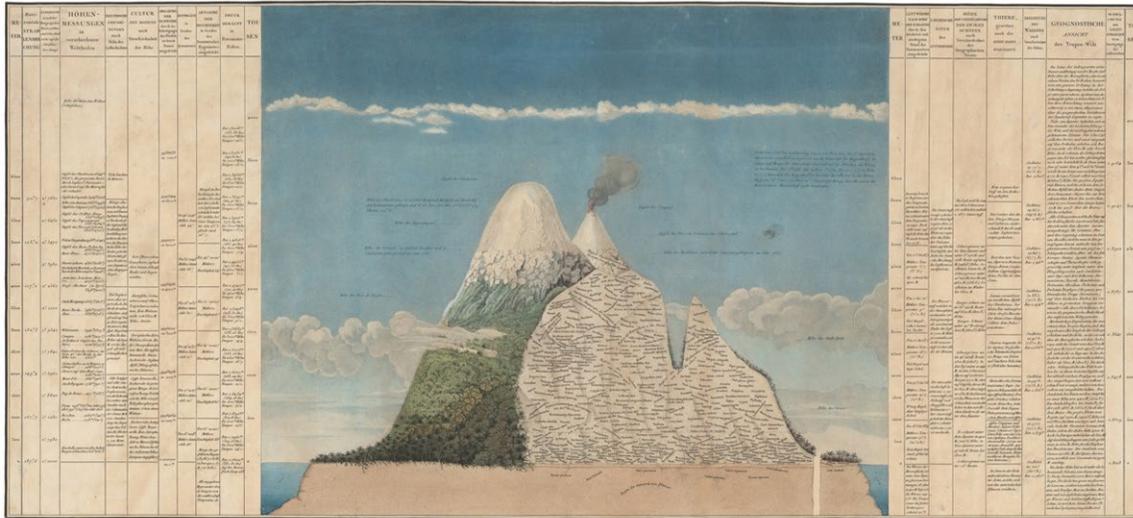


German Environmentalism and Ecocriticism

GERMAN 303.002/ENVIRON 304.011 – Fall 2021



“The world’s first infographic”: Alexander von Humboldt’s *Naturgemälde der Anden* (Unity of Nature in the Andes, 1805) depicts the natural world as an interconnected whole

Nature and the environment feature prominently in the philosophy and cultural traditions of the German-speaking world—from the deification of nature within Romantic poetry and painting, through the blood-and-soil ideology of the Nazis, to the land art of Joseph Beuys and Hans Haacke during the Cold War. Today, German, Austrian, and Swiss people are considered some of the world’s most environmentally conscious, a fact reflected in the extent to which environmental issues currently shape the political agendas of their respective countries.

While it may sound like it should belong exclusively to political or scientific activity, **ecocriticism is environmentally focused criticism practiced by producers of literature, film, art, and theory.** American films like the *Mad Max* Trilogy, *The Day After Tomorrow*, or Pixar’s *WALL-E* are popular earlier examples of the post-apocalyptic genre that has exploded in the last five years, and which arguably participates in ecocriticism by imagining the worlds that might exist after environmental collapse; novels like Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* or Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station 11* are examples of a similar strain of criticism in English-language literature.

In this course we will examine ecocriticism’s history and the appearance and disappearance of environmental themes in German-language literature, film, and art over the course of the last two centuries. We will read and learn about: the Anthropocene and Industrial Revolution, Alexander von Humboldt, J. W. Goethe and Goethean science, Novalis, German Romanticism and the philosophy of nature, Adalbert Stifter, Ernst Haeckel and the reception of Darwinism in Germany, Wilhelm Riehl, Franz Kafka, the Blue Rider group, Martin Heidegger, the Frankfurt School, Ingeborg Bachmann, Joseph Beuys, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Elfriede Jelinek, Herta Müller, Sharon Dodua Otoo, Carl Amery and Germany’s Green Party, Yoko Tawada, Werner Herzog, Dorothee Elmiger and the European migration crisis, ecotriller film and more.

Requirements: Short response papers and/or creative assignments; 6-8 page final paper.