

Okay.

Welcome to ecocriticism 101. Well, we've had the introductory material, we've had the housekeeping, but now we're going to get to a work of literature. And what a work of literature it is. The Epic of Gilgamesh is the oldest major work of literature in the West and arguably one of the greatest. It's just you know a touchstone for scholars and has been for some time. So it is however very very very far back in time and as a consequence it is not quite as sophisticated as other literature. But the best jump right in and look at it. So, this is of course our Prezi. We are way down here at this point. Note how far down we are, nearly 5000 years. There were a lot of ways to go for the rest of this course and a lot of ground to cover. Insofar, as note, that we're here in Northern Africa. So, let's click on lecture number 2 here. Jump right in. Notice here that we are having an

introduction to the environmental humanities, along with eco criticism. So what's all that about?

Well, our approach is always going to be eco critical in the sense that we are primarily looking at texts, and we are interpreting them through eco criticism as a procedure. But, we also are going to be looking at other fields of the humanities. So, what I mean by that is we'll be looking at eco theology, eco philosophy, environmental history, and so forth. Not so much today. Today, why I call this here eco criticism rather than new eco philosophy, eco theology, which I will in other lectures, is because today we're primarily looking at eco criticism. And let's look at that text that we wanna look at, and that's the Epic of Gilgamesh. So here it is. He had seen everything, and experienced all emotions full exaltation to despair, had been granted a vision into the great mystery, the secret places, the primeval

days before the Flood.

He had journeyed to the edge of the world and made his way back, exhausted but whole.

It carved his trials on stone tablets, have stored the Eanna Temple the massive walls of Uruk, which no city on earth can equal. See how its ramparts mean like copper in the sun. Climb the stone staircase, more ancient than the mind can imagine, approach the Eanna Temple, sacred to Ishtar, temple that no king has equaled in size or beauty, walk on the wall of Uruk, follow its course around the city, inspect its mighty foundations, examine its brickwork, how masterfully it is built, observe the land that encloses: the palm trees, the gardens, the orchards, the glorious palaces and temples, the shops and marketplaces, the houses, the public squares. Find the cornerstone and under at the copper box that is marked with his name. Unlock it. Open the lid. Take out the tablet of lapis lazuli. Read

how Gilgamesh suffered and conquered all.

Okay, now here's the thing. We're early in the

course and I just want to tell you

something. If you didn't like this text,

it's not gonna get any better as the

course goes on. In fact, other texts that

we're gonna be reading, things like Hesiod,

are not nearly this good. What I'm

saying is, this is really good literature.

If you didn't like it, and if you can't

imagine sitting through a whole course

reading things like this, well it's still

early in the term. You could

always leave the class. Not pushing

people out of the class, don't worry. I'm

just telling you, this is as good as it

gets. And you know, maybe it won't quite

register with you at this point. And you

know, if you're younger than I am, you may

be a lot younger than I am. But you know,

the whole notion that what makes

Gilgamesh this amazing person is that he,

you know, he went through life, he

encountered everything. And not that he

did great things, but at this point what is said in part is he just survived. He survived it all and still kept moving forward. Anyhow, it's a great work and I hope you really did enjoy it. So, go back here. And one of the things that we have throughout the prezis are these polls. Now, I'll be honest, these were designed when this was a lecture that was actually attended in Campbell Hall at UCSB. And I thought about taking them out when I did these prerecorded lectures. But I decided to leave them in because, first, they were there. And again to be honest, because we use a device called the i-clicker to take poll with, to take you know, let see who's there, take attendance with them. But on the other hand, they're useful I think is why I put them in. So for example, this one raises an interesting question and two questions really. One, you know have you done the reading at this point? And you

can answer that, I can't answer that for you. But it raises another question, an important one regarding the entire course and the relationship that you'll have to the readings. And that is, should you do the readings prior to the lectures or should you watch the lectures first? I've traditionally taken the approach with students, and you know in fact I've given little quizzes to make sure that they have done the reading. The approach is of course that they should do the reading first. You should do the reading first. Well, the thing is about that. These readings are not necessarily intuitively eco critical. In other words, it's not going to jump out at you then you can approach this from an environmental point of view. Scholars throughout you know centuries, decades, have not approached eco critically. It's only in the last few decades that we have. Consequently you may go through the whole thing and not,

you know, pick up any eco critical aspects of it. But that's okay, because I'll explain that in lecture. But really another approach, a useful approach, is if you do the lectures first and then do the readings afterwards because then you'll see you know what to look for in the readings, what kind of things are important, you'll remember that I talked about a particular scene. So then why haven't I always told people to do that. Well I found over the years that when I told people to do the readings after the lectures, they go to the lecture, they think that the lecture covers everything, and then they ask themselves the question why should I do the reading and they decide not to do the reading. That's a mistake. You're just not going to be able to get everything out of this course and, let's be honest, be successful in this course, do well. And if you're taking it for a grade, get a good grade

if you don't do the readings too. Doing the readings, it's absolutely important. But, you know, I still think it might be best if you watch the lecture first then do the reading. But, do the reading, please don't don't skip it okay.

So, let me by the way pop back on screen so you can hear me while things are going, see me while things are going on. So let's get into Gilgamesh.

Uruk, so you know you take this imaginative walk around the city and we just did, that's in the opening of it you know, and it's been nicely laid out for us you know. How would you describe Uruk?

