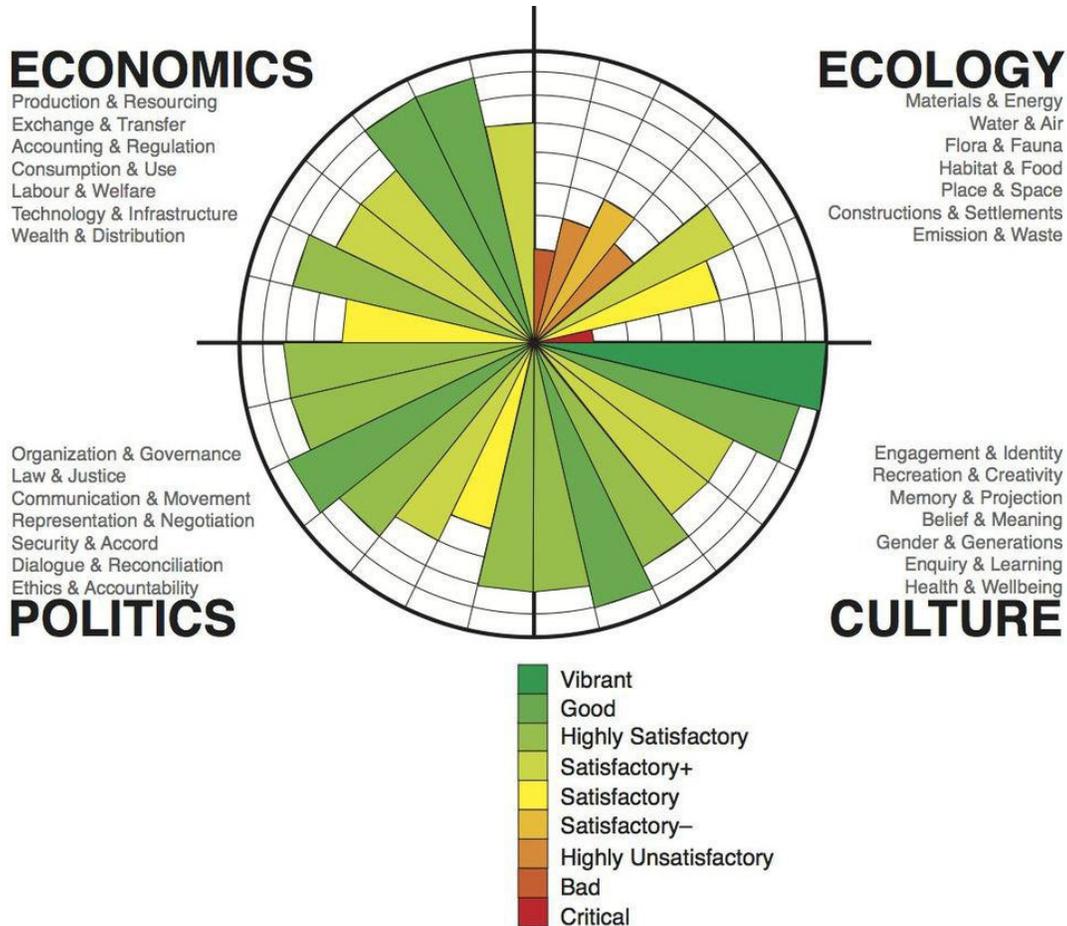


Comparative Literature 9696B

Life-Support: Literature and Environmentalism

Fall Term 2019
 Wednesdays from 9:30am to 12:30pm
 Weldon Library 107

Professor James Miller
 The Pride Library, jmiller@uwo.ca
 519-661-2111, extension 85828

