

CANG 9271 _ The Ecological Crisis: Finding an Alternative Language

Level C1

Teacher: Dr Elizabeth Rainsford-McMahon

Whilst much contemporary discourse about the global ecological crisis is framed in terms of biological, economic, or political necessities, there is an implicit emphasis on the earth as hallowed ground. Key tenets underline the crucial need to recognise the complex kinship of human and non-human and project an urgent plea for valuing a shared habitation. Is it possible to find a language which nurtures a greater empathy with the aspirations of ecological activism?

This module will consider the standpoints of global climate activism such as Extinction Rebellion, Greenpeace, *Collapsologie* and the dialogue on saving the planet from Greta Thunberg to the UN. We shall identify their common call for reverent attention to the Earth and an accompanying action. This will lead into an interrogation of what constitutes sacred space at a personal, national, global and cosmic level. Exploring aspirations both secular and religious for identifying the spiritual dimension of Earth, it will study a selection of texts in which place emerges as deeply significant and a powerful source of revelation and connection. Can such ecopoetic voices serve as a ballast to those economic, biological and political arguments?

Module Objectives

- To analyse short texts as channels for ecological activism
- To explore the idea of the sacred within human consciousness
- To explore the role of action in addressing climate crisis
- To evaluate use of language which seeks to persuade
- To consider personal connection with place
- To investigate tropes about place from both secular and religious sources: exile; pilgrimage, promised land, Eden, the desert, the house of God, uprootedness, alienation.

Assessment: All teaching is in English.

Coursework, oral presentations and final exam to be delivered in English.

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- 1) An oral presentation (individually or in a small group) 20%
- 2) One written piece of course work (1,500 words) 20%
- 3) Class participation 10%
- 4) One end of semester exam: 50%