By the way, Uruk was a real city and the part of the world that that was in is of course Iraq. So, it's a real place. Uruk is surrounded by a wall. This is the case with many ancient cities and so far in history this will be the greatest wall, the great city in the West. The interesting thing about this wall, it's designed to protect the people within

the city from other human beings and the environment too, both of which are seen as a threat. So, first conceptually what's going on here. You probably know this concept, but you know not from cities, but from you know like a castle right. So imagine a castle, a castle surrounded by a big wall, maybe a moat around that. What's that for? So if people attack it, you know the people inside the castle are protected from that. You may not know however that this has been the case throughout history with cities. Cities have been surrounded by walls, and until relatively recently in history. So in the medieval period, for example, all of London was surrounded by a wall.

That's really in Shakespeare's period that people begin moving outside the wall, and the wall becomes less relevant. But if you go to London today, or many European cities, you will find ancient walls still there, intact. And what they

were there for, and again if you go back to the idea of a castle you think well they're to protect you from you know other people who are trying to invade, true enough they are. But, they're also there to protect people from the environment. And what I mean, Uruk's an example, is that you know wild animals could come right into a city without a wall. Wolves can come into your to your city at night and do all sorts of things, be very dangerous, you had a wall would be a very nice protected place. So right off the bat, the fact that walls are put there in part for that reason reveals something about what the people thought, lived there. And that is the environment is kind of dangerous, kind of scary, futures in the environment. This is the actual description, which we had before, but I'll read it again. "Observe the land it encloses: the palm trees, the gardens, the orchards." The city is imagined, even at this point on nearly

five thousand years ago, as a built modified environment, even agriculturally.

So it's not just that the buildings are different than the natural world around it, but the plants, the landscapes, agriculture is different.

These are not indigenous you know plants growing just the way they would, these are gardens that have been planted, these are palm trees that have been brought in, these are orchards that have been put there. So what's in the wall is, even on the level of plants fundamentally different than what's outside the wall.

And that clearly is being boasted of in this epic, this is seen as a pretty remarkable thing. So what we have here already, nearly 5000 years ago, is a distinction between country and city. And this is still, we'll see throughout the course, very much in our cultural memory because it puts out a distinction not just between country and city, but between nature and culture.

What's inside that city, what's inside those walls, is human, it is created by human beings, by human culture, and it is fundamentally different in a variety of ways from what's outside the walls. So again, this distinction between nature and culture is shaping up here and you'll see, we'll see throughout the term and if you think about it, you can even reflect on it, that is still alive and well today. It's a good example of how a modern concept, in this case you know what we understand as natural, first began to emerge a long time ago. In an entirely different context with the way a city is made and all, you know in this case it is that distinction between country and city, but it has very much informed and shaped our concept of what we mean by natural and unnatural, or more or more traditionally referred to as artificial.

What is artificial? It is that which is made with art, human art, by human beings.

These two things do not need to be

disconnected, this binary structure and opposition as we'll see throughout the term do not need to be in opposition. When we get to Buddhism, we will see, these things don't need to be in opposition. But, in this case, they are and they will be. Maybe for you even still are, we'll get to how these ideas have been sort of taken in by all of us.

What is interesting, however, is that we have this binary structure and opposition. It will become inverted over time, so recall that you know what is being boasted of here, is that it is artificial inside the city, that it is not natural, and that is seen as superior.

That is going to get inverted, it's not that culture and nature are going to no longer be in opposition, they'll still stay in opposition, but people will begin to prefer the natural rather than the artificial the way it's being preserved here. And you'll see, this is perhaps more recently than you might

think. What I mean by that, for a long time, I just don't wanna be a spoiler but I said this much, for over 4000 years that opposition, the way we saw it cast here, casting the artificial is good, that stayed strongly in effect, it's only in the last thousand years now, you'll see when, that it begins to get inverted. City here, clearly privileged and let's just look at that example again so you can see how. You walk on the wall of Uruk, follow its course around the city, inspect its mighty foundations. Here you're going into this big list now of what's being you know emphasized as so important. Examine its brickwork, how masterfully it does built, observe that the land that encloses: the palm trees, the orchards, the gardens, the glorious palaces and temples, the shops, the marketplaces, the houses, the public squares. It's a little laundry list of that which is artificial, that which human beings have created, and how

wonderful it is. There's no reference to look at the beautiful natural waterfalls, look at the plants that have always been around. There's nothing like that, this is what people did and make no mistake here what people did is seen as pretty darn great. So, let's move from Uruk to the character of Gilgamesh. He's the main character, we need to get to him first. He was actually likely a real person, who lived 4,600 years ago, King Sumerian king. And a little note here. Like other great epics, so you may know the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer, which is a Greek epic, or Beowulf, which is the first major English work of literature, all of these works date back so far that they actually predate written language for these cultures. So this story was originally sung by bards, people who would actually get up and sing this to a group of people because most people were illiterate. But how would you have a story, how would you have literature otherwise,

it had to exist in the world tradition.

