to formulate a clear, organised argument, your engagement with critical discussion and/or issues of historical and cultural context, and your adherence to scholarly conventions concerning presentation, citation, and grammar.

Group Presentations (20%)

- You will prepare and deliver a group presentation about a topic of your choice that unpacks a text on the module. You are advised to engage with secondary criticism and theory to inform your presentation. Your presentation need not be exhaustive but should rather draw attention to a phenomenon or phenomena in the text and explain them in detail. You will be assessed according to the analytical and presentation skills demonstrated.

Preparation and Participation (10%)

- You will be evaluated on your contribution to in-class discussions. You will be assessed according to your knowledge of the text and your ability to understand contrasting perspectives on the material.

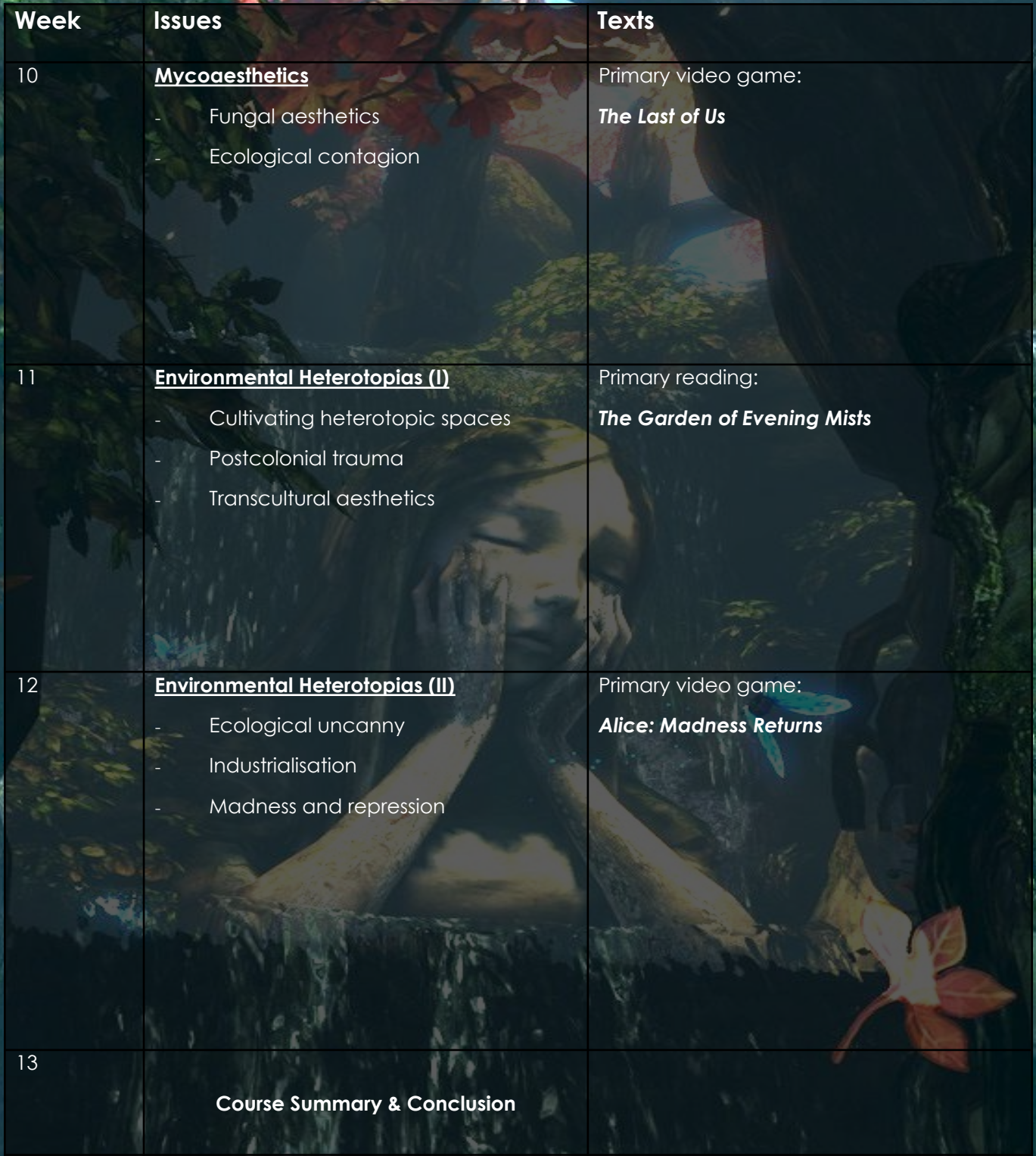
Final Exam (35%)

- You will write two essays, under examination conditions, in response to any two of ten questions relating to themes central to the module. The questions will be general and will offer you the chance to choose the texts with which to advance an argument. You will be expected to engage with three or more texts over the course of the exam, and you will also be expected to engage with two or more forms or genres of text over the course of the exam. In structuring your essays, you should also integrate and make use of the theoretical frameworks and/or secondary criticism covered throughout the semester.

