

EN370, Commodity Fictions: World Literature and World-Ecology  
Second Assessed Essay Questions

Write an essay of approximately 5000 words in response to **one** of the following questions. Essays **MUST** be submitted electronically via TABULA by **12.00 noon on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (week 3, term 3)**. Do not substantially repeat material from past assessed essays.

1. "The coal pit was the only thing in each village that mattered, the only part of life on which capital and care and brains were expended" (Ellen Wilkinson, *Clash*, p. 146). Critically analyse the literary inscription of the coal frontier in any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
2. "When one discusses the end of oil and imagines the main issue to be the possibility of replacement fuels [...] one fails to grasp that we are not dealing with an input that can easily take other forms, but with a substance that has given shape to capitalist social reality" (Imre Szeman, "The Cultural Politics of Oil," p. 34). Discuss the meaning and significance of Szeman's claim, making reference to any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
3. Critically analyse the "cultural geography" (Buell) of coal and / or oil in any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
4. "Fiction, in its various modes, genres, and histories, offers a significant (and relatively untapped) repository for the energy aware scholar to demonstrate how, through successive epochs, particularly embedded kinds of energy create a predominant (and oftentimes alternative) culture of being and imagining in the world; organizing and enabling a prevalent mode of living, thinking, moving, dwelling and working" (Graeme Macdonald, "Research Note," p. 4). Discuss the relationship between energy and fiction, making reference to any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
5. In what ways might we consider strikes as ecological projects? Discuss with reference to any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
6. "The 'dominant culture of automobility' is implicated in a deep context of affective and embodied relations between people, machines and spaces of mobility and dwelling, in which emotions and the senses play a key part" (Mimi Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," p. 221). Discuss how petroculture and the mobilities it enables are registered in any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
7. "Petro-magic is one of the forms that petro-violence takes; its illusions of sweet surplus can, for a time, mask the harm that petroleum extraction does to humans and nonhuman nature, turning each into instruments of violence against the other" (Jennifer Wenzel, "Petro-Magic-Realism Revisited", p. 214). Write an essay that explores the category of petro-magic in relation to any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.

8. "The slopes of slag and cinder / Are sulking in the rain, / And in derelict valleys / The hope of youth is slain" (Idris Davis, *Gwalia Deserta*, xxxvi). Discuss the representation of industrial decline in any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
9. "There is a structure of feeling which has one of its origins in the very distinctive physical character of the Welsh industrial areas [ . . . ]. The immediate landscape, the physical presence of industrial development, in the era of steam and coal, is almost invariably dark, smoke-ridden, huddled. These are its true physical bearings. In the mines these general qualities are intensified: the sense of darkness, of running grime, of a huddled enclosure. Yet not only in coming back up from the pit, to a general daylight, but also at any time in any Welsh mining valley, there is the profoundly different yet immediately accessible landscape of open hills and the sky above them, of a rising light and of a clear expansion, into which it is possible, both physically and figuratively, to move" (Raymond Williams, "The Welsh Industrial Novel," p. 105). Discuss the meaning and significance of Williams' argument in this passage, making reference to any one or more of the texts we have studied this term.
10. "This is an explicitly working-class modernism, both in the sociology of literary production and in terms of stance, and offers quite different coordinates to those we have been used to thinking with following older notions of 'British' literature" (Charles Ferrall and Dougal McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike*, p. 166). Write an essay that explores the category of modernism in relation to the texts we have studied this term.
11. With reference to any one or more of the texts we have studied this term, write an essay that explores the relationship between commodity frontiers and the sf genre.
12. Discuss the relationship between landscape, identity, and power in any two or more of the texts we have studied this term.
13. Discuss the relationship between language and landscape in any two or more of the texts we have studied this term.
14. Devise your own title (or modify one of the above titles). You should confirm your title with the module convenor.