Same case with Homer. And you can see this, scholars look carefully at these texts and you can see like repeated phrases again and again, which would have been kind of cused for the person singing it. So in the Iliad, for example, you always see this phrase coming back again and again, "rose fingered dawn," so a new day starts and it's always a reference to that. Here you'll see when you read it, if you haven't read it already,

you know reference to Enkidu spread out like a net at the doorway every night to protect Gilgamesh. That in a way is just like a thing coming back again and again, in a way of helping the bar to remember what's going on. So, Gilgamesh, yeah real person. But here's the interesting thing, and this is kind of you can make a little pitch for why we do literary analysis here. We know very little about Gilgamesh from the historical record.

There are a few you know stone inscriptions like this, this is a relief of Gilgamesh holding a lion, signifying he's very powerful guy and all. But we wouldn't know a whole lot about him otherwise, but we have this text. And this is why text can open up history in a certain kind of way. I'm gonna say they're better than you know physical anthropology, where you can actually look at you know sites where people lived and dig up their pottery and all that, but this gives you another indication into how people thought. So we just saw that already, right? In the first few lines, we know how they thought about nature in a certain regard because how they celebrated the artificial. You just can't get that kind of thing from you know shards of pottery and all. It's important to do anthropology in mind, I'm not denying that, but what we're doing is different. So here's a question. How would you describe Gilgamesh as a king? Good

king? Bad king? What was his attitude toward people, especially women.

Well I'm going to jump to the next slide, but I want to say right now, I wanna give you a little trigger warning.

There's gonna be a reference to rape here, and in fact Gilgamesh is a rapist, and at this point early on in the epic, an unreformed rapist. So if that's troubling to you, you could certainly skip this, or just scrub ahead till we get past that slide, really passed the next two slides because there'll be a second reference to it. So, the city is his possession, he struts through it, arrogant, his head raised high, trampling its citizens like a wild bull. He is king, he does what he wants, he takes the son from his daughter and crushes him. That means he killed his son. He takes the girl from her mother and uses her.

“Uses her” of course means rape here. The warrior's daughter;

the young man's bride, he uses her, no one

dares to oppose him. Now, so it's not just that Gilgamesh is a rapist that you know might have happened once in his life, but I mean he is a serial rapist. He does this all the time, no one dares oppose him, his rule here is based on fear and he's clearly seen as a pretty despicable character. So it's not like this rape stuff is going to be you know imagined as okay, it's not, clearly the people are not happy with the fact that he does that. And there are different reasons, but in part a note here. Note the part of the objection is that the daughter and bride are the possession of some other men. So let me just go back to that, you know. He takes the girl from her mother and uses her, but it's the warrior's daughter; the young man's bride. So we're at a point in history, and this will happen throughout history, where women are seen as essentially channeled as owned by men.

Who owns young women? Well that's you know the warrior's daughter, the someone else. A man is in possession of her, or when possession is transferred to the husband, it is now the young man's bride that he has taken. So yeah, the takeaway here not a good guy Gilgamesh. And the fact though that he abused power in general, and is moreover unabashedly a rapist is ironic because he's called the protector of people. Now keep that notion in mind, we're gonna see it directly. The notion of being a protector, protector of something, in this case, protector of people. It's very important on for the epic and Gilgamesh is not a good protector here, so. Just so you know, we do not read all the epic, we're only reading the first you know portion of it. By the end, he does become reformed, Gilgamesh. So if you're worried about Gilgamesh being a bad guy, he does become a good guy and he ultimately comes to quintessential epic hero.

We're not gonna talk a lot about the way that epic heroes have been seen by scholars for a long time, but it's enough to say that he is clearly displaying here an epic flaw, a big flaw, and for this to work properly he has to get beyond that, that epic brawl has to be surpassed. So we're gonna see that happening. Actually we're not seeing it happening, but I'm telling you it happens by the end and he gets reformed.

All great epic heroes, or many of them, are gonna have this problem. Which is really interested, you know scholars over the decades, over the centuries, but it's not interesting us as much because we're gonna keep our focus straightly on environmental things. Yeah, Gilgamesh is interesting, especially when compared to his double. Now doubling is a literary convention that has been around for a long time, even almost 5000 years ago. How that works is you have two characters, or two things, and they're put together and

they're described together, so that, when you learn something about one, you also learn something about the other. So we're gonna learn things about Gilgamesh by way of Enkidu. And kind of a spoiler here. One thing that we'll learn, based on and which is important in terms of what we just saw, Enkidu is a really good protector. Enkidu protects a whole range of things and Gilgamesh doesn't. So by having these two doubles together, right off the bat, this is gonna throw light on Gilgamesh and this epic flaw because he's just not a good protector. And he's going to have to learn by way of Enkidu and sort of take on some of the characteristics of his double, the importance of being a good protector. So let's go ahead and move now to our friend, Enkidu, whose often called the wild man in the epic by the way. I'll leave you with that for a moment, you can think whether it's true or not

if you've read it. So who is Enkidu? It's a very important character, second most important I would argue in the epic. In addition to being this wild man, Enkidu is a protector. So in order of appearance, what does Enkidu protect? So I could have been, if we were all in a room together, I could have used the iclicker to do a quiz with this, but you know see if you can think of some things if you've already read it. But again, why he's a wild man is, if you haven't read it already just give you a basic idea, he lives outside the walls of the city. So right off the bat, that binary structure, he is not in the artificial cultural world, he's in the natural world. And he's very much a part of it. He's there with the animals, he lives with the animals, he's like an animal, you sort of imagine Enkidu as sort of a raised by wolves kind of character. He's never had the connection of people and he's living there, which then

