### Course Description

Volcanic eruptions in Iceland, local food, oil exploration, polluted waters, aluminum factories, Chernobyl, global warming—if you follow the news in the past year, these items have been on your radar, but did you know that these issues have been important in German literature in the long 20th century? In this course, we will explore environmental issues through the lens of German literary, film, and nonfiction texts. Our readings will include poetry, Enzensberger’s epic poem about the limits of technological progress, Der Untergang der Titanic (The Sinking of the Titanic), short novels and novellas. We will begin with Kaminer’s satire about gardening, local food, and Thorstein Veblen’s Mein Leben im Schrebergarten (My Life in the Garden Plot). Turning our attention to Raabe’s Pfisters Muehle (Pfister’s Mill) from 1884, which describes the link between factory construction and water pollution, we will encounter what is considered to be the first text in German about environmental issues. Thomas Mann’s “Tristan” (1901), a story that takes place in an Alpine sanatorium, introduces us to the ways in which landscape has been imagined to shape identity. 

\[\text{Leutenegger's Koenig (19th Century)}\] records the impressions of a Swiss aluminum plant, Wolf’s Stoerfall (Accident: A Day’s News) meditates on the implications of Chernobyl in terms of human life, and Falke’s Bruno takes a very look at the handling of a rouge bear incident as well the issue of global warming. Parallel to the literary reading of texts, we will analyze several cinematic treatments of ecological issues and examine essays in ecocritism (Goodbody) that will guide our analysis of texts.

### Course Objectives

In this course students will:

- expand abilities to read, interpret, and appreciate literary and multimedia texts related to environmental topics.
- exercise effective communication skills in German and English in ways that lead to the development of critical literacy skills
- explore the complex relationships among the formal/aesthetic dimensions of literature, the social/historical contexts of works we read, and the global perspectives relevant to addressing environmental issues today.

### Active Learning Assessments

- Student-generated Glossary

For grade credit, students contribute vocabulary items to a glossary located at the course website. Entries include key terminology, grammatical information (such as noun gender), definitions, an example of how the word can be used in a sentence, and appropriate citations.

Sample (in English translation):

**Student-generated Glossary**

- der Schrebergarten: small garden in a garden colony, named after Dr. Daniel G. M. Schreber (1808-61). The Schrebergarten is a microcosm of Switzerland today <http://www.swissinfo.ch>.

### Course Readings

- **Kaminer**: uses descriptions of photographs at the beginning of his work to contrast the relationship to nature of generations in and past and people today. Select two photographs that show the relationship between man and nature and describe them in German.

- Compare the understanding of environmental issues in Pfisters Muehle with the situation today. To what extent do we see environmental questions similarly? How do we view progress today differently from Raabe’s characters?

- Consumer goods play an important role in the work we are reading as an indicator of our impact on the environment. Select an object and analyze its potential impact on the environment. What do you think it means to think of consumption as a sustainability issue?

### Student-generated Glossary

- **Raabe**: Mein Leben im Schrebergarten

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### Global Connections On-line

Links from the course website facilitate exploration of international connections through supplementary readings, video, and audio materials. Students have opportunities to critically evaluate the reliability of websites, use on-line reference sources, and encounter dialectical variations in spoken German.

### Works Cited

- Umweltbundesamt. http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/index-e.htm