

## **Nature, Environment, and Literature: Ecocritical Reading and Writing**

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Alexander Pichugin, SAS-German, Russian & Eastern European Languages & Literatures

W 11:30A-2:30P

Honors College Seminar Room S126

College Ave Campus

Will Count Towards SAS-German, Russian & Eastern European Languages & Literatures Major

Will Count Towards SAS-German, Russian & Eastern European Languages & Literatures Minor

This interdisciplinary honors seminar is designed to engage students in the discussion and development of writing skills focusing on the connections between ecology, culture, and literature. It is expected that students bring greatly varied backgrounds to this seminar: some of the participants might have considerable experience in reading and interpreting literary texts, others might be more familiar with environmental studies, while still others are simply curious about what ecocriticism is and how the ecocritical approach can enhance our appreciation of literature; all of the participants should feel at ease.

The seminar begins with an exploration of the theoretical principles of the ecological approach and the history of ecocriticism, which is defined, in the words of Cheryll Glotfelty, as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” The focus of the second (main) part of the seminar will be on the application of ecocritical thinking to literary texts. We will read, discuss, and write about literary works of renowned authors of Western cultural tradition, each of which presents a different view of the complex relationship between man and nature. We will analyze various aspects of these novels in order to better understand how each of them conceptualizes and represents a complex relationship between people and their environment. Through the analysis of text, language, symbols, and images in these works, students will deepen their understanding and appreciation of literary works in relation to the world around them.

As a learning outcome of the seminar, students will develop their abilities to approach the literary text both analytically and synthetically, exploring the connection between literature, social, and natural worlds in critical and creative ways. As a practical outcome, the students will develop important skills in working with literary texts by practicing oral and written interpretation, which will advance their ability to speak and write about literature in general.

The seminar is designed to satisfy the Core Curriculum goal “Writing and Communication in the Discipline [WCd]” in all three of its aspects: Effective communication in modes appropriate to the area of inquiry (WCd-t), critical evaluation and assessment of the sources and correct use of conventions of attribution and citation (WCd-u), as well as analysis and synthesis of information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights (WCD-v).

Dr. ALEXANDER E. PICHUGIN is the Director of German Language and Culture Studies at Rutgers and lecturer in German and Information Science (ITI & MLIS). One of his research interests is literary ecocriticism. He has developed and taught a variety of courses including Green German: Man and Nature in Text, Image, and Film, Surrounded and Embraced: Nature and Environment in German Cultural Discourse, and the Byrne seminar on Eco-cinema. His other academic interests include music, linguistics, cultural knowledge, and languages. In his spare time, he enjoys visiting the zoos and aquaria.