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IAH 209: Art, the Visual, and Culture  
**EcoGothic: Horror, the Supernatural, and the Environment**  
Summer 2018 | July 2 - August 16 | Online

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore the ways in which a variety of media, including literature, comics, and film, have represented cultural attitudes toward human relationships with the environment throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. We will specifically be focusing on texts that characterize these human/nature relationships with fear, discomfort, unease, anxiety, etc. These horrors emerge in a variety of ways: from fears of the unexplainable or strange within the environment itself, to more self-reflexive fears that human-induced environmental degradations will eventually make the planet uninhabitable.

We will trace the figure of the environment across the Gothic/horror genre, a genre that is often populated by encounters with ghosts, mysterious castles, and ill-fated romances. However, present-day anxieties over climate change, pollution, resource depletion, and mass species extinctions have provided new possibilities for considering how the emotions of fear and wonder have shaped—and have been shaped by—tales of the strange and horrifying in nature: haunted forests, humanoid fungi, malevolent amphibians, ecosystems that fight back. We will engage with our texts in order to think critically about cultural representations of human/nature relationships.

This course will be conducted entirely online, and will be hosted through MSU's D2L system. This means that there will be no in-person meetings. We will be using D2L to house all course content (including lectures, PowerPoint slides, tutorials, and assignment sheets), as well as for holding weekly, graded class discussions and for turning in major assignments. However, *the course will not be self-paced*: we will be working together at a set, collective pace.

### **GOALS OF INTEGRATIVE STUDIES IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES**

Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities at MSU seeks to assist students to become more familiar with ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and to be more knowledgeable and capable in a range of intellectual and expressive abilities. IAH courses encourage students to engage critically with their own society, history, and culture(s); they also encourage students to learn more about the history and culture of other societies. They focus on key ideas and issues in human experience; encourage appreciation of the roles of knowledge and values in shaping and understanding human behavior; emphasize the responsibilities and opportunities of democratic citizenship; highlight the value of the creative arts of literature, theater, music, and arts; and alert us to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

## COURSE GOALS

1. Gain an understanding of how literature and the visual arts (and the arts and humanities more generally) can (re)present different perspectives, cultures, and ways of knowing
2. Use skills in critical thinking (via methods of close reading) to analyze texts and thereby better understand interpretation: that is, the idea that texts have different, and often shifting meanings
3. Become familiar with the concept of horror and its relationship to the environment: to use the question of horror to think critically about how and why people respond to the environment in this way
4. Learn to use cultural and historical contexts to better understand written and visual texts
5. Develop and improve skills in writing and analysis

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*.

Kang, Han. *The Vegetarian*.

Moore, Alan. *Saga of the Swamp Thing: Book 2*

VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation*.

Whiteley, Aliya. *The Beauty*.

Wyndham, John. *Day of the Triffids*.

NOTE: You are not required to purchase any specific editions of these texts. The MSU Bookstore will have copies available of each, but you can often find alternate editions, including electronic/Kindle editions, online for much cheaper.

ANOTHER NOTE: We will be watching several films in this class (see list below). I am not requiring purchase of these films, because I will offer screenings of each film **at specified times** during the week each is assigned. In other words, I will open up a virtual meeting, share my screen, and play the film for you. I will do this TWICE per film. If you are unable to make it to either of the two virtual screenings for a given week, you will need to rent the film from a platform like YouTube, Amazon, iTunes, Google Play, Vudu, etc. These rentals should only cost \$3-\$4 each, but take advantage of the screenings whenever possible.

Film List:

*Proteus*.

- Available for free on YouTube.

*Rachel Carson's Silent Spring*.

- Available for free through Kanopy (will need to log in with your MSU username and password).

*Mad Max: Fury Road*. Directed by George Miller.

- Film will be screened virtually at specified times (see course schedule at the end of this syllabus). Also available for rental on YouTube and other platforms.

*The Shape of Water*. Directed by Guillermo del Toro.

- Film will be screened virtually at specified times (see course schedule at the end of this syllabus). Also available for rental on YouTube and other platforms.

*Jungle*. Directed by Greg McLean.

- Film will be screened virtually at specified times (see course schedule at the end of this syllabus). Available for free with an Amazon Prime membership, and is also available for rental on YouTube and other platforms.

*Okja*. Directed by Bong Joon-ho.

