

EVERGLADES ROMANTICISM

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English 4243, Fall 2018

Course Description

What's in a name? Once spanning nearly 4,000 square miles, the tropical wetlands of Florida have been called many things by different communities. The indigenous peoples known today as the Seminoles originally called them "Pa-hay-Okee," or "grassy waters." Arriving in the 1500s, the Spanish preferred "Laguna del Espiritu Santo" or "Lake of the Holy Spirit." Centuries later, the British-appointed John William Gerard DeBrahm used the phrase "River of Glades" on his 1773 surveyor map. The wetlands would appear for the first time as "The Ever Glades" on Charles Blacker Vignoles and H. S. Tanner's 1823 "Map of Florida." These names mark the intimacies between histories of empire and environment that continue to shape our present. The very name "Everglades" conjures visions of a vast, impenetrable, sublime expanse. It also names the anthropocentric fantasy of a planet whose resources are infinite, endlessly ripe for the claiming, the taking, the exploiting. Thus, in 1904—almost 100 years after the Everglades acquired its now iconic moniker—Napoleon Bonaparte Broward (namesake of Broward County) was elected governor on the promise he would make an "Empire of the Everglades." Envisioning South Florida as the second coming of ancient Egypt, Broward proclaimed Floridians would drain the swamp and thus master it as Egyptians had the Nile.

But what, you may be wondering, do the Everglades have to do with British Romanticism? The answer to this question, per the polemic of this course, is: everything! We might make the case for an Everglades Romanticism on the basis of dates. In 1763, the British Empire acquires the colonial territories of West and East Florida from Spain. Major British Romantic figures and concerns also emerge around this time: Jean-Jacques Rousseau traces the relationship between natural law and possessive individualism in 1755, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant theorize their respective notions of the sublime in 1757 and 1764, James Watt conducts experiments with steam that result in his 1769 patenting of the steam engine, and Anna Letitia Barbauld begins writing influential lyric poems on subjects as varied as intergalactic travel and the Corsican Revolution. We might also look beyond dates to a twinning of empires: Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, governor of Florida and self-styled Emperor of the Everglades, was named for *the* Napoléon Bonaparte, Romantic-era Emperor of France. Or we could think less literally, which is to say *conceptually*, about how the Everglades help us make sense of British Romanticism. Why might it be critical to contextualize British Romantic investments in liberal ideals like freedom or equality in a world of colonial conflict and revolutionary insurrection stretching from Europe to the Everglades and beyond? In what ways do Romantic fantasies of conquest and daydreams of untouched paradise take overt shape in the Floridian swamp? How do the Everglades mark the spot of racialized infection and natures run amok? And at the very same time become a launchpad for the imagination unbound?

This course will show the ways the Everglades helps us make sense of British Romanticism's most formative complexities and contradictions. It will also demonstrate how the relationship between the two is not a one-way street. Thus, we will also explore how British Romanticism helps us better understand the Everglades, past and present, then and now. How might lyric poetry—that most Romantic of genres—afford a language for tracing the category of the human and its exclusions central to Floridian histories of colonial encounter and dispossession? What might Romantic thought tell us about the Everglades as a site of conservation by dispossession—a place in which empire and erasure emerge not as antithetical to environmentalism but rather as its precondition? Or how might Romantic science and industry help us better understand the diminishing Everglades and uninterrupted coastal development? How might British Romanticism help us track the crossovers between natures that are on the one hand particular to South Florida and, on the other, illustrative of the environmental crises encompassed by what some now call the Anthropocene? In this course, we will read across a wide range of texts and genres, each of which offers its unique interpretation of these questions.

Course Schedule

** denotes readings available for download on Canvas

Week 1: “Florida Fever” & Everglades Romanticism

Royal Proclamation of 7 October 1763 by King George III
“Exhortation to Gentlemen of small Fortunes to settle in
East Florida”

William Bartram, *Travels* (selections)**

Charles Blacker Vignoles, *Observations upon the Floridas*
(selections)**

Albery A. Whitman, *The Rape of Florida* (selections)**

Charles Blacker Vignoles & H. S. Tanner, “Map of
Florida”**

Michael Grunwald, “A Requiem for Florida” (*Politico*)**

Week 2: Atlantic Intimacies

Declarations of Rights: America, France, Haiti**

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
(selections)

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
(selections)

William Wordsworth, “To Toussaint L’Ouverture”

Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, “Freedom to the Slave”**

Week 3: Lyric Powers, Figures of Speech

William Bartram, *Travels* (selections)**

Anna Letitia Barbauld, “A Summer Evening’s Meditation”

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ode to the West Wind”

