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ENG 388W: Literature and Environment | Latinx Environmentalisms

**Introductory Statement: Reconsidering Sustainability**

In a previous iteration of this syllabus for my ENG 388W Latinx Environmentalisms course, I had a sustainability unit entitled *Botanical Knowledge and Healing*, which brings together the writings of various cultural workers whose spiritual beliefs and healing practices invite us to develop more intimate knowledge of plants and to accompany such knowledge with an ethical obligation to cultivating plant life and employing more sustainable practices of use. Studying Karen Zacarías’ play *Native Gardens*, we also explore the possibilities for homeowners to “bring nature back” in suburbia via gardening practices. While conceptually important, this approach to sustainability focuses its efforts on the individual or “collective” micro levels of sustainable practices, so in my reconceptualization of this unit, I wanted us to think more about sustainability on a systemic level.

In my initial proposal, I expressed an interest in expanding this aforementioned section (previously spanning from Week 11 to the first half of Week 12) to include a more local component to Latinx environmentalisms. I suggested may plan to bring environmental issues from Atlanta into our class, particularly ones revolving around the Atlanta Forest and the construction of “Cop City.” Manuel Esteban Paez Terán (AKA “Tortuguita”), a Venezuelan Indigenous queer environmental activist who was killed by law enforcement, would be our entry point into the forest and would allow us to consider some of the stakes in the management of this land. Given that, to date, what we know of “Tortuguita” comes from second-hand accounts rather than Tortuguita’s own creations, their story has become not so much a narrative of them as much as what they represent. As such, we will explore how authorities *and* environmentalists and cultural producers have abstracted Tortuguita into a metaphor that serves (anti-)ecological causes.

This focus remains in my latest revision of the unit, which includes materials that reflect how local community members, healthcare providers, and professors from Morehouse College as well as activists have responded to “Cop City’s” perceived socio-ecological threats, but we also consider the “Cop City” debate within broader discourses about sustainability in Atlanta and beyond. We will, for instance, peruse the ***City of Atlanta Climate Action Plan*** created by City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Sustainability and learn about **initiatives such as the redevelopment of the Atlanta Beltline and the brownfield revitalization of Atlantic Station**. In the process, and in the spirit of our course, we will turn an intersectional and environmental justice lens onto sustainability concepts, practices, and projects. To quote Dan Immergluck and Tharunya Balan, when we talk about sustainability, we may ask “Sustainable for Whom?” as a means to consider the differential “benefits” from preserving the Atlanta Forest (and other sustainability projects) and the differential harms of developing “Cop City.”

Studying materials (e.g., photographs, news media, publications by the Forest Defenders, government documents) that offer us a history of the forest and the struggle for land management will offer us the opportunity to contemplate the environmental consequences of facilities such as “Cop City” and specifically what its erection means for the possibility for environmentally-informed public sentiment, environmental health, and sustainability in Atlanta.

**ENG 388W: Latinx Environmentalisms**

**Course Description**

This course offers us an overview of the complex and varied relationships Latinx people from diverse ethno-racial groups have with their environments by inviting us to study various mediums of Latinx cultural expressions on environments such as film, music, and visual art as well as a variety of literary forms including fiction, creative non-fiction, drama, and archival materials. Finding ourselves in, among other spaces-places, chicken houses, factories, and urban forests, as well as in suburbs and agricultural fields, this course will carry us throughout the U.S. and the globe to expose the socio-historical and natural processes that shape Latinx people’s experiences with their environments. Informed by eco-feminist and intersectional frameworks and attuned to environmental justice concerns, disproportionate impacts, and healing ecologies, this course allows us to explore how Latinx literature and other art forms depict Latinx structural vulnerability alongside place-making in human-made and natural environments. We will consider how Latinxs talk about and relate to nature and how they understand degraded environments. We will also immerse ourselves in Latinx healing ecologies and sustainability practices.