- Film will be screened virtually at specified times (see course schedule at the end of this syllabus). Available for free with a Netflix membership, and is NOT available for rental on other platforms.
- If you know in advance you will not be able to attend a screening for this film, and do not have access to a Netflix account, get in touch with me about an alternative film for you to watch.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:**

Assignment:	Weight:	Description (more detailed assignment sheets can be found on D2L):
Podcast Episode	20%	Once per semester, you will work in pre-assigned groups of 4 to hold a discussion of one of the texts assigned for that week. You will record the conversation via Zoom (MSU's version of Skype), and will upload it to our class Soundcloud account. The purpose of this assignment is to simulate the in-class discussion we lose out on with an online course. For due dates, please see the course schedule at the end of the syllabus.
Podcast Responses (x3)	10% (combined)	Each week that podcasts are due, you will be required to listen to the podcast episodes recorded by your classmates and then write a 250-word response on D2L to each podcast for that week. (Total of 500 words of writing). When it is your group's week to podcast, you will only need to respond to the other episode, and thus will only write 250 words for your response for that week.
Discussion Posts (x2)	10% (combined)	Twice this semester, you will be asked to respond to a specific prompt provided by your instructor in a short 500 word discussion post on D2L. The prompt will ask for you to take a small, specific passage from any of the texts we have read/viewed up to that point, and write a coherent analysis of that passage. The purpose of these assignments is to practice and receive feedback on the skills necessary to write your short and long papers.
Reading Quizzes (x6)	10% (combined)	Reading quizzes will be held each Friday, and are designed to motivate you to engage meaningfully with the texts assigned for that week. The

		quizzes will include one identification of a specific passage from the text/s (novels and films) and one short answer. These quizzes will help prepare you for the final exam. Each quiz will be available beginning at 9 a.m. every Friday, and will close at 9 p.m. that evening.
Short Paper	10%	2-3 page (600-900 words) paper analyzing the significance of a specific passage from any of the texts we've read up to that point, discussing any of the following: characterization, voice, tone, symbolism, metaphors/similes, descriptive phrases, etc.
Long Paper	20%	4-5 page (1350-1750 words) paper building an original interpretation of some aspect of your chosen text (any novel or film we have discussed up to that point) and incorporating 1-2 external perspectives from scholarly articles found on the library database system.
Final Exam	20%	The final exam will be cumulative. Since we will not be having a reading quiz during week 7, you can expect to answer questions about our week 7 reading and screening on the final. The exam will take the form of short answer (you will be practicing for these each week with the reading quizzes) and essay questions. You will have two hours to take the exam once you begin, and the exam will be available for 24 hours beginning at 10 p.m. on August 15.

\*Grades for this course will be scored on the 4.0 scale. This means that you can calculate your grade using the scores you earn on each assignment, and the weights for each item. Review the example grade calculation chart below to see how you can calculate your grade throughout the semester.

Example grade calculation:

Grade Item	Score/s Received	Weighted Score
Podcast	3.5	3.5 + 3.5 (counted twice for 20% weight)
Podcast responses	$2.75 + 3.0 + 3.25 = 9 / 3 = 3.0$ Average of all three responses moves to next column	3.0 (counted once for 10% weight)
Discussion posts	$3.0 + 3.25 = 6.25 / 2 = 3.125$ Average of both moves to next column	3.125 (counted once for 10% weight)
Reading Quizzes	$4.0 + 4.0 + 4.0 + 0.0 + 4.0 + 4.0 = 20 / 6 = 3.33$ Average of all six moves to next column	3.33 (counted once for 10% weight)
Short Paper	3.75	3.75 (counted once for 10% weight)

Long Paper	3.5	3.5 + 3.5 (counted twice for 20% weight)
Final Exam	3.25	3.25 + 3.25 (counted twice for 20% weight)
Total:	<p>A note on rounding:  *Grades round up to 3.5 when 3.25 or higher, rounds down when 3.249 or lower</p> <p>*Similarly, a 2.75 and above would round up to a 3.0, and a 2.749 and below would round down to a 2.5</p>	<p><math>33.74 / 10</math> (# of weighted grade items) = <math>3.374 = 3.5</math></p> <p><b>Final grade for this example student: 3.5</b></p>

A note on the 4.0 grading scale:

Grades on this scale **do not correspond with simple percentages**. For example, earning a 3.0 on an assignment does NOT mean you have earned a 75% on the assignment. A 3.0 is simply a 3.0. However, if you wish to equate your grade to a percentage or “letter” grade, please refer to the following scale:

100-97	A+	4
96-93	A	4
92-90	A-	3.5
89-87	B+	3.5
86-83	B	3
82-80	B-	2.5
79-78	C+	2.5
77-73	C+	2
72-70	C-	1.5
69-68	D+	1.5
67-63	D	1
62-60	D-	1
below 60	F	0

## COURSE POLICIES:

### Late work:

- All late papers will be reduced by a half grade-step (0.5) for EACH DAY the paper is late.
- Late discussion posts, reading quizzes, podcasts, and podcast responses will not be accepted.

