

En 180. Special Topics in English: American Literature of the Environment

We use words such as desert, forest, mountain, sea, ice, landscape—and even the word "nature" itself—to designate certain natural sites. These words can be misleading, however. The language we use to try and describe the world we inhabit can fail us or even enable forms of ecological corruption. Focusing on 20th–21st century prose writing (fiction and nonfiction), this course examines a variety of ways that writers of the United States have represented the physical environment and have navigated the metaphors long used to describe environmental experience. Among the topics under consideration are climate change, the anthropocene, species extinction, human agency and culpability, the history of environmental literature, social and environmental justice, and intersectionality (where, that is, environmental concerns overlap with concerns of race, class, and gender/ sexuality).