

Advanced Studies in Literature:

Bachelor:Lit

M4

Man and Nature in Literary and Non-

LIZ:

Proseminar

Literary Texts from the 18th to 20th Century

(Modern Eng. Lit.)

C. Gertsch

Time: Thursday 8-10

First session: 03.11.2005

Level: BA: Third-year Major students
Liz.: Not first-year students

Credit Points: BA: 5 / Liz.: 6

Content/Aims: In our own time we have become used to talking about Nature predominantly in terms of ecological categories - involving the pollution of the environment and the exploitation of natural resources - together with warnings of ensuing consequences. 20th-century discourse about the "protection of the environment" seems logical and natural to us. It will be one of the purposes of this course to trace the historical roots of such a "protective" attitude to Nature, setting it off against altogether different attitudes as they appear in various English and American texts of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. We shall investigate the societal functions that were attributed - both in Europe and in America - to elements of "Nature" in literary and non-literary texts from the Enlightenment to the Romantics, i.e. from Newton's age of detached scientific observation at the end of the 17th century to a much more irrational attitude in the last century, when elements of Nature were being mystified and anthropomorphized.

Texts: Texts to be discussed include: Alexander Pope's poem *Windsor Forest* and James Thomson's *The Seasons*; prose texts by Samuel Johnson, William Bartram, Edmund Burke, R.W.Emerson; H. D. Thoreau; poems by Thomas Gray, George Crabbe, William Blake, William Wordsworth, S.T.Coleridge, Percy B. Shelley, John Keats. Texts will be read against a background of late 20th-century environmentalist discourse. They will be available as a hand-out.

Assessment: Regular attendance, group work, active participation in class, and an in-depth presentation in class of your reading of several of the texts on the agenda. Please make sure you reserve a minimum of 2 hours per week outside class for preparatory work for this course. Evaluation of written and oral work.