

University of North Texas
Ecofeminism, PHIL 6710
Spring 2024

Professor: Dr. Terra Schwerin Rowe
Email: terra.rowe@unt.edu
Time: Tuesday, 5-8:00pm
Location: ENV 225A
Office Hours: T/R 1-2:30
Office: ENV 310M

I. Rationale and course outline:

While there are many and various expressions of ecofeminism, most join in analyzing and addressing connections between the oppression of feminized humans and the exploitation of the other-than-human world. It was an intellectual and political movement initiated by feminists who argued that feminist criticism was incomplete without addressing intersecting oppressions of other-than-humans and race; while, conversely, the environmental movement was inadequate without addressing the domination of those who are feminized. While some have emphasized intersectionality as inherent to ecofeminism, others have identified a troubling lack of attention to the intersections of gender and nature with race.

Early ecofeminists identified and constructed alternatives to typical western philosophical hierarchical dualisms such as mind and body, theory and practice, or the value of transcendence or mind/spirit over immanence and body/earth. As a result, more than a purely scholarly conversation, ecofeminism is also an activist movement. This commitment to both scholarly discourse and political activism is the logical result of the ecofeminist critique of traditionally transcendent theory (including claims of neutrality or objectivity). In many and various ways ecofeminist scholars insist that theory should never be disconnected from the mundane, embodied events and practices of daily life. As a direct extension of the critiques of western hierarchical dualisms and activist commitments, ecofeminist themes are more recently finding expression in feminist materialisms.

Feminist (or “new”) materialisms can very basically be understood as a movement attending to the agency of other-than-human matter. Discoveries in quantum physics, the advances in complexity, chaos, emergence, and systems theories, as well as crucial environmental concerns like climate change have impressed upon scholars a profound sense that the material world is not dead, passive, or inert, but vital, animated, and even agential. Many also contest the “newness” of such feminist materialisms, emphasizing that Indigenous, animist, Black and other thinkers have long emphasized the themes and concerns articulated by “new” materialisms.

Therefore, while ecofeminism continues to be expressed in a variety of ways, the current course will follow this trajectory, starting with key initiating ecofeminist voices, critical or alternate responses to ecofeminism, new and feminist materialisms, and then to perspectives building from and also critically reflecting on new materialisms from perspectives that might not explicitly identify with ecofeminism, but approach feminism as necessarily a more-than-human project.

II. Course Aims and Outcomes:

Aims

- Learn key ideas, values, and arguments of the ecofeminist movement
- Learn to efficiently summarize an author's main argument or key contributions to a wider conversation
- Learn to analyze an author's sources and how they have constructed their argument and unique perspective within a wider conversation
- Learn to analyze the effectiveness of an author's argument
- Think critically about the mode and style of our teaching and writing by engage ecofeminist perspectives and practices in our own teaching, scholarship, and activism.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be able to concisely articulate various perspectives on ecofeminism and related movements
- Be able to identify key ideas, values, arguments and figures in the ecofeminist movement
- Be able to put various voices on and of ecofeminism in conversation with one another, identifying where they converge and differ
- Be able to effectively communicate how well an author has made their argument
- Have a stronger sense of how they might construct their own original argument or point of view in relation to key voices in a wider scholarly conversation
- Leave the course with an essay, book review (for MA students), or project proposal articulating an original argument to be further revised for publication or submission.

III. Format and Procedures:

This class will emphasize discussion and will thus require consistent participation and engagement during class time. Class participation is key since skills for coming up with your own unique ideas and communicating them clearly and persuasively will develop in class discussion as we test ideas and have them challenged or built upon by other classmates from different world or disciplinary perspectives. This means more than just showing up for class. You should be prepared to be an active participant in class (having completed readings, reflected on them with critical thinking skills and finished any assignments), contribute to class discussion, take notes during class, and bring appropriate materials (*especially the assigned reading and your notes on the reading*) to class.

