

ENL 40: Becoming Plant



Figure 1 "The Metamorphosis of Daphne" by Master of the Judgement of Paris. <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-metamorphosis-of-daphne-33148>

Instructor	Kirsten Schuhmacher (she/her/hers)
Email	kschuhmacher@ucdavis.edu
Office	Voorhies 330
Office Hours	R 2-3pm (Zoom) and F 1-2pm (in person)

What might it look and feel like to become plant? This question has, in many ways, perpetuated through history and continued to be a source of anxiety, wonder, acceptance, horror, etc. We will look at a variety of texts across genres, historical periods, and cultures to better understand what it means to “become plant.” Some of the questions that this course will interrogate are: What does it mean to have a relationship with plants and other nonhumans? How might we experience kinship with plants? What does it mean to “become” something other than human? How do writers take an intersectional approach to “becoming” plant? What might we gain from embodying vegetal ways of being and incorporating vegetal thinking?

Required Texts

You will be responsible for acquiring either digital or hard copy versions of these texts. Some texts might be included in Canvas's Bookshelf, others are not. This is not an exhaustive list of the readings in this class. For the most part, I have included most of our readings digitally in Canvas. Please always check the calendar and "modules" tab for what texts you are required to read each week.

Texts:

William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* [ISBN:] or free PDF in Canvas
Dominique Morisseau, *Blood at the Root* [ISBN:]
Ram V., *The Swamp Thing 1: Becoming* [ISBN: 9781779512765]

Movies:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

Requirements

Grading

I want and expect that all of you will come prepared to engage with these texts and their afterlives. As such, it is of equal importance that you come to class prepared to discuss and interrogate these works as it is to complete assignments. As each quarter seems to present new challenges, I am relatively lenient; however, your learning and engagement is your own. Please be prepared to communicate with me when and if you need course accommodations.

Grade Breakdown

Attendance and Participation	20%
Discussion + Critical Inquiry	20%
Found Artifact Report	20%
Essay #2- Research Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%

Grading Scale

A+ = 97-100
A = 93-96.9
A- = 90-92.9
B+ = 87-89.9
B = 83-86.9
B- = 80-82.9

C+ = 77-79.9
C = 73-76.9
C- = 70-72.9
D+ = 67-69.9
D = 63-66.9
D- = 60-62.9

Late Work Policy

Late work will only be accepted **without penalty** with prior written communication. I accept late work up until the last instruction week with penalties outlined below. Keep in mind, it is always better to be transparent about your needs since I encourage taking charge of your learning experience.

Lateness penalties: if up to 24 hours late, 1/3 grade reduction (B- becomes C+); if 24 hours late, 2/3 grade reduction (B- becomes C). For more than 24 hours late, a full grade reduction. Please note that it is class policy not to offer written commentary on late essays.

I cannot accept late work for the found artifact report or the final exam.

Communication

Communication Etiquette

I am here to support your success. Please seek my help if you need it. I will do everything I can, and I will note your effort. If my office hours are inconvenient for you, do not hesitate to make an appointment or email me with questions or problems. I check my email often and will respond with reasonable regularity. Please note that emails sent before 6am, after 5pm, and on weekends will take me longer to respond to.

I am always happy to talk with you about your ideas and drafts during my office hours or by appointment; however, please do not send drafts via email for me to look at and respond to. I will not respond to drafts over email.

Inclusive Language

Pronouns are linguistic tools that we use to refer to people. (i.e. they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his). Because pronouns in English are often associated with

gender identity, using each other's correct pronouns is an important way to show respect to each other and create a learning environment that is inclusive to trans* and gender-non-conforming scholars. Consistent with core values for this course, we will collectively create an inclusive learning environment by doing the following:

- Offer opportunities for our classmates to share their correct pronouns
- Use each other's pronouns correctly, or if pronouns are not known, refer to people by name or with gender neutral language (they/ them).
- Discuss the group using gender neutral language (i.e. "y'all" or "everyone" versus "you guys")

This course is designed to emphasize and explore multilingual and multicultural adaptation. We are very fortunate to be in a diverse learning environment where we encounter a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds and levels of English proficiency. This learning environment reflects a realistic writing and collaborative situation from today's world. You are invited to use all of your languages as resources in this course. You are welcome to write in a language other than English whenever it is helpful (such as in first drafts and notes), to draw on words and phrases in final drafts that do not have translations in English, and to use print-and web-based sources that are written in languages other than English. **In this class, I expect "written accent" (missing articles, incorrect prepositions, incorrect verb tenses) to be treated with respect.** While all students in this course are expected to challenge themselves to become more effective and accomplished writers in English, we will not spend time worrying too much about the aspects of English that take many years to acquire (i.e. articles, verb tense, prepositions).