explains why he protects what he does in the order that he does. So first off, animals. He is the protector of animals, and why not he lives with the animals, sort of raised by animals. So he tears out the traps and frees the animals. So he is, now, in opposition in this binary structure to the projects of human beings. One of them being the farmers and people who would like to trap these animals and keep them from you know harming the fields and things because there are fields of course a lot of, the main agriculture is gonna be outside of the city. But you know animals then to human beings are seen either as a problem or a resource, you know animal you can trap and eat. And Enkidu being a champion of animals has none of that, he is counter to what human beings are trying to do because he sees himself as the protector of animals. He will come in and become part of the society. He's brought inside the walls of

the city, he becomes fully human. And when he does that, suddenly he now becomes a protector of women, in particular, because Gilgamesh has this fatal problem, he other problems but one of the big ones here is that he is this rapist. Once Enkidu hears that this is that Gilgamesh is doing this, since he is Gilgamesh is double, and in this case that means, because it's an epic thing and you know in epics people are strong and powerful and good fighters and all, he is equal to Gilgamesh as a fighter and all. So, when Gilgamesh reached the marriage house. So what's happening here, in terms of how this happened and if you've like the movie Braveheart you may know this. So what Gilgamesh is exercising is a right, that he feels he has his king, and that is when a marriage takes place on the marriage night. Normally, you know marriage would be

consummated by the husband and wife
in a traditional patriarchal you know
heteronormative culture like this, but
what happens here is Gilgamesh
is taking that right. So, the first
night, he sleeps with the woman, rapes the
woman. Enkidu incensed you know he sets
himself outside the door, he stands there
like a boulder, Gilgamesh comes and says
you know I am going to go in and well
take this woman, rape this woman,
Enkidu then fights Gilgamesh to
protect the woman. So now protector
again, but in a different kind of way.
They ultimately, Gilgamesh and Enkidu,
work it out and they become great
friends.
And they are a formidable pair because
they're both these powerful strong
warriors, stronger and more powerful than
anyone else together. When that happens,
Enkidu takes on a new role and that
is protector of his friend,
Gilgamesh. So the examples here you know.

“The elders turned to Enkidu and said /
“We leave the king in your care. Protect
him.” So this is when they are going to
the Great Cedar Forest to have a battle
with Humbaba, we'll get to in a minute,
and now Enkidu is entrusted as the
protector.

And again this repeated phrase, that we
will see throughout the epic, you know
“sprawled like a net across the doorway.”
Every night, at every house where they're
staying, Enkidu stays
at the doorway there to protect
Gilgamesh, just like he was at the
doorway to protect you know bride the
bride, he is there now to protect
Gilgamesh. And ultimately, finally, he
protects Gilgamesh, at least the part of
the epic we've readen finally, from
Humbaba in a great epic fight that
they have. So and, immediately after being
fed by the shepherds ... Enkidu went out
with his sword and spear. He chased off
lions and wolves, all night he guarded

the flocks, he stayed awake and guarded them while the shepherds slept.

So, this chronologically were moving back now. At the very beginning, he protects animals from the traps and what you know human beings would kill them or at least trap them. But then, when he becomes human, he then inverts it and becomes the protector of people. He's going to become specifically the protector of you know women. He's gonna specifically become the protector of another human being, Gilgamesh, but first he's a general one. And he you know goes out with his sword and spear and chased off lion and wolves, and you know he's such an epic hero by the way so formidable lions run away from Enkidu. So interesting, but again and again, it's important from where we're going with this to note that he is like the quintessential protector. And he takes the job very seriously, and he's really you know

formidable and good at it. Yeah
so and of course what we just said here,
just to make it explicit, when he
makes the transition from being a wild
man to becoming in human culture and
becoming a full human being, he inverts
the role of protector. First he protects
animals, then he generally protects
shepherds, then specifically life, then
specifically Gilgamesh. And that's
important because it suggests the way
human beings are imagined postured to
nature here. And what are they? They're in
opposition to nature, it's not just that
the city is an opposition to our lives
out, but people are in opposition to
nature. And again, nature at this point in
history, and this epic in particular, is
scary, and dangerous, and you need to be
protected from it. This is not a
welcoming park that you go in, and lie
down, and enjoy a summer day. This is
scary, that's the way nature is going to
be seen. And I'll tell you again, kind of

a spoiler, it's gonna be seen that way for well over 4000 years and we'll see when it shifts in this course. But for now, when you see nature, and you hear nature, when nature is being talked about, it is generally seen as something that's kind of scary, something that you need to be protected from. Interestingly, Gilgamesh and Enkidu are great doubles. You know, when you see them in a fight you know you wonder who's going to win because they're both so powerful and all. But there is another double here, and this is a double for Enkidu especially as wild man, and this is also a protector, so we need to get to that person next. First, again, I would have done this as you know an actual i-clicker poll, but just curious what you think of this text. So you can't tell me because I'm not doing an actual poll during this video, but something to think about. What did you think of this text? And if you haven't read it yet, fine. But when you

get done, you know would you recommend it?

And that's an important question because

it's of what value you find this

text, was it valuable to have read it? In

part, yes, from an ecocritical

point of view it may well be, hopefully

you'll see it that way after this course.