John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale” & “Ode on a Grecian
Urn”

John Clare, “I Am”

William Wordsworth, preface to *Lyrical Ballads* & “The
Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman”

Week 4: Romantic Natures & Broward’s “Empire of the Everglades”

William Bartram, *Travels* (selections)**

Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* (selections)**

François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala* (selections)**

Lord Byron, “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte”** &
“Napoleon’s Farewell”**

Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos* (selections)**

Napoleon Bonaparte Broward II, “Open Letter”** & “The
Call of the Everglades”**

Week 5: Counting, Collecting, Displaying

William Bartram, *Travels* (selections)**

William Wordsworth, “We Are Seven”

Lord Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*

John Keats, “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles”**

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias”

Week 6: Pleistocene Dreams

Anna Letitia Barbauld, “Corsica”**

Charlotte Smith, *Beachy Head*

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Mont Blanc”

James Hutton, *Theory of the Earth* (selections)**

Georges Cuvier on catastrophism and Pleistocene fossils**

Week 7: Swamp Sublime, Subtropical Wilderness

Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757)**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Kubla Khan” & “Christabel”

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (selections)

Herman Ottomar Herzog, *The Fox; Near Gainesville* (image
linked on Canvas)**

George Loring Brown’s *Midnight on the Okefenokee Swamp*
(image linked on Canvas)**

Tommy Pico, *Nature Poem* (selections)**

Week 8: Miasmatic Climates & Climactic Weather

William Bartram, *Travels* (selections)**

William Gilbert, *The Hurricane* (selections)**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Fears in Solitude”

Helen Maria Williams, “Sonnet to the Torrid Zone”**

John Clare, “The Mouse’s Nest”**

William Cullens Bryant, “The Hurricane”**

Week 9: Ecologies, Invasives, Extinctions

William Wordsworth, Lucy poems & “Resolution and
Independence”

Lord Byron, “Darkness”

John Clare, “To the Snipe,” “The Badger,” & “Silent Love”

Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (selections)**

Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos* (selections)**

Week 10: Landscape, Enclosure, Conservation by Dispossession

William Gilpin, *Essay on Prints* (selections)**

Excerpts from Inclosure, Indian Removal, and Everglades
National Park Acts**

William Wordsworth, “Lines written a few miles above
Tintern Abbey”

François-René Chateaubriand, *Atala* (selections)**

John Clare, “The Lamentations of Round-Oak Waters”** &
“The Lament of Swordy Well”**

“The Emigration of the Seminoles” (1842)**

Week 11: Draining the Swamp & Urbanization

William Bartram, *Travels* (selections)**

William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

William Wordsworth, “Michael” & “Composed Upon
Westminster Bridge”

Percy Bysshe Shelley, Act IV of *Prometheus Unbound*
The Florida East Coast Homeseeker (selections)**

Week 12: Anthropocene Natures

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

William Wordsworth, “The World is Too Much With Us”**

UNESCO Re-designation of Everglades National Park as
Endangered

Week 13: Romanticism Meets Area X

Caspar David Friedrich, “Wanderer above the Sea of Fog”
(image linked on Canvas)

Alex Garland, “Annihilation”

Week 14: Romanticism Now

Presentations of capstone essay assignments.

English 4243: Everglades Romanticism

ROMANTICISM IN AREA X

Due Date:

Thursday, December 6th at 12:00pm. Submit your assignment to Canvas in .doc or .docx format and bring a hard copy to class for use during your presentation.

Objectives:

To craft an essay which considers the crossovers between Romantic literature and our Everglades present. This assignment builds on a semester's worth of conversations about how the Everglades help us make sense of Romanticism's most formative complexities and concerns, as well as how Romanticism might help us better understand the aesthetic, environmental, and political histories which converge and remain very much alive in the Everglades.

Instructions:

The title of this assignment invokes Alex Garland's "Annihilation," a film wherein the Floridian swamp becomes the launchpad for an ever-expanding and -mutating territory called Area X. The challenge of this assignment is equal parts critical and speculative. In **approximately 750 words**, identify *one* pressing aesthetic, environmental, and / or political question or problem haunting the Everglades (and / or South Florida) today. Use a Romantic text of your choice to then explore that question or problem's backstory and complexities. Your ultimate goal in this assignment is to consider how Romanticism helps us better understand our Everglades present. This is an open-ended assignment. The only requirements are as follows:

1. Take as your point of departure a close reading of one passage (two at the most) found in your chosen Romantic text. Your essay should, in other words, be inspired and *guided* by a particular moment in (or feature of) a course text of your choice. Your close reading of the text should inform and support any and all claims made.
2. Bring your chosen Romantic text to bear upon your chosen Floridian question or problem. Whatever you choose to discuss, your essay should be focused and specific (rather than generalizing and vague). This will make for a compelling and nuanced discussion. To support your claims, substantively cite at least one scholarly source and one reputable journalistic source in addition to your primary text. The following journalistic sources are great places to start (others must be approved by me): *The Atlantic*, *BBC*, *The Guardian*, *The LA Times*, *The Miami Herald*, *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *NPR*, *Politico*, *The Sun Sentinel*, *The Tampa Bay Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*.