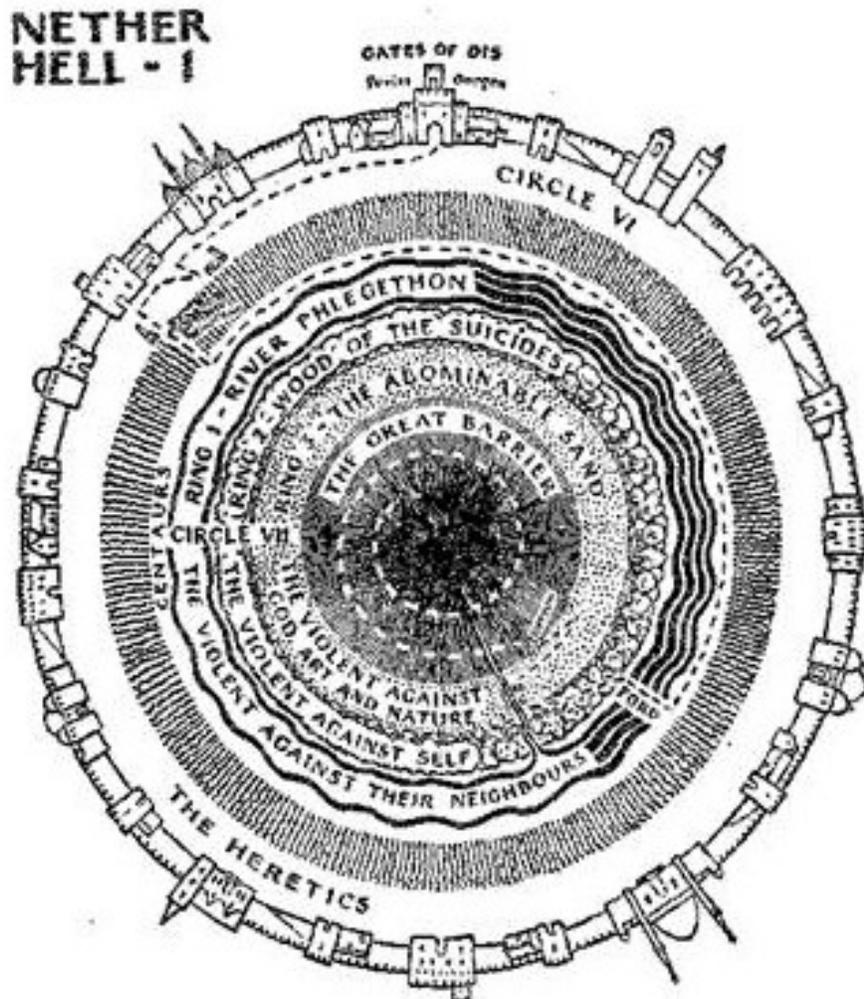


CIRCLES OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. Course Description

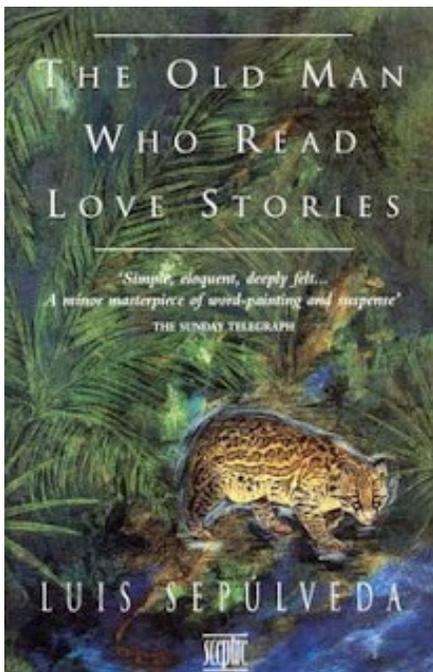
An old theological allegory of holistic interdependence underlies the UN World Habitat Forum's recent championing of the “Circles of Sustainability” method for understanding, assessing, and confronting the seemingly intractable problems of urban life in the twenty-first century. As developed by the researchers behind the UN briefing paper *Accounting for Sustainability* (No. 1, 2008), the method results in the symbolic transformation of the messy realities of an actual city – Melbourne, for instance, or Mumbai– into an instantly readable and comparable profile of its economic, political, cultural, and ecological ratings in four sets of seven categories centripetally arrayed across the quadrants of a wheel-

diagram. Why is environmental discourse so deeply allegorical? The UN's rotary method of urban evaluation was brilliantly anticipated by Dante in his mapping of the City of Dis in the *Inferno* (completed c. 1310). As a groundbreaking allegory of urban decline and environmental degradation, the *Inferno* reconstructs Florence as an infernal model for the Devil's imperial capital: a concentrically structured *pozzo* ("cistern") into which the polluted currents of ancient and modern history inescapably drain. Populated with sinners notable for their rapacious greed, rampant violence, and raging egotism, the multiple rings of the City of Dis project an ominous vision of the "Circles of Unsustainability" into which humanity, already fallen through desire, may fall even further through antisocial disregard for natural order. In this course we shall study a range of contemporary environmental discourses — including the democratic pragmatism and administrative rationalism underlying the "Circles of Sustainability" model of urban analysis — in order to develop a hermeneutical method for assessing literature (including film texts) focused on environmental crises. Besides Dante's *Inferno*, readings for the course will include St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*, Pope Francis I's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the Kabuki drama *Saint Narukami and the God Fudō*, Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, Luis Sepulveda's *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, Abdul Rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt*, and Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. Global extensions of Dante's allegory of unsustainability will be traced in the artwork of Sandow Birk, the demographic fiction of Dan Brown, the manga adaptation of the *Inferno* by Nagai Go, and Hayao Miyazake's animated feature film *Princess Nausicaä*.



