

Green Media

Module Code:	MECS 3013
Module Title:	Green Media
Department:	Humanities
Subject:	Media and Culture
Module Leader:	John Parham, Bredon 115 Email: j.parham@worc.ac.uk
Time:	Fridays (pm) 3.15-6.15pm, JLG010



Outline

This module considers the media's role in relation to environmental concerns and questions how various media and popular cultural forms can enable us to address environmental questions in our own lives. Working with both scientific and social concepts of 'ecology', in classes conducted around lectures, screenings, seminars and workshops, the module will consider the representation of environmental issues via a series of case studies in popular culture.

Intended Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module, you will be able to:

1. recognise and define the difference between related terms such as environmentalism, conservation, deep and social ecology;
2. demonstrate an awareness of how political and economic factors influence, constrain or facilitate an understanding of environmental issues as these might be gained through media forms;
3. comment knowledgeably on the ways in which one or more media forms has been (or might be) utilised to advance environmental understanding or to achieve environmental aims or goals;
4. critically reflect upon, and communicate in writing commensurate with level 6 study, arguments and information pertaining to environmental issues.

Module Programme

Week 1: Introduction: Defining 'Green Media and Popular Culture'

Seminar: Screening, discussion, assignment exercise

Reading: Michael Allaby (2000) *A Dictionary of Ecology*. London: Routledge

Week 2: Green Screen: Hollywood Cinema

Seminar: Discussion and screening of *The Day after Tomorrow*

Reading: David Ingram (2009) 'Four Recent Books on Ecocriticism and Film and Television', *Green Letters* 10.

Week 3: News Agendas, Journalism, Environmental Activism

Seminar: Exercise around news journalism

Reading: Hansen, *Environment, Media and Communication*; Kevin Michael DeLuca (1999) *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*. New York and London: The Guilford Press

Week 4: How Green is your Media? Production, Consumption, Sustainability

Seminar: Discussion; assignment 1 preparation workshop

Reading: Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller (2012) *Greening the Media*. New York: Oxford University Press. Sean Cubitt (2017) *Finite Media*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Week 5: Television Nature Documentaries

Seminar: Screening/discussion of nature documentaries – *Blue Planet 2* and *Springwatch*

Reading: Adrian Ivakhiv (2008) 'Green Film Criticism and its Futures', *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 15(2).

Week 6: Environmentalism and Popular Music

Seminar: Screenings, Listeners, Workshop: from John Denver to Björk.

Reading: David Ingram (2010) *The Jukebox in the Garden. Ecocriticism and American Popular Music*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Week 7: Green Computer Games

Seminar: Screening/Discussion of *EnerCities* and *Journey*

Reading: Alenda Y. Chang (2011) 'Games as Environmental Texts', *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19(2)

Week 8: Alternative/Activist Green Journalism

Seminar: Finding examples of alternative journalism and social activism

Reading: Michael Frome (1998) *Green Ink: An Introduction to Environmental Journalism*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press; Leah Lievrouw (2011) *Alternative and Activist New Media*. Cambridge: Polity.

Week 9: Art Film and Documentary

Seminar: Screening/discussion of Larry Gottheim *Fog Line*; Al Gore *An Inconvenient Truth*

Reading: Scott MacDonald (2002) *The Garden in the Machine. : A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press; Ivakhiv, 'Green Film Criticism'

Week 10: Green Humour

Seminar: Screening/discussion of 'green' stand-up comedy: Bill Bailey and Marcus Brigstocke

Reading: Parham, *Green Media and Popular Culture*, ch.5

Week 11: Animation: Hollywood/Anime

Seminar: Screening/discussion of Disney animation/anime: *Finding Nemo*; *Spirited Away*

Reading: David Whitley (2012 [2nd edn]) *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Week 12: Assignment 2: Assignment Workshop and Tutorials

Seminar: Assignment workshop

Reading: n/a

Assessment

Assignment 1: Portfolio (Learning Outcome 1)

Weighting: 30%

Length: 500-750 words

The portfolio is a series of small tasks designed to measure your understanding of the key concepts on the module and to pilot case studies for the long essay. In this assignment you will be asked to do the following:

1. Define the terms 'ecology' and 'green media' *approx. 100 words*
2. Define Cox's distinction between pragmatic and constitutive rhetoric. *approx. 150 words*
3. Give an example from one of the following media/cultural forms that you would describe as a green text: Film (fiction, animation, or documentary), Television, Popular Music, Journalism (newspapers, TV, or online), Computer Games. Do not use examples discussed or shown in class. (*Not included in the Word Count*)
4. State a) why your example is an example of 'green media'; b) whether its rhetorical approach is chiefly pragmatic or constitutive. *250 words*
5. Choose one critical reading of your chosen media or cultural form. Explain that writer's main argument. *50 words*
6. Identify one media product that you consume (anything from a print newspaper to digital downloads to a tablet) and explain what raw materials are used in its manufacture and where it goes after you have finished with it. *100 words*

Assignment 2: Essay (Learning Outcomes 2, 3, 4)

Weighting: 70%

Length: 1500-2000 words

Choose from one of the following questions:

1. Who sets the news agenda on environmental issues? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of mainstream news media or alternative/activist media in presenting environmental issues. Your answer should primarily focus on one from press, broadcast or internet media.
2. 'The upshot of a nature education by television is a deep fondness for certain species and a deep lacking of understanding of systems, or of the policies that destroy those systems' (Bill McKibben). Discuss.
3. Whitley argues that Disney films 'have the potential for putting us in touch with issues' by 'allow[ing] audiences to think as well as feel'.

Evaluate his conclusion with reference to a Disney film or a different genre of animation.

4. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of one of the following forms of film to address environmental concerns? Mainstream Hollywood cinema; Documentary; Alternative or avant-garde film.
5. David Ingram argues that there has been a 'growing link' between music and ecological or environmental ideas (9). Discuss these claims with relation to a genre of popular music.
6. Can computer games teach 'environmental values'? Discuss through one or two examples of your choice.
7. Sean Cubitt argues that media forms are 'finite' because they depend on energy and material resources that are themselves limited. Discuss the ecological implications of a media form (e.g. film, popular music) or product (e.g. tablet, mobile phone) of your choice.

Criteria for assessment

Your essay should:

- address the question fully;
- demonstrate an understanding of key theoretical perspectives around ecology and environmentalism;
- demonstrate detailed knowledge of a media text, or set of ecocritical theoretical debates, of your choice;
- comment knowledgeably on the ways in which one or more media forms has been (or might be) utilised to advance environmental awareness;
- use appropriate scholarship to develop an informed response to the question;
- be presented in an appropriately referenced, academic format, using coherent, concise, and accurate language, and including a correctly laid-out bibliography. Credit will be given for evidence of thorough research, and use of a range of secondary material gained from both hard copies and electronic sources of books and journals; interviews; reviews etc.

Reading

Set Text

Parham, John. 2016. *Green Media and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

You might wish, however, to purchase one of the following, dependent upon your course of study or area of interest: for an alternative (more pessimistic!) take on green media, cultural studies & film, see Noël Sturgeon (2009) *Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Gender, Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of the Natural*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press; for a detailed, book-length study of green journalism, try: Anders Hansen (2010) *Environment, Media and Communication*. London: Routledge.

Module reading can be found on this link:

<https://worc.rl.talis.com/lists/0C57030A-7664-DE12-2371-967101D8A709.html>