Possible focal points include but are not limited to: race, gender and sexuality, class, and / or questions of legal personhood; the concepts of nature, wilderness, ecology, species, climate, or planet; the intertwinements of environmental and imperial histories; problems of scale (i.e. human history versus deep time); conflicts between different ways of knowing; how figurative language or aesthetic concepts such as the sublime might afford lenses for understanding the Everglades at present; the concepts of landscape, enclosure, property, and / or conservation; calls (past and present) to drain the swamp; the concept of infrastructure and histories of coastal development, South Floridian geoengineering, etc. This list of starting points is by no means comprehensive! If you are feeling stuck, review the syllabus and your favorite readings for ideas.

On the Inception & Aims of “Everglades Romanticism”

I had the pleasure of teaching “Everglades Romanticism,” an upper-division course in British Romanticism, at Florida Atlantic University (a second-tier public university that lies to the northeast of Everglades National Park) in the fall of 2018. The course was designed to bring “home”—both temporally and spatially—a literary period from which students often feel distant. I accomplished this through strange pairings: the Everglades and the Lake District, alligators and nightingales.

“Everglades Romanticism” was borne from a question to which I often return: what does it mean to profess Romanticism here and now? For me, this question is especially pressing because of the community of students I serve. Most of my students are people of color; many work one or more jobs and commute, sometimes from hours away; some are first-generation or non-traditional; a good number have children. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many do not feel the English major is *for* them insofar as it is often organized around the British and American literary canons, with other literatures cordoned off into separate subdisciplines. The curriculum communicates to some students that British Romantic literature is not multicultural literature, for instance; that such literature is not *here* for students who care about empire or race or ethnicity; that students must go elsewhere or *over there* to think about such things. On the flipside, it can also suggest to a different kind of student that if he is disinterested in interrogating white supremacy or canonicity, he might opt out of these conversations by taking courses in the British literary tradition, which seems to afford a potential safe space. I designed “Everglades Romanticism” to respond to these dual concerns.

I accomplished this not only by emphasizing the transtemporal histories of Romanticism, but also by bringing Romantic literature and thought “home” to my students in a geographical sense. They were able to see how the legacies of the British Romantic period are visible in the here and now of Floridian coastlines and swamps; how their own experiences intersect with this seemingly removed moment in literary and cultural history; how their obsession with contemporary pop-cultural phenomena like Alex Garland’s “Annihilation” might in fact be steeped in Romantic philosophies of nature, landscape, and anthropogenic power. The place-based nature of the course also allowed students to explore how all knowledges (including their own) require contextualization because they are situated historically, geographically, and culturally.

To follow through on these aims, the course was experimental in archive. Readings included canonical heavyweights like Lord Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” as well as materials gathered from the State Archives of Florida. Sometimes we explored literal connections between British Romantic thought and the Everglades, such as those outlined on the course timeline attached. But other connections we considered were non-literal: how Romantic lyric might help us better understand the power dynamics of figuration in William Bartram’s encounters with and representations of the Seminoles, for instance, or how the writings of Georges Cuvier illuminate Florida’s deep geologic past. Readings often ranged beyond the proprietary boundaries of the period, too, so that students might develop a sense of legacy or, perhaps, our Romantic present. Thus, we turned to Napoleon Bonaparte Broward’s 1910 address, “The Call of the Everglades,” to see how Romantic-era colonial and industrial developments impelled calls to “drain the swamp” so that Florida might become an anthropogenic and economic empire.

The course requirements were also experimental. In their capstone assignments, for instance, students wrote about how a Romantic text of their choice might illuminate a pressing problem in South Florida today. These essays were nothing short of incredible. One used William Bartram’s *Travels* to explore how the rhetoric of invasion, so common in discussions of swamp ecology, reveals the colonial logic of ongoing efforts to “restore” the Everglades. Another turned to Edmund Burke’s *Enquiry* and William Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” to consider how a place like Everglades National Park preserves not only a landscape but also an aesthetic experience—one predicated upon colonial dispossession and erasure. These essays crystallized beautifully the course, its aims, and its convictions. By our last meeting, many of my students had begun to think of themselves as Romantics in one way or another. Their investment in the best parts of the Romantic project—and their nuanced understanding of that project at its most dangerous—is cause for hope.