A key part of this course will be examining the ways that these scholars do constructive work—that is, the ways they take various influences and sources from different disciplines, synthesizing them to construct a new and unique perspective. There is much to be learned here about ecofeminism, but there is also much to glean about scholarly practices, writing, and the nature of knowledge/scholarly production more broadly. Since ecofeminism identifies and attempts to shift away from typical western philosophical dualisms between mind and body, theory and practice, and the value of transcendence or mind/spirit over immanence and body/earth, it is therefore appropriate to analyze both the content of our philosophies as well as their form. In other words, it is not just our ideas and theories that are important, but *how* we construct, articulate, and practice them. Methodology and logic as well as style and rhetoric are consequently not inconsequential—mere ornamentation—but a key part of articulating an

argument that has integrity. For example, is it appropriate if we argue for more collaborative approaches to scholarship but then use antagonistic and dualistic forms of logic to make this argument? Therefore, this course will emphasize analysis of key influences for our sources and require critical thinking about the form as well as the content of the argument. *How* does the author argue and is his/her/their rhetoric, style, and form of logic consistent with the argument being made? Again, this will serve as an excellent exercise not just in analysis of scholarly sources, but in thinking about the way we as scholars will go about writing and teaching as well.

V. Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:

Given the importance of class participation, *on time attendance each week is mandatory* and unexcused absences will reduce your participation grade. Excessive tardiness will similarly affect your grade. More than physically being present, class participation entails:

1. coming to class having read the assigned readings any other assignments completed.
2. critical reflection on the text.
3. bringing the assigned reading and notes to class every day.
4. taking notes in class on lectures and class discussion.
5. contributing to class discussion with your observations and opinions on the topic being discussed.

*An unexcused absence is 1) when you don't show up in class without first communicating with the instructor and/or 2) don't have an acceptable reason for missing class (even if you first communicate with the instructor).

* If a student misses a class (whether it is an excused or unexcused absence) that student is responsible for class content, assignments missed, and upcoming due dates. Any time a class is missed the student is responsible for arranging with a classmate to take good notes and notifying of upcoming due dates and announcements.

*Exceptions will only be made for emergency situations. In all cases, timely communication with your professor is key.

Cell phone policy: Cell phones must be on silent or vibrate mode during class. Calls or texting are not appropriate during class. If an emergency situation arises, communicate this with your instructor and step outside the classroom.

Computer policy: Computer and internet use should *aid participation* in class. If their use becomes a distraction from class this will affect your participation grade and you may be asked to leave these devices outside the classroom.

2. Course readings:

(a) Required texts (for purchase at college book store or on the web):

Adams and Gruen, *Ecofeminism*

Merchant, *The Death of Nature*

Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*

Holland, *an other*

- (b) Essays and book chapters
provided through library or Canvas

3. Assignments

Class participation and attendance **30%**

Brief book reviews (3) **20%**

For three of our texts students will prepare a 1-2 page (double spaced) summary and critical analysis of the text being discussed. The review should include a statement of the central argument of the book as well as an assessment of the success of the argument

Presentation and annotated bibliography **20%**

- Each student will be responsible for leading discussion on one of the class texts.
- This will include a presentation of important information on the text and author.
- To prepare for the presentation the discussion leader should prepare an annotated bibliography covering 10-15 of the most important or influential sources used by the author to construct the current text.
- The bibliography should use Chicago style.
- Each entry should include three paragraphs: summary of the argument, evaluation of the significance of the argument, and relevance to that week's course text. See the Cornell Library (<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=32342&p=203789>) or Purdue Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/>) guides for more information.
- The bibliography should be made available for the class by *8pm the night before the presentation*.
- The presentation should start with a brief statement of the main project of the book (2-3 sentences), *but the focus should remain on filling out the context of the work*, addressing questions such as:
 - What was the historical context of the book when originally published and what made its arguments provocative or distinctive in its time?
 - What and who are the author's key influences (some research into the author's educational training and background would be appropriate here)?
 - Who are the author's main conversation partners (both positive and negative influences)?
 - What discourses/concerns/wider conversations is the author drawing upon or reacting to?
- *After the presentation the student should have at least three questions prepared to spark conversation and discussion about the text.*

Final paper/project proposal **30%**

MA: A critical review of one of the more recent texts read in class that can be submitted for publication. Submit also a proposal for an appropriate journal with submission instructions. Word count for class assignment should be 2000-2500 words (this may need to be cut for journal submission). Be sure to read other book reviews and follow the guidelines

for book reviews (on Canvas).