Code of Academic Conduct

In written assignments, you must unambiguously cite all work that is not your own and give credit to any person or publication whose language or ideas you use. You may not submit work that you have submitted for credit in other courses, and you may not turn in work that you could not have completed on your own (e.g., you may have a family member or tutor read over a paper and make suggestions, but you may not enlist someone to write or fix your work for you). Penalties for violations of this code of conduct may include failure of an assignment, failure of the course, and other academic penalties.

Please refer to the [UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct](#) for more information.

Students who are in doubt as to what constitutes a violation of academic integrity should consult with their instructor.

Respectful Classroom

My classroom is a mutually respectful space. I encourage you to take charge of your learning and come to me when issues arise. As college students, I expect that you will be in touch with me regularly if you have issues or concerns. These principles are the basis for which I grade your participation in this class.

As an instructor, I will show you respect in the following ways:

- Grading your work promptly and thoroughly
- Giving feedback regularly on work
- Being available to discuss your work in my course
- Listening to your ideas
- Helping you to think through difficult concepts
- Being prepared for each class
- Allowing you to share ideas without interruption
- Being cognizant and sensitive to your identities and cultures

As a student, I require that you show respect in the following ways:

- Turning in assignments on time or informing me when you need more time
- Doing assignments to the best of your abilities
- Reading the text and engaging with the assigned materials each week
- Showing up on time
- Being engaged in class discussion and lecture
- Listening to lecture and to other students without interruption
- Being prepared when called upon
- Allowing other students to share ideas without ridicule (i.e. laughing, making fun of, jeering, etc.)
- Always refer to evidence when sharing ideas and opinions
- Critique ideas, not people
- Do not monopolize discussion
- Being cognizant and sensitive to other's identities and cultures

Accommodations

Because we all learn differently, we all need accommodations. If an aspect of this course prevents you from learning or participating fully, please let me know. We will work together to create the best learning environment for you in this course. If you need

ENL 40-2
Time: MWF 2:10-3:00

Fall 2023
Location: 1134 Bainer Hall

official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. I encourage you to reach out to the Student Disability Center if you feel that it is a good option for you.

Be Well

Taking care of yourself is always part of my teaching philosophy. I will work to support you as much as I am able, but if you need further resources to better support you, please feel free to use the links below:

Therapy Assistance Online: <https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/tao>

To access Counseling Services in North Hall and all locations call 530-752-0871

It is also important that I tell you that I am a mandatory reporter. If you tell me something i.e. sexual harassment, stalking, etc. that you want to keep "confidential," I cannot. My job requires me to talk to and involve the appropriate people who have more experience and knowhow. If, however, you would like to talk to someone who is not a mandatory reporter, you can call the CARE (Center for Advocacy Resources and Education) Line at 530-752-3299.

Writing Support Center

The goal of the Writing Support Center in the Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers is to help you develop as a writer at UC Davis through encouraging peer feedback and guided practice on a variety of writing topics. The team is made up of undergraduate tutors who are UC Davis students as well as specialists who are experienced in teaching writing at the college level and hold advanced graduate degrees. To help students through the writing process, writing tutors and specialists work with students one-on-one as well as in small groups to discuss topics that range from brainstorming to drafting. Tutors and specialists are trained to help students at any point in the writing process.

The writing support team also has a Writing Studio where you can work on your essays with peers, tutors, and specialists. The studio is located in the University House Annex, and it is open from 12pm-7pm Monday through Thursday.

For more information, please visit the AATC Writing team's website:
<http://success.ucdavis.edu/services/writing.html> or call 530-752-2013
The main office is 2205 Dutton Hall.

