

Fresher/Sophister Module Description Template 2024-25

Full Name: Figures in Landscapes: The Body and its Horizon in Literature

Short Name: Figures in Landscapes

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Björn Quiring, quiringb@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: MT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: SS

Module Content:

“Landscape” is generally defined as the entirety of visible features of a territory, both natural and man-made – and as the representation of this entirety in literary texts or visual images. In the context of the arts, landscapes are often described as extensions of the human body; all the more so, if the represented land can be claimed as that body’s “own” land, in some sense. The human body in question can be an individual one, but also a vague collective body, for example the “body politic”, the “state population” or the “body of the nation”. Because of this asserted link between bodies and territories, representations of a landscape tend to map the peaks and chasms of human emotions onto it, to anthropomorphize it (the “mouth” of the river, the “entrails” of the earth, the “murmuring” waves running in water “veins”, etc.) and to assign a gender to it – often a female one (e.g. in the rhetoric of the “motherland”).

Furthermore, writers and painters often associate the term “landscape” with the representation of a tract of land that stretches all the way to the horizon. And since the horizon is conceptualized as the area where the line of sight touches upon infinity, this representation seems to suggest the possibility of a sublime encounter between human finitude and a transcendent boundlessness.

The seminar investigates how English literature has processed this relation between seemingly boundless landscapes and delimited (collective or individual) bodies. Beside some (more or less) classical literary texts, we are going to read a fair amount of theoretical texts at the crossroads of aesthetics, psychology and politics, occasionally touching upon questions of posthumanism, (anti-)imperialism and ecocriticism.

Learning Outcomes:

- Read selected literary texts from several literary epochs (William Shakespeare, Dorothy and William Wordsworth, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Hardy, Samuel Beckett, Gary Snyder, Iain Sinclair and others).
- Read selected theoretical texts on the aesthetic, psychological and political aspects of landscape (Hannah Arendt, Hans Blumenberg, Edmund Burke, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Henri Lefebvre, John Ruskin and others).
- Think about the relation between landscape and literature.

Learning Aims:

- To gain a better understanding of the aesthetic, political and psychological dimensions of landscape and the ways they are processed in literary works.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): 1 final essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

- Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Excerpt)
- Samuel Beckett, "One Evening"
- Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* (Excerpt)
- Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Excerpts)
- Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Excerpt)
- Rachel Crawford, "The Poetics of the Bower"
- Bernard Debarbieux, "The Political Meaning of Landscape (Through the Lens of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*)"
- Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, "How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?"
- Tim Fulford, "Wordsworth: The Politics of Landscape"
- Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (Excerpts)
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Great Stone Face"
- Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*
- Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function"
- Didier Maleuvre, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (Excerpt)
- Kenneth Robert Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World* (Excerpt)
- Petrarch, "Ascent of Mont Ventoux"
- John Ruskin, *Lectures on Landscape* (Excerpts)
- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*
- Georg Simmel, "The Philosophy of Landscape"
- Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital* (Excerpt)
- Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (Excerpts)
- *Song of Songs*
- Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Journals* (Excerpts)
- William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (Excerpt)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.

School of English

- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**