**Course Objectives**

**Content & Concepts**

* To introduce students to key terminology relevant to Latinx Studies and ecocriticism
* To offer a historical, literary, and multimodal account of Latinx environmental, ecofeminist, and ecocritical discourses
* To help students identify the intersections between Latina feminisms and other civil rights and social movements
* To familiarize students with Latinx ecological aesthetics in literature and visual arts

**Methods**

* To hone close reading and analytical skills that will help students become stronger readers and writers
* To develop new historicist and self-reflective reader-response approaches to the interpretation of literature

**Communication**

* To facilitate student comfort with communication by offering the opportunity to write in and communicate in different modes (i.e., presentations, journal writings, essay, and Canvas group discussions)
* To help improve critical awareness of ethical, rhetorical, and/or ideological dimensions of communicating within and across communities

### Required Texts:

Ernesto Quiñonez, *Bodega Dreams* | ISBN-13: ‎978-0375705892

Karen Zacarías, *Native Gardens* | ISBN-13: 978-0573707544

Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* | ISBN-13: ‎ 978-0931122743

Moira Millán, *Train to Oblivian* | ISBN-13: 978-1542034968

### Assignments & Grade Breakdown

**Assignments:**

* Journal Entries/Reading Responses (6 Total): 15%
* Group Discussions on Canvas (6 Total): 15%
* Multi-Media Presentation/Teaching Activity: 15%
* Participation in in-Class Discussions: 15%
* Latinx Environmental Topic Paper: 30%
* Final Exam: 10%

### Course Calendar Schedule (Readings & Assignments)

Important **Due Dates** are in ***Green Bolded, Italicized Font***

This calendar reflects our course schedule, so please be sure to read it carefully to know when our readings and/or assignments are due. Please keep the following in mind when reading the below schedule:

1. The readings/texts listed under a particular date should be read/reviewed by that date. That is, the work (whether readings or viewings) is due the day it is listed under, unless specifically stated as an “in-class” activity.
2. Also, the course calendar, including project due dates, may change based on course needs. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

**Part I: Latinx Cultural Expressions & Environmentalisms**

**Week 1**

Wednesday, August 27, 2025:

* Introduction to ENGL 388W & Syllabus Overview
* Tour of Canvas
* Read Guidelines for Journal Responses
* Read Guidelines for Group Discussions on Canvas
* In-Class Readings:
  + “Nopalitos” from Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*
  + “Give Me This” from Ada Límon’s *The Hurting Kind*

**Literary Criticism**

* Sarah D. Wald et al., “Introduction: Why Latinx Environmentalisms?” from *Latinx Environmentalisms*

**Week 2**

Monday, September 1, 2025: **Labor Day, no Classes**

Wednesday, September 3, 2025:

* Read Guidelines for Journal Responses
* Read Guidelines for Group Discussions on Canvas

**Literary Criticism**

* Priscilla Solis Ybarra, “Introduction: Defining Mexican American Goodlife Writing” from *Writing the Goodlife*

**Literary Expressions**

**Striking Environments & the Fruits of Nature**

* Selections from *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*
  + “Lightning,” Mirtha N. Quintanales
  + “Dispelling the *Sombras, Grito Mi Nombre con Rayos de Luz*,” Inés Hernández Avila
  + “Sand from Varadero Beach,” Ruth Behar
  + “*Plátanos* and Palms,” Rina Benmayor
  + “*Pisco* and Cranberry,” Eliana Rivero
  + “Eating Mango,” Liza Fiol-Matta
* Selections from Ada Limón, *The Hurting Kind*:
  + **From Spring**
    - “Drowning Creek”
    - “Forsythia”
    - “Not the Saddest Thing in the World”
    - “Stillwater Cove”
  + **From Summer**
    - “It Begins with the Trees”
    - “The First Fish”
    - “Open Water”

**Part II: Chicanx/Latinx Labor, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism**

**Farmwork: In the Agricultural Fields**

**Week 3**

Monday, September 8, 2025:

* Read Guidelines for Latinx Environmental Topic Paper
* Alicia Chávez, “Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers” (PDF @ Canvas=>Files)
* View *Living-Self Portrait: Dolores Huerta* as part of *Story: Community Organizing, the*

*Chicano Movement and Challenging Gender Norms* ([The Smithsonian Video](https://oursharedfuture.si.edu/stories/community-organizing-the-chicano-movement-and-challenging-gender-norms))