But you know, was it something that you

thought was important? It's a great

question because there's you know debate

whether we should be reading text like

this. I'm not gonna get into that debate

right now. I don't subscribe to a

celebration, western exceptionalism,

which is what we're

looking at here. And already just

expressing it that way, you may have

guessed that the controversy centers

on you know seeing this particular

tradition, this western tradition, is so

important, so significant. And many people

do, and they then say well see this is

why Western culture is so much more

important and better than others.

Well again, I don't subscribe to that at all, and in fact after this course you're gonna like kind of look a little dubiously at Western culture because it is responsible for a lot of the problems that we currently have. I would argue, I would say that more in a general way, but especially environmentally. But then, what do we make of a text like this? And again, you may have noted...if you think about for a minute, I just opened a big can of worms here. I'm not gonna tend to that can of worms right now, even we can do a whole course about it. But I do want you to think about what you think the value of this literature is, and in a bigger way the value of the Western tradition. It's been celebrated and lauded for a long time, and there are many people who still do, but there are many people, myself included, who want to reassess it. That's not to say that there aren't great works of literature at all, you probably got the idea

when I read the introduction. I think it's a beautiful work, the epic of Gilgamesh. On the other hand, do I think we should just accept everything in the text and celebrate it and all? Well, look at it from an environmental point of view, you know this is setting up a problematic culture, we're gonna see that directly in terms of you know deforestation. But anyhow, think about this, it is a question that's important I think to reflect upon. But next we need to get to the character of Humbaba. Who is Humbaba? He is not as central a character, the way the text portrays him, certainly not Gilgamesh and Enkidu and that they both get a lot more attention, a lot more lines than he does. If you've read it already you may not quite know who I'm talking about here. But Humbaba is the protector of the Cedar Forest, he is placed there by the great god Enlil. When reading that, maybe the thing that just popped out at

you, should have popped out at you, and especially in terms of him being a double, is the word protector. He is protecting a feature of the environment, something outside the walls of the city for sure, in fact it's quite a distance from the city. So in a way, he's like Gilgamesh the wild man, Gilgamesh was there- I'm sorry Enkidu the wild man. Enkidu, as the epic opens, is protecting the environment, features of it, you know animals and all. Humbaba is doing the same thing, but it's a whole forest that he's protecting and he's placed there by a god. Actually Ishtar's the god, the big god in the background, we'll get to that in a minute. But know that he is not in the pantheon of gods that we have here, and we're gonna be getting to this. He's not you know a big god, he's like a demigod, he's- and we'll talk about what he really is, he's a genius loci. But know that he is formidable in his own right and know that

epic heroes, and if you've read the
the Iliad you know this with
Achilles, they are often almost gods
they're so powerful and Achilles, if
you've read it, you know that he's half
god, he's a demigod.

That's basically what Humbaba is, he is-
he has powers like gods do. So, but
here's an important thing to note, and
we're gonna see this again and again in
the next few lectures. In many ancient
religions, features of the environment,
and we're talking about like rivers,
mountains, forests, had a protector of a
place there, a genius loci, and that's an
important term, appointed there to guard
the place. Humbaba is such a genius
loci. And so what's going on here. Well,
let me jump to the next slide.

Interestingly a genius loci does not
protect a place against animals or gods,
but rather against human beings who
would violate it, which assumes a binary
between human beings and certain places.

So again the same situation that we saw with the city and what lies outside, there's this distinction between culture and what's natural. Why you need someone to protect nature is an interesting question because you're really protecting nature against human beings. Okay so imagine that you're a human being, or an early human culture, and you live next to a river, as many cultures for many cities and were built next to rivers.

Well that river is enormously powerful, if you live there you'll note this. So what I mean by that is; if there's a huge flood your whole village, your whole city could be swept away because of it you know people would die, could die during it.

On the other hand, if there's a horrific drought, that river could dry up and you'd risk you know having no water at all, and you know dying of dehydration. As a consequence, that river is awfully awfully important to you. Now

traditional cultures, they realized that human beings were just no way nearly as powerful as something like a river. And as a consequence, in traditional religions, human beings postured themselves as sort of subordinate to the natural world. They worshiped it, they tried to keep the river happy. In other words, there's a river god something you know must be in control of this river, you want to keep that river happy, you don't want that river to be flooding, and killing people, or drying up. And to ensure that, you know that you acted reverently toward it, the culture was set up, religions are set up to put a prohibition there that no one messed with the river. Who does that? Well the river needs a protector, that's the genius loci. A protector is there to make sure that you do not harm the river. So in other words, we have a culture where lots and lots of people,

everybody's supposed to be really nice to the river. What if someone starts going out and do a bad thing to the river? We can't have that, so there has to be this you know this fear put in place not to do it. So let's switch over to the Cedar Forest, which Humbaba protects because he is the genius loci there. Well Cedar Forest, and this is a forest filled with old-growth, lebanese cedar; this is an enormous, natural resource. Someone could go in there and start cutting that forest down, but jeez you don't want to do that because that would make you know the god of the forest very unhappy. So that god has put there this protector, which in the epic is seen as the scary monster Humbaba there to protect it. Now we're gonna see, directly, Gilgamesh decides to go there to cut down that forest. And if you think about it, from the environmental point of view, why would you need to protect the forest? So I gave the example of the

river, maybe that makes sense to you, but why protect the forest?

