

ES 319: ENVIRONMENTAL FILM

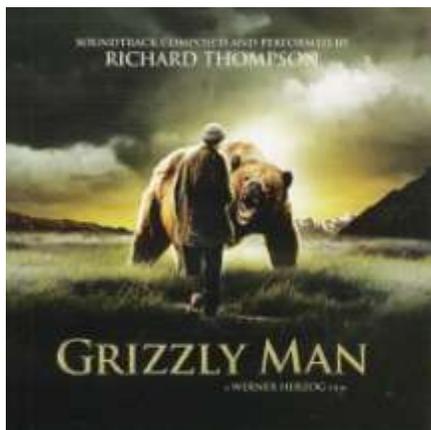
Professor: Salma Monani

Class Meeting Times: MW 11:00am-12:15pm. **Film Screening:** W 7-9:30pm

Classroom: Masters Hall 110

Office hours: Fridays 10-11am and by appointment. **Office:** Science Center 154G

Email address: smonani@gettysburg.edu **Office Phone:** 337-6269



COURSE OVERVIEW:

At the dawn of the twentieth century, film, as a medium of expression that documented moving images, was a nascent and novel concept. Today, a century later, its success is all around us, evident in movie theatres and in the more personal spaces of our homes—on our televisions and our computers. What role do films play in shaping our imagination of the environment? How might they influence our actions? These are the central questions we will explore in this class.

Throughout the semester, we will engage in textual and contextual analysis of a variety of films. By the end of semester, you should not only have a good grasp of films as expressions of environmental discourse, you should also be able of choose examples of eco-cinema for the final project, the student organized Gettysburg Environmental Film Festival.

The class is organized into four parts:

Part I: Foundations

The key questions we will consider are the following: What exactly is environmental film? Why should we care about such a concept and how do we begin to study film as an expression of environmental consciousness?

Part II: Wildlife-Nature Films

We examine mainstream and popular cultural expressions of environmental film. Specifically, we turn our attention to wildlife-nature films as presented by Hollywood and television documentaries. By paying attention to the socio-political, historical and cultural contexts of these films, we consider their potential for influencing environmental action.

Part III: Social-Nature Films

What are social-nature films and how are they similar and different from wildlife-nature films? These are some of the questions we consider even as we ponder the limitations and potentials of social-nature films inspiring environmental action.

Part IV: Environmental Film Festivals: 'Rebooting' Environmental Film?

What is the role of environmental film festivals in promoting environmental action and change? This is the question we will explore in Part IV. Specifically, we will begin our section with a weekend trip (April 3-5th) to the Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival (FLEFF) in Ithaca, NY. At FLEFF we will have the opportunity to not only attend a film festival but also learn about film festival missions, ideals, and organization from Ithaca College colleagues.

Once back in Gettysburg, we will continue our exploration of environmental films by further examining the content and form of the types of films FLEFF showcases. Our final goal is to design an Environmental Film Festival for Gettysburg College.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Hone ecocritical film analysis skills by engaging in close and contextualized readings of a variety of films throughout semester.
- Recognize/identify, discuss comfortably, and meaningfully connect key concepts, intellectual traditions, institutions, texts, and contexts of environmental film.
- Communicate ideas effectively through written and oral assignments that demonstrate an understanding of the ideologies that shape environmental film as symbolic action.
- Build connections among yourselves and other members of the college and larger community to work toward common environmental goals.

REQUIRED TEXT

There is no assigned textbook for this class. However, you are responsible for weekly readings that will be posted on Angel or placed on reserve in the library. In addition, almost every week, you are required to view films that we will discuss in class.

Selected Bibliography:

Bousé, Derek. *Wildlife Films*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 20.

Cubitt, Sean. *Eco Media*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005.

Ingram, David. *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema*. Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

Mitman, Gregg. *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Wilson, Alexander. *The Nature of Culture: Northern American Landscape from Disney to Exxon Valdez*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1992.

Selected Filmography:

An Inconvenient Truth. Dir. Davis Guggenheim. Paramount Classics, 2006.

Arctic Tale. Dir. Adam Ravetch and Sarah Robertson. Narr. Queen Latifah. VisionBox Pictures, 2007.

Born Free. Dir. James Hill. Perfs. Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers. Columbia Pictures 1966.

Crocodile Hunter. Hosts Steve and Terri Irwin. Animal Planet. Episodes 1-5 April 1992.

Grizzly Man. Dir. Werner Herzog. Lion Gate Films, 2005.

