

## German 4300

Autumn 2012 | T Th 11.10 – 12.30

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# Nature and Ecology in German literature and intellectual history

In a recent international study comparing 'green' records, Switzerland and Germany ranked in the top group. Newsweek magazine writes: "No country is more green by design", referring to the fact that in Germany 'green thinking' is not only a matter of policies, but also embedded in culture and mentality. This course wants to explore and critically assess the history, variety and design of ecological thinking in the German speaking world, focusing on the following aspects:

- (1) **Ethics:** philosophical concepts of ecological responsibility
- (2) **Writing:** literary reflections of nature and the ecological crisis
- (3) **Current affairs and their history:** the role of green issues in contemporary politics, modern environmentalism and its history, the history of the German Green Party, 'green' identity politics

Nature throughout history has served as a projection screen for a wide range of contradictory qualities, ranging from the anti-human to the origin of humanness, from cruelty to harmony. We will discuss how these various concepts change in a time of global ecological crisis and what kind of challenge the scientific concept of nature as ecology (i.e. a network of organisms and environments mutually conditioning one another) poses to our self-perception.

**Texts** include the short novels *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse, *Homo Faber* by Max Frisch and *Die Wolke* by Gudrun Pausewang, films by Werner Herzog and Thomas Riedelsheimer, a selection of poetry, philosophical, scientific and political essays, as well as media coverage of current environmental affairs.

This course is open to advanced undergraduate and graduate students. The course will be taught in German.



## Requirements

Participation	25
Presentation	25
Seminar paper	50