Well, the forest is an incredible natural resource that can last throughout your- the history of your people if you treat it well. What I mean by that is, if you you know do take logs from that forest but do it at a very in a very sustainable way, say like you know five or ten percent of the trees a year, well that's just fine. The forest will continue on and you know new trees will grow up, and it'll constantly rejuvenate itself, it'll be sustainable. But if you go in there and cut down the whole forest, then you've lost those resources forever if the forest doesn't come back, and especially if you keep it from coming back. So it was important for, and very sort of forward thinking for people at the time, to go ahead and make a prohibition so that no one would harm the very much needed resources. And one of them would

be of course, in this case, the Cedar Forest. These are very conspicuous features, the genius loci figures, that religions that call for the worship of the earth, rather than a metaphysical god.

We're going to get into this too because this is a big distinction. This religion here, before Gilgamesh's time in any event, is an earth-based religion; features of the earth are worship, the earth itself is worship. By the time we get to, and we're gonna get very quickly with Christianity. By the time we get to a metaphysical religion, that God is not of the earth, he is not part of the waterfall or something, he is actually separate and apart from the planet, he's up in another realm altogether, a metaphysical realm, and we'll talk about this. But here, at this point in history, although it's going to be changing and we'll see a change again even while we read, this was originally an earth-based religion. Humbaba was important then.

Genius loci figures more generally. It's important right off the bat, you know it reflects belief, belief in a genius loci figure, it reflects belief in deities that are part of the earth, rather than some sort of metaphysical realm. Although you can tell a lot about what kind of religion that we are talking about by the kind of deities that we have. So if you knew nothing about this religion, right away, when you started hearing that there were figures like Humbaba, you know you know demigods who were part of a natural feature, you know right away you would know that this is not a metaphysical realm. We'll get to what that word "metaphysical" means, but it comes out of greek and metaphysical means meta beyond physical, and in greek the word for nature is fusa, so metaphysical is beyond nature. These are not gods that are beyond nature, this is not a religions beyond nature, this is a religion that is thoroughly rooted in the earth. Yup. And

you know in a more general sense, we just saw it with Humbaba, you know they are all the features of the earth are seen as nothing less than sacred, and they're protected by the religion itself. So I just went over how that happens. But it's important to note that this is you know built into the religion, this is an essential part of the religion, that nature is protected. It's not that these religions are set up to protect nature, but if you think about them from an environmental point of view, they're pretty good environmentally. What I mean by that is, they're not postulating a god above nature that says you can do whatever you want to the earth because you know he or she, usually he, is a metaphysical god. This type of religion postulates into everything, everywhere that you encounter that is natural is sacred, and protected, and if there are deities out there protecting it. So I'm not saying that

these religions are set up just to protect the environment, but you look at from position of a 21st century environmentalist, like me, well that's pretty cool feature of these religions because they did things like protect forests, like the Great Cedar Forests that we have here, from exploitation from human beings. It's very interesting to note that it's not that- that these genius loci, or the religions more generally said you can't use these resources, they generally never say that. I mean there there yeah- there are some religions that say never go to this place, it is a sacred place and all. But rather, and this is revealing about the relationship that people have to natural resources, you can use these resources, but you have to pay tribute to the god, you have to make nice with the god. And the religion will prescribe how that happens, so you have to make like an

offering, you have a certain ceremony, you
you know you have ceremony before
you'll cut down a tree, or kill an
animal or something, or ceremony after
you've killed the animal before you'll
eat it at all. You have to do these
things. And this ensures that you're
acting respectfully toward that
particular thing, whether it's a tree, a
forest, and animal, or whatever. And again,
that's done for religious reasons, but if
you think about it from an environmental point
of view, and we'll see as the term
goes on why people have looked very-
with great interest at earth-based
religions, this is a very good thing
environmentally because it means that,
again, you just can't cut down a whole
forest, you have to pay tribute to a god,
and very respectfully take
one tree out, or a couple trees out of
here, or whatever. So yeah, environmentally
very important. Humbaba again is, in
terms of this whole discussion bring it

to very specifics, he's there to protect this forest. So he's a great example of a genius loci because he's there, there's one feature, we can see why he'd be there because a forest shouldn't be destroyed. But a little note, this was a real cedar forest. So we're talking about ecocriticism and interpreting a text, but here we actually know from the physical record that this forest existed, it's actually referenced in the Hebrew Testament of the Bible as well, and it actually remained we know this you know from archaeology it remained intact til Gilgamesh's era. So there's really you know not a whole lot of reason to believe- to doubt that Gilgamesh- people in Gilgamesh's era, from Gilgamesh's culture, destroyed this forest. So it actually did happen, maybe not exactly the way it happens here, and in fact we'll talk about the way it's described. But this was a real forest and this was something that really did

happen and that is, in terms of the bigger discussion of genius loci here, that for thousands and thousands and thousands of years this forest remain intact, a group of people built a city near it, and then they cut it all down.

Then we're gonna be talking about- we are talking about how that happened and why it happened. So let's talk about the Cedar Forest. Here is the description of them, so this is Gilgamesh and Enkidu. So again, they're not like ordinary men, they're almost like demigods, so they could carry these things. So they cast huge, so they've built- made huge weapons, so that ordinary men could never carry, axes that weighed 200 pounds each, knives with cross guards. So they're getting ready for battle, and they're going to fight Humbaba. Humbaba, and it's an interesting note, in the terms of the epic, he's not described as a genius loci the way I'm describing him. This is an epic that has sort of, I don't know how

to put it, pro environmental destruction.