### Workload for summer courses:

- Please keep in mind that this is a summer session course, meaning that (1) the session is about 60% as long as fall or spring semester and that (2) this course is still worth the usual 4 credits of a fall or spring semester course. Usually, a 4-credit course consists of 4 hours of in-person class time plus 2 hours of study per week for each hour. Thus, an IAH class should total 8 hours of study time + 4 hours of class time for a total of 12 hours per week. Since this is an accelerated class that takes place in 7 weeks (as opposed to a regular 14-15 weeks), you can expect to devote **[up to] 24 hours per week to this class.**
- In short, we will have a lot of material to cover in a condensed time frame, and thus *the course will be challenging, but manageable.* Stay on top of readings/film screenings, complete your assignments each week, and turn in thoughtful, original papers on time, and you will be successful in this class.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Plagiarizing all or part of another writer's work, intentionally or not, may result in earning a 0 for the class.

Honesty and integrity will be vital to our work together this semester and to ALL academic work you do in the future (at MSU and in the workplace). Because one of our goals in IAH 209 is to further develop your confidence as writers, it is crucial that all work you complete is, in fact, YOUR work. Not only does plagiarism commit a serious breach of intellectual property rights, it also prevents you from improving your own writing and critical thinking skills.

In order to avoid plagiarism in this course, refrain from the following:

- Using word for word, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. from any course without acknowledgment and citation;
- Incorporating material from another source with only slight changes in wording without acknowledgment and citation;
- Submitting the same piece of writing in two different classes, or commit self-plagiarism. If you want to double submit, you must obtain permission from BOTH instructors first.
- Attempting to pass off the work of other students or professional writers as your own.

All students are expected to follow the university guidelines for academic integrity, which you can access here: <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>

If at any point you have any specific questions regarding plagiarism or using proper citation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

## **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [rcpd.msu.edu](http://rcpd.msu.edu). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form.

Please present this form to me **at the start of the term** and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

## **MANDATORY REPORTING/CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University’s student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others.

As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the Department of Police and Public Safety) if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child;
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center (please see the additional resources section of this syllabus for that contact information).

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Purdue Online Writing Lab, MLA Formatting and Style Guide

[https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/?\\_ga=2.19623804.558179429.1522454400-1709346682.1522454400](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/?_ga=2.19623804.558179429.1522454400-1709346682.1522454400)

MSU Writing Center

<http://writing.msu.edu/>

MSU Policies on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

<https://ombud.msu.edu/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html>

MSU Resources for Reporting Sexual Violence

<http://titleix.msu.edu/make-a-report/index.html>

<http://endrape.msu.edu/>

MSU Resources for Persons with Disabilities

<https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>

Office of the Ombudsperson

<https://www.ombud.msu.edu>

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1 Reading: Short selections Watch: Proteus on YouTube	July 2	July 3	July 4	July 5	July 6 Syllabus/ Reading Quiz 1	July 7	July 8
Week 2 Reading: Day of the Triffids Watch: Carson documentary on Kanopy	July 9	July 10	July 11 Discussion post due: close reading	July 12	July 13 Reading Quiz 2	July 14 Podcasts 1 & 2 due	July 15 Podcast responses due
Week 3 Reading: Parable of the Sower	July 16	July 17 Mad Max: Fury Road screening	July 18	July 19 Mad Max: Fury Road screening	July 20 Reading Quiz 3	July 21 Podcasts 3 & 4 due	July 22 Podcast responses due
Week 4 Reading: The Beauty	July 23	July 24 The Shape of Water screening	July 25 Short paper due	July 26 The Shape of Water screening	July 27 Reading Quiz 4	July 28 Podcasts 5 & 6 due	July 29 Podcast responses due
Week 5 Reading: Swamp Thing	July 30	July 31	Aug. 1 Discussion post due: Close reading 2.0	Aug. 2	Aug. 3 Reading Quiz 5	Aug. 4 Podcasts 7 & 8 due	Aug. 5 Podcast responses due
Week 6 Reading: Annihilation	Aug. 6	Aug. 7 Jungle screening	Aug. 8	Aug. 9 Jungle screening	Aug. 10 Reading Quiz 6	Aug. 11	Aug. 12 Long paper due
Week 7 Reading: The Vegetarian	Aug. 13 Okja screening	Aug. 14 Okja screening	Aug. 15	Aug. 16 Final exam			