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English 4243: British Romanticism

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF EVERGLADES ROMANTICISM

4 July 1776
American Declaration of Independence

5 May 1789
Three Estates (clergy, nobility, commoners) assemble at Versailles

17 June 1789
The Third Estate (commoners) names itself the National Assembly

14 July 1789
Storming of the Bastille (Paris), a symbol of royal power

16 July 1791
Louis XVI, King of France, suspended from office until he agrees to ratify new constitution prioritizing general will & rights

August 1791
Slave revolts break out in St. Domingue; Haitian Revolution begins

1 October 1791
French National Legislative Assembly (primarily middle class) established to enforce Constitution & spread revolutionary ideals

10 August 1792
Storming of Tuileries Palace (Paris); French royal family detained

2-7 September 1792
Royalists massacred in Paris

5 September 1792
Maximilien Robespierre elected deputy to the National Assembly

22 September 1792
France proclaims itself a Republic

11 December 1792
Louis XVI sentenced to death; publicly guillotined 21 January 1793

6 April 1793
Robespierre & others establish Committee of Public Safety

5 September 1793
Robespierre decrees the beginning of the Reign of Terror, proclaiming terror will be “the order of the day”

16 October 1793
Marie Antoinette publicly executed

4 February 1794
France abolishes slavery in France and French territories

28 July 1794
Robespierre executed without trial, ending the Terror

30 August 1800
Toussaint L’Ouverture, former slave, proclaimed Haiti’s Supreme Commander-in-Chief; forms an assembly for the writing of a new constitution that abolishes slavery in January 1801

June 1801
Parliament passes the 1st Enclosure Act, privatizing the “commons”

7 April 1803
Toussaint L’Ouverture dies in prison after being arrested & deported to France

1 January 1804
Haiti proclaims its independence

18 May 1804
Napoléon Bonaparte proclaimed Emperor of France

8 October 1804
Jean-Jacques Dessalines becomes Emperor Jacques I of Haiti

25 March 1807
Parliament passes the Slave Trade Act

16 August 1819
Peterloo Massacre: English cavalry charges crowd of over 60,000 demanding expanded parliamentary representation

7 June 1832
Reform Bill receives royal assent; expands the electorate

28 August 1833
Parliament passes the Slavery Abolition Act

1700s
Indigenous refugees of war (mostly Creek) begin moving into Florida; joined by Africans fleeing slavery; eventually called “Seminoles” (or “Black Seminoles”), translated roughly as “outsiders” or “runaways”

10 February 1763
Spain trades Florida to Britain in exchange for Havana, Cuba

1764
Britain divides East & West Florida; St. Augustine & Pensacola are their respective capitals; sugar, citrus, rice & indigo plantations established

1775-83
Florida the only colony to remain loyal to Britain during American Revolutionary War, serving as refuge for royalists

9 March – 8 May 1781
Siege of Pensacola; Spain retakes city from the British

3 September 1783
Treaty of Paris ends Revolutionary War; Britain recognizes Spanish sovereignty over West Florida & cedes East Florida

1791
William Bartram’s *Travels* published

1795
Spanish forces suppress revolt by American settlers in East Florida

1803
U.S. purchases Louisiana from France; Thomas Jefferson claims transaction includes portions of Spanish West Florida

1804
Osceola (Seminole leader) born near Tuskegee, Alabama

1808
Slave traders begin using Amelia Island in East Florida as a hub

17-18 March 1812
American rebels occupy Spanish East Florida; withdraw to Georgia the next year, burning plantations as they go

1813-14
Creek Civil War drives Muskogee-speaking Creeks (including Osceola) to migrate to Florida

1814
Andrew Jackson’s troops occupy Pensacola in Spanish West Florida

1815
Freedmen and fugitives occupy British fort on Apalachicola River; U.S. army quashes the occupation in 1816

1816-19
First Seminole War: Andrew Jackson invades north Florida

1819-21
Spain cedes the Floridas to the U.S.; finalized by Adams-Onís Treaty

1821
Spanish Floridas merged into one U.S. territory (eventually becoming a state in 1845); Andrew Jackson becomes governor

1823
Treaty of Moultrie Creek (result of First Seminole War) forcibly moves Seminoles onto reservation at center of Florida peninsula

1835-42
Second Seminole War: thousands of Seminoles killed or forcibly moved west of the Mississippi

1855-58
Third Seminole War: most of remaining Seminoles forcibly moved to Oklahoma; some take refuge in the Everglades

1901
Everglades drainage begins for purpose of creating farmland