





English (ENGL) 460

The Ecological Imagination (Revision 1)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

Individualized study online 

Credits:

3

Areas of study:

Arts or Humanities

Prerequisites:

ENGL 211 and **ENGL 212** or equivalent first-year English courses. It is recommended that students also take at least one intermediate literature course before taking this course.

Precluded:

None

Challenge:

ENGL 460 has a challenge for credit option.

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

English 460: The Ecological Imagination investigates the links among literature, culture, and the environment, asking students to consider the role of cultural and literary analysis in the face of climate crisis and ecological complexity. Drawing from scholarly work in the environmental humanities as well as close readings of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, students will investigate how literature can illuminate, question, and reshape our relationships with the environment. They will have the opportunity to consider topics such as climate justice, wilderness, birds, metaphor, technology, the limitations of language and imagination, environmental racism and inequities, Indigenous representations of the environment, decolonization, the Anthropocene, pandemics, hope, grief, and visions of the future.

By the end of the course, students will have given up on language, listened through the ears in their feet, learned how to train a falcon but decided not to, taken up language again, and considered the reasons for and against boarding a spaceship to another star. In addition to writing traditional analytical essays, students will have the option to develop work in other formats such as videos, podcasts, conference-style presentations, comic books, or other forms that provide a medium in which to combine analytical argumentation and textual evidence with elegance of expression. Students will have the chance to step outside the proverbial classroom and interact with their environment in new ways, and also develop self-reflections on their work in which they will evaluate their own learning. Ultimately, they will develop original assessments of the role of the human imagination in responding to the environmental concerns of our time.

Outline

Unit 1: Climate and the Imagination introduces the field of ecocriticism and considers critical and theoretical works about literature, the environment, and the imagination.

Unit 2: Gun Island examines Amitav Ghosh's novel *Gun Island*.

Unit 3: Encountering the Earth examines works of theory, memoir, and poetry about engaging with the environment from personal and societal perspectives.

Unit 4: H Is for Hawk examines Helen Macdonald's memoir *H Is for Hawk*.

Unit 5: The Sasquatch at Home examines Eden Robinson's book *The Sasquatch at Home* and additional readings.

Unit 6: The Anthropocene and Its Erasures examines works of theory and poetry about the geological epoch known as the Anthropocene.


Unit 7: Aurora examines Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *Aurora*.

Learning outcomes

When students have completed English 460: The Ecological Imagination, they should be able to:


- Evaluate the concerns at stake within the field of the environmental humanities.
- Assess the role of literature and imaginative representation in responding to ecological complexity, including scrutiny of whose voices are heard or silenced.
- Apply the skills of close reading and secondary research in order to assess the ways in which the assigned texts approach cultural assumptions and concepts associated with the environment.
- Analyze the ways in which relevant literary concepts such as theme, metaphor, irony, point of view, form, genre, and others operate within specific texts.
- Create thoughtful, articulate, original critical analyses of the assigned texts and concepts (and of their own activities), surprising themselves and their instructor with new insights.

Evaluation

To **receive credit**  for ENGL 460, students must submit all four assignments, including the brief self-reflection that is part of each of them, and achieve a minimum grade of 50% on each assignment. Resubmission of assignments is not permitted in English 460, with rare exceptions possible in cases where an assignment receives a grade of F.


English 460 does not have a final exam.


Activity	Weight
Assignment 1: Two Short Analytical Essays	20%
Assignment 2: Analytical Essay or Alternative-Medium Assignment	25%
Assignment 3: Analytical Essay or Alternative-Medium Assignment	25%
Assignment 4: Analytical Essay or Alternative-Medium Assignment	30%
Total	100%

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's [online Calendar](#) .

Materials

Ghosh, Amitav. *Gun Island: A Novel*. Picador, 2019.  (Print)

Macdonald, Helen. *H Is for Hawk*. Penguin Canada, 2016.  (Print)

Robinson, Eden. *The Sasquatch at Home: Traditional Protocols and Modern Storytelling*. The University of Alberta Press, 2011.  (Print)

Robinson, Kim Stanley. *Aurora*. Orbit, 2018.  (Print)

Other Materials

All other course materials, including a Study Guide, additional selected readings, a writing guide, and detailed course information, can be found online.

Challenge for credit

Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about [challenge for credit](#) can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation

To **receive credit** for the ENGL 460 challenge registration, you must achieve a grade of at least 50% on each essay. Note that the challenge option requires more writing in total than the standard registration, and it expects students to demonstrate mastery of the course concepts, but it does not include access to the Study Guide lessons, the online readings, or any teaching support.

Activity	Weight
Research Essay 1	50%
Research Essay 2	50%
Total	100%



Challenge for credit course registration form

Important links

- > [Academic advising](#)
- > [Program planning](#)
- > [Request assistance](#)
- > [Support services](#)

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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