This is an epic that is pro going in there and getting rid of that monster that's keeping them from the forest, and these guys are going to do it.

Now we're going to talk about how it happens, that culture that created the notion of a genius loci, now is going to recast that protector as a monster and go out and kill it. But let's talk about the actual thing that they did. So note that the principal weapons that Gilgamesh and Enkidu. I mean you'd expect them to carry like swords, spears, you know that sort of thing, and read The Iliad, The Iliad is like a celebration of those kind of weapons and all, but they don't. In fact, going back to that you know thing, "they cast huge weapons...axes that weighed two hundred pounds each." Axes are what they're carrying into this battle. Now I know that there are fighting axes, like broad axes and all, but it is interesting that

these are the particular, I was gonna say
weapons but I'll shift and say tools,
that they are carrying into this battle.
Again not swords, axes. It's described in
this epic as a battle, and that's why
you know scholars often have,
traditionally, put this in the you know
sort of lumped it in together with
like you know Homer's Iliad and Odyssey,
especially the Iliad full of battles and
all. But what it really is, what is
actually being talked about here, and we
know that historically this is accurate
again because that cedar forest was
there and got cut down in Gilgamesh's
era. This was an expedition to cut down a
cedar- a forest.

Hence the people going on that
expedition are not gonna go in there
with you know swords, and shields, and
spears and all, they're gonna make axes,
and they're gonna go with axes to cut
down the forest. In that sense, it's the
story of how a genius loci, a protector of

place, was defeated so that a great forest could be cut down. And in that sense, the story of the epic, the way the epic tells the story as this great battle that'll kind of you know set the stage for all epics to have like battles the way the Iliad and all will. That's actually kind of a cover story, this wasn't a battle between two great heroic characters, this was an expedition where these two characters stood for thousands of people, probably men, who went in and deforested a great forest. But again, it's being seen as like this great battle, this great conquest. Here's the description. They took their axes and penetrated deeper into the forest, they went chopping down cedars, wood chips flew, Gilgamesh chopped down the mighty trees, Enkidu hewed the trunks into timbers. Enkidu said... "We have chopped down the trees of the Cedar Forest, we have

brought to earth the highest of the trees." A couple things here, first on that last passage. Enkidu is being correct here, in the description, because we know this was an old-growth forest and Lebanese Cedars are huge huge trees. So if this forest had been cut down a generation or two before, there's no way it would have these far trees that were you know the highest of the trees, and you know the reason for that is that it takes hundreds and hundreds of years for these two to grow. And it's actually, and I'll talk in a minute, well let's just jump to the next slide. And even though the language is so much of an epic battle a fight, it also reveals exactly how this operation, this expedition to cut down the forest, actually worked. So you know it's a description of logging operation, so how did it work?

You know Gilgamesh cut down the trees, and if you go back here and you'll note

you know, Enkidu hewed the trunks into timbers. So how this worked is this is up the Euphrates, up a river from where Uruk is, and that's perfect for what these people are doing. So

Gilgamesh stands for a big part of this forestry operation, that would be all the men he stands for who do the actual toppling of the trees, getting them down on the ground.

That's a big job, cutting down trees this big. And I would note, as an aside, but it's important to note in the bigger history of human interaction with the environment, that this is aided by technology. In other words, these are not stone axes. If they were, I don't know how you would cut down trees this big, but instead we have now entered the copper and bronze age, where human beings are fashioning these weapons. And again, scholars have traditionally looked at what they did with these weapons, which is fight each other, so that's the Iliad

and the Odyssey is about, but if you think about it, this new technology has other uses too. We could talk about a lot of them, but let's just stay with this one. You suddenly have a tool that is far far far more effective when it comes to something like cutting down trees, and hewing them into shape. So again, in terms of what happens here, Gilgamesh stands for all the men who cut down the trees.

Enkidu stands for another group of workers, and what they did is they cut the trees into square timbers. So that's what I, when I went back, and I'll do it again.

You know Enkidu hewed the trunks into timbers. If you're not familiar with that distinction, a timber is generally a square piece of wood. You go into an old timber frame building, or a barn, or anything, you'll note these massive timbers is what the building is made of.

They come from trees, they are generally one tree that was cut into as big a

square timber as it could be. Enkidu is in charge- is in charge of doing that. Once they are- they are processed on site, which is happening here, right? So it's not just that trees are cut down, they're being processed into usable lumber timbers, they were then thrown into you- drag into the Euphrates, where they will now float down the river to the city. And there'll be another team of people who will catch them as they come by, and pull them into the city. So again, even though it's described as this battle, was really described here and there are these little indications of it, is a logging operation, and a big one, and a pretty advanced one, and certainly with the most advanced tools and techniques that they possessed in this era. So these heroes are not just two men, but they stand for you know what actually happens. So in other words, someone's gonna write a story about this,

right? And you're gonna write a story about what a great thing this was, and if you think it's a great thing because it's you know got all this wood and made the city greater, you're gonna tell it as the story of these two men who did this thing. Well it's not just two men who did this thing, it's actually thousands of people, probably men, who took part in this deforesting operation, which Gilgamesh you know sets out to do to bring fame to, and wealth to, Uruk. I note here this is not unlike, and I held back from talking about the current presidential administration, but George W Bush, for example, wanted to set out on a great expedition to Alaska into the wilderness to, at first, cut down a lot of trees. But that wasn't the real goal, but to get to the natural resources under them, which is all that oil that is in Alaska. And it's really no different, except, and I don't wanna be too much of a spoiler for the course, that there were a

range of genius loci that were intent on protecting that. Those are modern environmentalists, who are the new protectors of place, but forget I said that because we're gonna spend time seeing how that happened over the years.