2. Assignments / Grade Breakdown

1. Critical Essay (20-25 pages).....60%
2. Oral Presentation in class (30 minutes).....30%
To be scheduled in weeks 4-13
3. Respondent's Remarks (10 minutes).....10%
To be scheduled in weeks 4-13



3. Schedule of Readings

WEEK ONE: September 11: Environmental Allegories

Readings: St. Francis, *Canticle of the Sun*; Pope Francis, Encyclical: *Laudato Si'*

WEEK TWO: September 18: Environmental Discourses

Readings: Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*

WEEK THREE: September 25: Fallen Cities, Barren Landscapes
Readings: Virgil, *Aeneid* 6; Dante, *Inferno* 1-16

WEEK FOUR: October 2: Ecocriticism *de profundis*
Readings: Dante, *Inferno* 17-34

WEEK FIVE: October 9: Ecotheology #1: Myths of Regeneration
Screening: Miyzake, *Princess Nausicaä*.

WEEK SIX: October 16: Ecotheology #2: Environmental Crisis as Apocalyptic Omen
Readings: Kushner, *Angels in America* [parts one and two]

WEEK SEVEN: October 23: Environmental Activist as Martyr
Readings: Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People*

WEEK EIGHT: October 30: Environmental Activist as Rebel
Reading: Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

[WEEK NINE: November 6: Fall Reading Week]
→ No Class

WEEK TEN: November 13: Environmental Activist as Prophet
Readings: Salviani, *Gomorra*

WEEK ELEVEN: November 20: Sustainable Eco-Eroticism
Readings: Supelveda, *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*

WEEK TWELVE: November 27: Dystopic Bildungsroman
Readings: Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* → *The Year of the Flood*

WEEK THIRTEEN: December 4: Green Hagiography / Paradise Sustained
Readings: Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* → *Maddaddam*



4. Required Readings: Printed Texts [on order at the Bookstore]

a. Margaret Atwood. *Oryx and Crake*
Paperback: 416 pages

- **Publisher:** Vintage Canada (July 28 2009)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 030739848X
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0307398482

b. Margaret Atwood. *The Year of the Flood*
Paperback: 448 pages

- **Publisher:** Vintage Canada (July 27 2010)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 030739798X
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0307397980

c. Margaret Atwood. *Maddaddam*

Paperback: 416 pages

- **Publisher:** Vintage Canada (Aug. 12 2014)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0307397998
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0307397997

d. Dante. *Inferno* trans. Robert Hollander

Paperback: 736 pages

- **Publisher:** Anchor; Tra Blg edition (Jan. 8 2002)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0385496982
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0385496988

f. Roberto Saviano. *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System*

Paperback

- **Publisher:** Picador (Dec 10 2008)
- **ASIN:** B00SQCEUXW

g. Henrik Ibsen. *An Enemy of the People*

Paperback: 96 pages

- **Publisher:** Dover Publications; New edition edition (Feb. 2 1999)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0486406571
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0486406572

h. Tony Kushner. *Angels in America (Parts one and two)*

Paperback: 288 pages

- **Publisher:** Nick Hern Books (April 12 2007)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1854599828
- **ISBN-13:** 978-185459982

i. John S. Dryzek. *The Politics of the Earth. (third edition)*

Paperback: 288 pages

- **Publisher:** Oxford University Press; Third Edition edition (Dec 14 2012)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0199696004
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0199696000

j. Edward Abbey. *The Monkey Wrench Gang.*

Paperback: 448 pages

- **Publisher:** Harper Perennial; Rei Ltd edition (Aug. 28 2014)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0062357263
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0062357267

k. Luis Sepulveda. *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories* [paperback edition]

- **Publisher:** Harcourt (March 1994)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0151685509
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0151685509

5. Required Readings: Online Texts

a. Virgil. *Aeneid*, book 6

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/VirgilAeneidVI.htm>

b. Pope Francis. *Praise Be to You - Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

c. St. Francis. *Canticle of the Sun*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canticle_of_the_Sun

6. Required Viewings

a. *Princess Nausicaä*. Animated feature film by Hayao Miyazake.

8. Contact

James Miller

UC 351 (Office) or The Pride Library (Weldon Mainfloor)

ex 85828 (UWO) 519-673-0234 (Home)

jmiller@uwo.ca

9. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the *Western Academic Calendar*). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's verbatim or paraphrased text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against a possible charge of plagiarism. This also applies to work facilitated or written for students by third parties.

10. Absenteeism

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

N.B. E-mail will be used extensively.