* Selections from *El Malcriado* newspaper, March 17, 1966:
  + “Farm Workers Pilgrimage” (4-5)
  + “Schenley, Leech of the Valley” (11)
  + “The Plan of Delano” (12-14)
  + “Commentary of Luis Valdez: The Plan of Delano”

\*Optional Reading: Laura Pulido “Subaltern Environmental Struggles” from *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest*

Wednesday, September 10, 2025:

* Ivone Gebara, “Ecofeminism: A Latin American Perspective”
* Ellen O’Loughlin, “Questioning Sour Grapes: Ecofeminism and the United Farm Workers Grape Boycott” from *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*
* Gloria Anzaldúa, selections from *Borderlands/La Frontera*:
  + “Sus Plumas El Viento”
  + “Cultures”
  + “A Sea of Cabbages”

\*Optional Readings:

* Lori Gruen, “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection between Women and Animals”
* Enriqueta Vasquez, “La Chicana: Let’s Build a New Life” from *Writings from El Grito del Norte*

**Week 4**

Monday, September 15, 2025:

* Priscilla Solis Ybarra, “Active Subjectivity in Migrant Farmworker Fiction: Rejecting Alienation from the Land” (Chapter 4 from *Writing the Goodlife*. Find in [ebook here](https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/j.ctt19rmccv))
* Selections by Tomás Rivera
  + From *Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra/And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (Find in [ebook here](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=3425646))
    - “The Children Couldn’t Wait” (Find on p. 77)
    - “And the Earth Did Not Devour him” (Find on p. 101)
  + From *The Harvest/La Cosecha*:
    - “The Salamanders”
    - “Zoo Island”

\* Optional Readings:

* Dvera Saxton, “Strawberry Fields as Extreme Environments”(PDF @ Canvas=>Files)
* “Under the House” (Find on p. 140), selection from *Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra/And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (Find in [ebook here](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=3425646))

Wednesday, September 17, 2025:

* Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (complete Act I)

**Week 5**

Monday, September 22, 2025:

* Read Multi-Media Presentation/Teaching Activity
* Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (complete Act II)
* Jennifer Garcia Peacock, “Sun Ma(i)d: Art, Activism, and Environment in Ester Hernández’s Central Valley” from *Latinx Environmentalisms* (in Part I. Place: Racial Capital and the Production of Place section. Find in [ebook here](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=5915565))

\*For In-Class Consideration ~ Visual Chicana/o/x Art:

* + Malaquias Montoya Art, “[Cultivadores Para Un Futuro](https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/cultivadores-para-un-futuro-de-desarrollo-comun-34728)” (1965)
  + Ester Hernández Art, “[Sun Mad](https://esterhernandez.com/screenprints/sun-mad-lll)” (1982)
  + Yolanda Lopez Art, “[The Guadalupe Series](http://almalopez.com/projects/ChicanasLatinas/lopezyolanda3.html)”
  + Judy Baca Art, “[Uprising of the Mujeres](https://americanart.si.edu/blog/judy-baca-interview)” (1979)
  + Judy Baca Art, “[The Matriarchal Mural: When God Was Woman, 1980-2021](https://www.judybaca.com/art/the-matriarchal-mural-when-god-was-woman/)”
  + Santa Barraza Art, [Various Pieces](https://www.santabarraza.com/)

Wednesday, September 24, 2025:

* Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (Discussion continued)

**In the Poultry Industry**

**Week 6**

Monday, September 29, 2025:

* Excerpts from *A Home on the Field*, Paul Cuadros
* “Intensive Poultry Farming: A Review of the Impact on the Environment and Human Health, Goran Gržinić

Wednesday, October 1, 2025:

* Excerpts from *A Home on the Field*, Paul Cuadros
* “Back to ‘The Jungle’: Processing Migrants in North Carolina Meatpacking Plants,” Sandy Smith-Nonini

**Part III: Urban Latinx Environmentalisms**

**Week 7**

Monday, October 6, 2025:

* Selections by Aurora Levins Morales:
  + “Immigrants” from *Getting Home Alive*
  + “Hurricane” from *Cosecha and Other Stories*
* Miguel Piñero, “Spring Garden–Philadelphia”
* “‘An Organic Being in the Middle of Chicago’: An Interview with Ana Castillo” from *Latinx Environmentalisms* (in Part I. Place: Racial Capital and the Production of Place section) (Find in [ebook here](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=5915565))

Optional Readings:

* “An Ecofeminist Perspective on the Urban Environment” from *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments*, Catherine Villanueva Gardner

**The Young Lords, 1968-1976 ~ Urban Environmentalism & Health Justice**

Wednesday, October 8, 2025:

* *Bodega Dreams* (1-54)
* View *The Young Lords: Exploring the Legacy of the Radical Puerto Rican Activist Group 50 Years Later* ([*Democracy Now!* Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWAJS0a1kgg))
* View *Takeover: How We Occupied a Hospital and Changed Public Health Care* ([*The New York Times* Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aK_ALMA1NMk))

Optional Reading:

* Darrel Enck-Warner “Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization’s Garbage Offensive”
* “[13 Point Program and Platform](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young_Lords_platform.html)”
* **First Set of Journal Entries (Weeks 1-7) Due. Submit paper copies at beginning of class.**

**Week 8**

Monday, October 13, 2025: **Fall Break, No Classes**

Wednesday, October 15, 2025:

* *Bodega Dreams* (55-107)
* “[Puerto Rican Obituary](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58396/puerto-rican-obituary),” Pedro Pietri
* The Nuyorican Poets Café
* For in-class consideration:
  + [Audio version](https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&sca_esv=598892895&q=puerto+rican+obituary+poem+live&tbm=vid&source=lnms&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjn5aeq3uKDAxUmF1kFHSBGDfUQ0pQJegQIChAB&biw=940&bih=809&dpr=2#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:dc66e883,vid:XCD0IsZ4HLI,st:0) of “Puerto Rican Obituary”
  + Hurray for the Riff Raff “[Pa’lante](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LilVDjLaZSE)”

**Week 9**

Monday, October 20, 2025:

* *Bodega Dreams* (108-171)
* David Vázquez, “Memory, Space, and Gentrification: The Legacies of the Young Lords and Urban Decolonial Environmentalism in Ernesto Quiñonez’s *Bodega Dreams*” from *Latinx Environmentalisms*

\*For in-class consideration ~ Visual Art in the Streets:

* + Hiram Maristany, “Young Lords, the Garbage Offensive” (1969)
  + “Mapping Resistance: The Young Lords in El Barrio”

Wednesday, October 22, 2025:

* *Bodega Dreams* (Complete the novel)
* Miguel Piñero, “La Bodega Sold Dreams” from *La Bodega Sold Dreams*

**Week 10**

Monday, October 27, 2025:

* \*In-Class Viewing: *Mosquita y Mari*

Wednesday, October 29, 2025:

* \*In-Class Viewing: *Mosquita y Mari*
* In-Class Selections from *Losing Miami*, Gabriel Ojeda-Sague

**Part IV: Making (Un)Sustainable Worlds**

**Urban Sustainability, Climate Change, and Quality of Life | “Tortuguita” | Copy City/Weelaunee Forest (South River Forest), Atlanta G.A.**

**Week 11**

Monday, November 3, 2025:

* “Bridging Environmental Sustainability and Quality of Life in Metropolitan Atlanta’s Urban Communities,” Susannah Lee and Subhrajit Guhathakurta
* “Environmental Equity and Spatiotemporal Patterns of Urban Tree Canopy in Atlanta” ([Click Here](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0739456X19864149) for Access), Bon Woo Koo et al.
* “Atlanta Households’ Willingness to Increase Urban Forests to Mitigate Climate Change,” Yenie Le Tran
* In-Class Selections from *City of Atlanta Climate Action Plan*, City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Sustainability ([Click Here](https://atlantaclimateactionplan.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/atlanta-climate-action-plan-07-23-2015.pdf) for Access)

Wednesday, November 5, 2025:

* “Sustainable for Whom? Green Urban Development, Environmental Gentrification, and the Atlanta Beltline,” Dan Immergluck and Tharunya Balan
* “Atlantic Station, Atlanta, Georgia: A Sustainable Brownfield Revitalization Best Practice,” Christopher De Sousa and Lily-Ann D’Souza ([Click Here](https://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/ord/2326021493334CC088257E46005DA806/$file/AtlanticStationCaseStudyFinalforposting1-3-13.pdf) for Access)
* “Environmentalist Manuel Esteban Paez Terán’s Death is Part of a Disturbing Trend” ([Click Here](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/02/manuel-esteban-paez-teran-climate-activist-killed-atlanta-police) for Access), Steven Donziger
* In-Class Viewing *The Fight over “Cop City”: Inside the Protests Against Atlanta’s New Police Training Center* ([Click Here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4jNv8lhOv4) to View)
* **Optional Readings:**
  + “Criminalizing Care: Environmental Justice under Political and Police Repression” ([Click Here](https://doi-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/10.1080/17524032.2023.2296835) for Emory Library Access) Constance Gordon
  + “Stop Cop City!—Understanding the Strategic Choices of Protest Movements,” Joseph M. Brown

**Week 12**

Monday, November 10, 2025:

* “There is No Cop City in the Beloved Community: An Open Letter from Members of Morehouse College Faculty” ([Click Here](file:///Users/GRAMI28/Downloads/Cop%20City%20Open%20Letter%20from%20the%20Morehouse%20Faculty.pdf) for Access)
* “Media Advisory: Atlanta Healthcare Professionals Demand Emory Professors Resign from Atlanta Police Foundation Board in Open Letter” ([Click Here](https://defendtheatlantaforest.org/2023/02/06/atlanta-healthcare-workers-demand-emory-cut-ties-to-apf/) for Access)
* **Optional Readings**:
  + “Creative Care: Artistic Action in the Stop Cop City Movement” ([Click Here](https://journals.flvc.org/athanor/article/view/138381/143638) for Access) Ivy Borden
  + “Meet Belkis Terán, Tortuguita’s Mother Who Continues the Forest Defender’s Legacy” ([Click Here](https://atlpresscollective.com/2025/01/08/meet-belkis-teran-tortuguitas-mother-who-continues-the-forest-defenders-legacy/) for Written or Video Interview)

**Indigenous (-derived) Botanical Knowledge & Healing**

Wednesday, November 12, 2025:

* Suzanne Bost, “Shared Ecologies and Healing Justice in the Work of Aurora Levins Morales: An Interview”
* Aurora Levins Morales, Selections from *Medicine Stories*:
  + “Certified Organic Intellectual”
  + “Ecology is Everything”
  + “Nadie la Tiene: Land, Ecology, and Nationalism”
  + “Building Radical Soil”
* Short selections from *Voices from the Ancestors: Xicanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices Stories*:
  + “Encontrándome,” Berenice Dimas
  + “Prayers to the Orishas,”, Martha R. Gonzales
  + “The Thirteen Aires and Self-Limpias,” Atava Garcia Swiecicki
  + “Baños de Limpia Espiritual,” Sandra M. Pacheco

**Week 13**

Monday, November 17, 2025:

* *Train to Oblivion*, Moira Millán

Wednesday, November 19, 2025:

* *Train to Oblivion*, Moira Millán

**Week 14**

Monday, November 24, 2025:

* *Train to Oblivion*, Moira Millán

Wednesday, November 26, 2025: **Thanksgiving Recess, No classes**

**Week 15**

Monday, December 1, 2025:

* *Train to Oblivion*, Moira Millán

Wednesday, December 3, 2025:

* “LatinX Botanical Epistemologies,” María DeGuzmán
* In-Class Reading/Performance of Karen Zacarías, *Native Gardens*
* ***Latinx Environmental Topic Paper Due. Submit paper copy at beginning of class.***

**Week 16**

Monday, December 8, 2025:

* David J. Vázquez, “Mapping Decolonial Environmental Imaginaries in Latinx Culture”
* In-Class Reading/Performance of Karen Zacarías, *Native Gardens* (Complete)
* ***Final 3 Journal Entries (Weeks 9-15) Due. Submit paper copies at beginning of class.***