PhD: Two options:

- 1) A 20 page publication worthy paper (an original argument in an essay that can be revised for publication) building from and synthesizing some of the key contributions of at least two of our authors (a minimum of five sources is expected). The essay should include an original thesis statement on the topic of ecofeminism. Submit also a proposed journal for publication with submission instructions and your plans/timeline for submission.
- 2) A 15-20 pg project proposal (recommended for non-academic PhD tracks). Write a proposal for an activist/academic project related to or employing ecofeminist methods and perspectives. The proposal should include sections:
 - a) overviewing/introducing the problem or issue being addressed (how/why did this problem come about?, history of the problem and analysis suggesting ways to address the issue);
 - b) making the case for a particular intervention in addressing this issue (given the above problem, what can be done about it. This is where you make the case for the feasibility and applicability of your particular project). (Why/how would this address the problem outlined in the first section?)
 - c) outlining a detailed description of the project (what will you be doing and how will you be doing it?)
 - c) introducing your “ask” (what resources do you need to implement the project and why are you the person to be trusted with these resources to make the intended impact?).
 - d) on possible sources of support (who/what organizations would likely support this project and have the ability to help to get the resources you need?)

The proposal should build from analyses/insights from at least 2 texts read in class and include research from at least 5 sources.

** If the student has a particular grant source in mind the above may be modified (in consultation with the professor) to better fit the stated requirements of the organization.*

V. Grading Policies and Procedures

Grading rubrics will be used to evaluate each assignment. These can be found at the end of this document.

GRADING SYSTEM:

A	90-100 %
B	80-89 %
C	70-79 %
D	60-69%

F	0-59%
---	-------

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

All work is expected to be submitted by the designated due date. Late assignments will be docked 5%. Late assignments should be emailed to the instructor as soon as they are completed in order to avoid further grade penalty. If a student is absent from a class when an assignment is due, the student must email the assignment to the instructor the same day it is due in order to avoid penalty.

* As with attendance, exceptions will only be made for emergency situations. In all cases, timely communication with your instructor is key.

VI. Academic Integrity

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty.

According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university;
- dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or
- any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

- the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and
- the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

VII. Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>.

VIII. Accommodations for students with disabilities (ADA statement)

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://disability.unt.edu>. You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

IX. Inclusivity Statement

UNT students represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The professor is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. Therefore, a portion of the student's participation grade will reflect their ability to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal nature

Chosen Names

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know.

Pronouns

Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns. You can add your pronouns to your Canvas account so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

[Texas Senate Bill 17](#), the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

X. Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>

XI. Succeed at UNT

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grow. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go <http://success.unt.edu/>.

XII. Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETE)

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

XIII. Course Schedule

(May change to accommodate guest presenters, weather events & student needs)

Week / Date	Theme	Readings to be discussed	Assignment due
class 1 1/16	Introductions: Insemination or collaboration?	Introductions to one another and the theme of the course including an overview of the syllabus	
class 2 1/23	Overview/introduction of Ecofeminist discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren, “Ecofeminism” • Adams and Gruen, <i>Ecofeminism</i> • intro, ch. 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative (practice) presentation
class 3 1/30		Adams and Gruen, <i>Ecofeminism</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Adams and Gruen
class 4 2/6	Ruether	Ruether, <i>New Woman, New Earth</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation
class 5 2/13	Merchant	Merchant, <i>The Death of Nature</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation
class 6 2/20	Plumwood	Plumwood, <i>Feminism and the Mastery of Nature</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation
class 7 2/27		Plumwood, cont’d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Plumwood
class 8 3/5	Queer ecofeminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” • Gaard, <i>Critical Ecofeminism</i> (selections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on <i>Critical Ecofeminism</i>
3/11-15	Spring Break		
class 9 3/19	Critiques of/alternatives to ecofeminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaimo, “Cyborg and Ecofeminist Interventions” • Morton, “Queer Ecology” • Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System” • Alaimo, <i>Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self</i>, ch. 1 	

class 10 3/26	Feminist (or “new”) materialisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coole and Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms” • Alaimo and Hekman, “Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory” in <i>Material Feminisms</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on <i>Feminist Materialisms</i>
class 11 4/2	Feminist materialisms	<i>Feminist Materialisms</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of <i>Feminist Materialisms</i>
class 12 4/9	Tallbear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tallbear, “Beyond the Life/ Not Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking and the New Materialisms” • Tallbear, “Indigenous Reflection on working beyond the Human/non-human” • Todd, “Oil Kin” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation
class 13 4/16	Jackson	Jackson, <i>Becoming Human</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation
class 14 4/23	Harrison	Harrison, <i>an other</i> (selections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final paper/ project proposal due
class 15 4/30		Harrison, cont’d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing workshop
May 6-10		Final Exam Week	Final papers due 11:50pm, May 7