Course Calendar

Week 1: Our Vegetal Souls

ENL 40-2
Time: MWF 2:10-3:00

Fall 2023
Location: 1134 Bainer Hall

Wednesday – September 27th:

Read: Syllabus
Due: Discussion #1

Friday – September 29th (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Aristotle, *De Anima* pts. 1-4
Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* sections 1-6
Due: Discussion #2

Week 2: Being and Becoming

Monday – October 2nd:

Read: Ram V., *The Swamp Thing: Becoming*
Due: Discussion #3

Wednesday – October 4th:

Read/Watch: Ersin Han Ersin, [What's It like to Be a Giant Sequoia Tree](#)
Due: Critical Question

Friday – October 6th (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Nothing
Due: Found Object Reports:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Week 3: Metamorphoses and Surrender

Monday – October 9th:

Read: MacLean, ["Unhuman Sacrifice"](#) pgs. 100-126
Marvell, ["The Garden"](#)
Due: Discussion #4

Wednesday – October 11th:

Read: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* ["Apollo and Daphne"](#)
Due: Critical Question

Friday – October 13th (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Nothing

ENL 40-2
Time: MWF 2:10-3:00

Fall 2023
Location: 1134 Bainer Hall

Due: Found Object Reports:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Week 4: Punishment

Monday – October 15th:

Read: *Titus Andronicus*

Due: Discussion #5

Wednesday – October 17th:

Read: Dante, “Inferno” from *The Divine Comedy* Canto XIII

Due: Critical Question

Friday – October 19th (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Nothing

Due: Found Object Reports:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Week 5: Horror

Monday – October 23rd:

Watch: *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*
King, “Weeds”

Due: Discussion #6

Wednesday – October 25th:

Read: Estok, “Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia” pgs. 206-210

Due: Critical Question

Friday – October 27th (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Nothing

Due: Found Object Reports:

- 1.

ENL 40-2
Time: MWF 2:10-3:00

Fall 2023
Location: 1134 Bainer Hall

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Week 6: Gender and Resistance

Monday – October 30th:

Read: Kang, *The Vegetarian* pt. 3 “Flaming Trees”

Due: Discussion #7

Wednesday – November 1st:

Read: Alaimo, “Nature” in *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*; read “Introduction” and “Environmental Feminisms”

Due: Critical Question

Friday – November 3rd (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Nothing

Due: Found Object Reports:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Week 7: Race, Reclamation, and Grief

Monday – November 6th:

Read: Morisseau, *Blood at the Root*

Due: Discussion #8

Wednesday – November 8th:

Read: Ruffin, [“Message of the Trees”](#) pgs. 1-4 in *Black on Earth*

Due: Critical Question

Friday – November 10th (NO CLASS - Veterans’ Day):

Read: Nothing

Due: Nothing

Week 8: Trans-Corporeality

Monday – November 13th:

ENL 40-2
Time: MWF 2:10-3:00

Fall 2023
Location: 1134 Bainer Hall

Read: Hawthorn, "Rappaccini's Daughter"
Perez, "from 'Understory'"
Due: Discussion #9

Wednesday – November 15th:

Read: Iovino and Oppermann, "Introduction: Stories Come to Matter" pgs. 1-5 in
Material Ecocriticism
Due: Critical Question

Friday – November 17th (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Nothing
Due: Found Object Reports:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Week 9: Origins, Family, and Ancestors

Monday – November 20th:

Read: Burnett, *The Grassling* excerpts
Due: Discussion #10

Wednesday – November 22nd:

Read: Nothing
Due: Research Essay Proposal

Friday – November 24th (NO CLASS – Thanksgiving):

Read: Nothing
Due: Nothing

Week 10: Review

Monday – November 27th:

Read: Research Essay Instructions
Due: Research Essay Draft

Wednesday – November 29th:

Read: Nothing
Due: Nothing

ENL 40-2
Time: MWF 2:10-3:00

Fall 2023
Location: 1134 Bainer Hall

Friday – December 1st (outside class – weather permitting):

Read: Reread your research essay draft and your peers' comments

Due: Found Object Reports:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Week 11: Review

Monday – December 4th:

Read: Michael Marder, [“If Peas Can Talk, Should We Eat Them?”](#) in *The New York Times*

Due: Nothing

Wednesday – December 6th:

Read: Nothing

Due: Research Essay Due

Friday – December 8th:

Read: Nothing

Due: Questions on Final

Final Exam: December 12th at 8:00am