You are warmly invited to come to a reading and discussion group with visiting fellow Dr. Susan Oliver (University of Essex) for three sessions and a screening beginning on Tuesday, March 29th. The focus of the group is Literature and the Environmental Imagination. Works that we will discuss engage with how writing and film understands (or fails to understand) natural environments. The three sessions focus on topics: land ethics, environmental justice, and taking stock and thinking forwards in an Anthropocene epoch.

The group will meet weekly in Coe 123, beginning with a pre-session film screening on March 29th from 12 p.m.-1:15 p.m. As in previous years, you are invited to bring lunch with you. Please join us, whether you would like to come to some or all of the sessions.

Topics and Reading list:

**Pre-Session: 29th March 2016:**
**Film Screening:** DamNation (2014). Directors: Ben Knight, Travis Rummel. Coe Library 123.
If you are unable to make the screening, DamNation is available on YouTube and Netflix for a small fee.

**Session 1: 31st March 2016:**
**Topic:** 21st Century Land Ethics
**Film:** DamNation (2014). Directors: Ben Knight, Travis Rummel.
“The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.” Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There (1949)

Ben Knight and Travis Rummel’s multi-award-winning documentary looks at the effects of damming rivers in North America during the twentieth century and the results of recent policies of dam removal. Lyrical footage of salmon and steelhead trout supports an account of nature at its most resilient. Interviews with environmental activists explore art as protest. This film takes elegy as a mode of grieving and looks to turn it around. We will discuss the film’s argument for restitution as a response to Aldo Leopold’s 1949 call for a land ethic.

Photo: Pink Salmon. Still from DamNation.
Session 2: 7 April 2016

**Topic: Environmental Justice and slow violence: people and other species**


Rob Nixon asks for new definitions of what constitutes violence in a world driven by spectacle and accelerating time. He explores catastrophes that take place so slowly that those of us living in the first world are unable to see them until their effects risk being beyond remedy. *Slow Violence* is concerned with the relationship between people and the land in some of the worlds most damaged and degraded environments. Kathleen Jamie and Chris McCully lyrically treat the relationship between time and place through poems that, at one level, are about the non-human inhabitants: Shetland ponies, raptors, and black rhinos. We will discuss how literature and reading can confront quiet, insidious violence against people and other living things that risks going unseen and without the potential for redress.

Photo: Black rhinoceros in the Serengeti. Thompson Safaris.

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Session 3: 14 April 2016

**Topic: Where we are now: taking stock and thinking forwards in an Anthropocene epoch**


*The Edge of Extinction* is concerned with extreme margins in familiar places. Jules Pretty writes about people from around the world who are having to cope with matters of land ethics and environmental justice. Rather than seeing those communities in terms of their presupposed extinction, he assesses their capacity for endurance. This chapter looks at the situation of people including the Houma nation who live in an area better known for nature conservation: the wetlands of the Atchafalaya basin in Louisiana. Jules is a biological scientist and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Essex. He was awarded an OBE for his services to biological science and writing. In this last session in the discussion group series we will talk about a chapter from his most recent book.

Photo: Atchafalaya Basin in Louisiana, USA, in the Sherburne Complex Wildlife Management Area, a Nature Conservancy reserve. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Digital Visual Library