Course Schedule:

Week	Issues	Texts
1	<u>Introduction to module</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Syllabus overview and course expectations- Group presentation slots- Survey of key themes, terms, and ideas	
2	<u>Ecological Perspectives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Indigenous- Biological/cellular- Queer/trans	Primary readings: Excerpts from Kathleen Jamie's <i>Sightlines</i>, Robin Kimmerer's <i>Sweetgrass</i>, and Callum Angus's <i>A Natural History of Transition</i>
3	<u>Waste Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Apocalypse- Nonhuman earth- Nostalgia- Ambivalence	Primary film: <i>Wall-E</i>
4	<u>Petroculture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Colonialism/Neocolonialism- Slow violence- Reportage	Primary reading: <i>Oil on Water</i>

Week	Issues	Texts
5	<u>Environmental Assemblages</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assemblage thinking- Transcorporeality- White geology	Primary film: Avatar
6	<u>Land Reclamation (I)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Biophilia and Geophilia- State fatherhood and the sandbox(ed) nation- Megastructural performance	Primary reading: The Great Reclamation
7	Essay Consultations	
	RECESS WEEK	
8	<u>Land Reclamation (II)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fungibility- Exploitation- Race and labour Term paper due the day before class	Primary film: A Land Imagined
9	<u>Ecogothic Fiction</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Monster culture- Queer(ed) ecologies of time	Primary text: Annihilation



Week	Issues	Texts
10	<u>Mycoaesthetics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fungal aesthetics- Ecological contagion	Primary video game: <i>The Last of Us</i>
11	<u>Environmental Heterotopias (I)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cultivating heterotopic spaces- Postcolonial trauma- Transcultural aesthetics	Primary reading: <i>The Garden of Evening Mists</i>
12	<u>Environmental Heterotopias (II)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ecological uncanny- Industrialisation- Madness and repression	Primary video game: <i>Alice: Madness Returns</i>
13	Course Summary & Conclusion	

Course Policies:

Attendance and Participation:

Regular attendance is mandatory in this course, as seminars depend on collaborative engagement with your peers and the course material. If you must miss a session, please notify me via email in advance and inform your groupmates accordingly to avoid disruptions to collaborative work. Participation requires thorough preparation as well. Complete all the **assigned primary readings or viewings** prior to each seminar and actively contribute to class and small-group discussions. Students with accommodations or recurring conflicts should discuss arrangements with me by the second week of the term.

Late Submissions and Extensions:

All assignments must be submitted by the stated deadline. Late submissions will incur a penalty of **one-third of a letter grade per calendar day** (e.g., an essay originally graded as a B+ would drop to a B after one day, a B- after two days, etc.). Submissions will close seven calendar days after the original deadline, after which no work will be accepted. Extensions are granted **only in exceptional circumstances**, such as documented illness, hospitalisation, bereavement, or other emergencies. Plan ahead to avoid technical issues as late submissions due to internet or device problems are still subject to penalties.

Plagiarism and AI:

Do not appropriate others' ideas without proper citation. Self-plagiarism is also an academic misconduct. Please refer to the university's resources on plagiarism for further information.

Only with explicit written permission from me are GenAI tools permitted in this course to enhance your own learning. However, this is limited to:

1. Exploring counter arguments to enhance your essay's critiques
2. Refining grammar, syntax, and spelling
3. Organising your own extensive notes in preparation for the final exam

You must properly acknowledge the extent of use of these tools. You **are not** permitted to generate an essay even if the prompts contain your own ideas, nor are you allowed to generate ideas from scratch for use in your submissions. Additional guidelines to follow in Week 1's seminar.

Do remember that a well-defended, original argument cannot be simply generated from a resource that is trained on a body of already published or available work. Generated writing lacks flair and character, and it can often appear flaccid and vague. Essays with high plagiarism/AI scores in Turnitin will be reported accordingly.

Seeking Help Outside Class:

Our Language Communication Cube (LCC) has a range of resources available to assist students with their writing. Do make an appointment with them should you require help with your essay writing. I am also available for consultations (outside of Week 7).