



Universität Hamburg  
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

INSTITUTE  
OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES

Instructor: **Veronika Arutyunyan**

Title: **From Nature poetry to Ecopoetry**

Course: **Seminar II** (ENG-7, ENG-7a, ENG-13, AA7, AA11, LAA9, LAA13, IAA22, IAA23, IAA24, IAA25, AA-MA01, AA-MA02, AA-MA03, AA-MA05)

Number: **53-561**

Time: **Wednesdays, 14–16h**

Room: **Ü35–01016**

Start: **06.04.2022**

### Course description:

From its beginnings American poetry has been concerned with humanity's relationship with nature that for long seemed vast and wild, but this relationship has changed dramatically. In the last few decades, in response to the burgeoning environmental crisis, there emerged an ecocritical perspective that traverses the disciplinary boundaries of literary production and ecology in order



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to interrogate the complex relationship between the human subject and the world of nature. As a consequence of such interdisciplinary inquiries, writing framed as ecopoetry foregrounds the changing notion of what nature is to human imagination.

Tracing the deep-seated roots of ecopoetics in the nature poetry of the United States, this seminar will explore the environmental turn in a variety of texts from nineteenth century to contemporary poetry. We will pay close attention to the ways that nature has been represented in North American verse, tracing the shift from nature poetry to ecopoetry that sees the human subject as entangled in the more-than-human processes. Our close reading will be framed by seminal theoretical texts on ecopoetics and relevant theories of nature and its shifting representations in poetry.

Given the manifold nature of ecopoetry, we will address the diverse ecocritical approaches and provide you with the tools to read a poem ecocritically. During the course of the seminar, you will develop an understanding of the recurrent motifs in ecopoetry, including anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism, the pastoral, the agency of the non-human, and the breakdown of the nature culture divide. Ultimately, through the close reading of the poems we will examine how poets engage with the pressing issues of the environmental crisis by scrutinizing the poetic devices they employ and set out to discover what contribution ecopoetic discourse can make in raising ecological awareness and in what sense poetry can be considered ecological.

**Course requirements:**

The *Studienleistung* consists of thorough preparation of all reading material, collaboration in one of the "expert" groups and active participation. The *Prüfungsleistung* consists of a research paper.

The syllabus will be provided during the first session. Most of the reading material will be made available digitally (on AGORA).