Happy Feet. Dir. George Miller and Warren Coleman. Warner Bros. 2006.

Honeydripper. Dir. John Sayles. Perfs. Danny Glover and Charles S. Dutton. DVD. Anarchist Convention Films and Honeydripper Films, 2007.

King Corn. Dir. Aaron Woolf. Perfs. Ian Cheney and Curtis Ellis. DVD. ITV and Mosaic Films, 2007.

Lone Star. Dir. John Sayles. Perfs. Chris Cooper and Elizabeth Pena. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1996.

Lord of the Rings. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perfs. Ian Holm and Christopher Lee. New Line Cinema, 2001.

March of the Penguins. Dir. Luc Jacquet. Warner Independent Pictures and National Geographic Feature Films, 2005.

One Man's Journey. Dir. Robert Perkins. A Crocodile River Production. Episodes 1-3. 1987-2004.

Soylent Green. Dir. Richard Fleischer. Perfs. Charlton Heston and Leigh Taylor Young. Metro Goldwyn Mayer (1973) and Warner Home Video (2003).

The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream. Dir. Gregory Greene. The Electric Wallpaper Company, 2004.

Thelma and Louise. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perfs. Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis. Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1991.

Wall-E. Dir. Andrew Stanton. Perfs. Ben Burtt and Elissa Knight. Pixar and Walt Disney Studios, 2008.

GRADES

Percentage of final grade

Presentation and Paper	15
FLEFF Response Paper	10
Final Project	20
Exams	35
Participation (including weekly film analyses)	15
Attendance	5
Total	100

Grading scale:

A+ 96%	A 93%	A- 90%
B+ 86%	B 83%	B- 80%
C+ 76%	C 73%	C- 70%*
	D 65%	
	F 60% or lower	

*(If you are taking the class Pass/Fail, this is the lowest percentage you can get to pass this class)

Participation:

Because learning is a social process, you will need to participate actively in this course, so that all of us can learn as much as possible from one another. Your participation will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- A: Frequent and courteous participation, with mature and thoughtful insights.
- B: Above average participation and insight.
- C: Moderate participation and reasonable insight
- D: Below average participation with little understanding of the issues
- F: Little or no participation.

I look forward to a good balance of participation (neither dominating the conversation nor remaining completely quiet).

Assignments Described in Brief (I will have more details for each assignment in class):

Presentation:

You, along with two or three other members of the class, will be responsible for structuring the

discussion for 30 minutes at the start of class on the particular day you chose. Your presentation must respond to the particular themes and conceptual questions of the week by:

- i) Engaging the required readings and films by directly referencing and quoting from them when making general statements or arguing particular points.
- ii) Providing additional research insights that contextualize the films and readings as part of broader discourse on environment and film (for example, look for additional scholarly reviews on a particular film; or, consider the broader environmental implications of a particular idea, such as wildlife conservation in Africa or consumerism in America).
- iii) Highlight other contemporary films that evoke similar reflections.

In addition to honing your ecocritical film analysis skills, this assignment will help you to get to know some of the other students in class both through collaborating with a classmate and through engaging your classmates in discussion. It is also an opportunity to practice your public speaking skills. You may approach this assignment in any way you wish (be creative!), but you **MUST** prepare a written document (such as a list of discussion questions) for use on the day of your presentation, as a handout.

You **MUST** consult with me ahead of time for suggestions about how to prepare your presentation.

Presentation Paper:

This assignment (3-4 pages) is directly related to your presentation topic and is due the day of your presentation.

FLEFF Response Paper:

You will be required to write a short reflective report on your FLEFF experience. This paper will include a film review of one of the films you watched at the festival along with reflections on discussions and meetings we have with FLEFF organizers.

Exams:

There will be two in-class exams over the course of the semester. The first exam will involve responding to fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, true-and-false, and short answers that test your knowledge and engagement with the material covered through lectures, discussions, film screenings, and assignments. The second exam will involve short answers as well as an essay question that specifically tests your ecocritical film analysis skills.

Final Project:

Instead of a final exam, you will be expected to:

- a) Engage in a collaborative project on designing an Environmental Film Festival for Gettysburg College.
- b) Submit a final paper that provides critical analysis of one film that you have chosen to showcase at this film festival.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

FLEFF Field Trip

April 3-5, 2009

Final Project Presentation and Paper Submissions

Saturday May 9, 8:30-11:30.

The schedule provides an approximation of other due dates. Due dates are dependent on the rate of progress we make in class. Essentially, watch for weekly updates!