But it is the case that people still are rulers, still are very much intent on getting the natural resources, and metaphorically leading expeditions to do so. So, the battle story, two men fighting this monster, quote monster. It's in some sense a cover story, so what really is being talked about here, what this particular part of the epic is about, is deforestation. "Gilgamesh... yelled, he lifted his massive axe, he swung it, it tore into Humbaba's neck... and at the axe's third stroke he toppled like a cedar and crashed to the ground." So, this is an important scene because Humbaba is traditionally seen as, sorry, Humbaba is associated with the cedar forest, he is actually metaphorically the

cedar forest. So what happens here in the epic is you know he gets cut on the third swing of Gilgamesh's axe, he gets cut down.

So again, Gilgamesh is this bigger than life epic hero, he's powerful enough to cut him down and destroy him. But really you know since Humbaba is not just a double for Enkidu being this sort of wild protector of place, he's also a double for the cedar forest. Truly what is happening here, of course, is the cedar forest is being toppled. And again, as I noted earlier, this was an old-growth cedar forest, there's no doubt about it that you know. And when you see it you know Gilgamesh kills the biggest tree of all, also he's the hero, he gets the chance to cut down the largest tree. So I'm throwing this question out at you, and that is, is the story and in fact an environmental epic.. So in other words, you may have- if you did read it, you may have read it and thought

nothing about the environment during it.
But really I'm asking you if I've convinced you that this is an environmental epic, if it really is essentially about the relationship that human beings have to the environment? It's maybe a bad way of putting it. I'm not saying that was the intent of the author at all to say I'm gonna you know, it could be authors by the way and it probably is, this person or people did not set out to say you know I'm gonna chronicle here the relationship that our people have to the planet, no. But on the other hand, encoded in that you know is a lot about how these people thought of their relationship to the environment, and how that is actually changing. We'll see that changing in a minute.

So genius loci figures in Gilgamesh.

So, right we've had a couple of them, and so far as Enkidu was kind of a protector of place early on, but of course Humbaba is a classic protector

of place. Yup. But if you think about it here a minute, going back to what I said a few moments- a little while ago about how genius locis are there to protect a place, they're a feature of religions, and these are actually semi deities you know, and demigods usually. Then what Gilgamesh did is rather extraordinary because he attempted, and actually succeeded, at nothing short of sacrilege, huge sacrilege. He had to face a major sacred site, which was this forest protected by a genius loci. So, how does that happen exactly? In other words, you're- you know you live in a culture that has a religion that says don't do that, and yet you do it. Well we need to see how he was allowed to do it here. But just right off the bat, that's what he does, I mean that's a crazy thing to do, and that's something that would be celebrated, right? I mean you don't go around making heroes if you're a very religious culture about people who do

large-scale sacrilege, and boast of it.

Yeah, he is of course a reformed rapist.

By the time Enkidu stops him, you know when he stood at the doorway and they had their fight, Gilgamesh has ended that, so that that's a good thing, and that's going to be seen as important in his character developing into a real leader, a good leader, and a protector of place. But you know you can see however that his entering the forest, the Great Cedar Forest, can be seen as echoing rape. So you know the language of the epic even suggests forcible penetration you know: "Gripping their axes, their knives unsheathed, / they entered the Forest...

They took their axes and penetrated / deeper into the forest." Eco-feminists have looked at this, and argued that yeah this is- this sounds an awful lot like the language of rape going on here, and in a male culture this is seen as you know a right that they have. So again, if we had this binary structure of

culture and nature, Gilgamesh has become reformed, he's not you know violating people, but the place is being seen as violated. An eco-feminist, by the way, are individuals who approach texts and culture from a feminist perspective, but also an environmental one. And often these go hand in hand. What I mean by that is, nature has traditionally been seen as female, you know mother nature and all that, and eco-feminists have talked about that. We're gonna actually see an example here with respect to earth's deities, and how this can actually be- how gender can enter into this, and sex can enter into this issue. Eco-feminist had long argued, and it's somewhat debatable, but the shift from female deities to male deities occurred sometime before the Epic of Gilgamesh. So, what do I mean by that? The female deity were often seen as a trinity, in fact and we'll get to this but I'll just kind of say it now. For

thousands of years, for tens of thousands of years,
or maybe about ten twenty thirty
thousand years ago in the west, you will
see little stone sculptures. And
what these are-, typically, are three parts
and they're three female parts, and
they generally stand from the maiden,
the matron and the crone, that's what was
historically known. In fact, even the Epic
of Gilgamesh- the epic of-
the story of Persephone, and Demeter,
and Hecate, which you may have heard,
comes from the american to Demeter, which
is a Greek text much more recent than
this one. But what you have here, are three
female characters: the maiden, and this is
often in greek it was kórē, which is
the word for girl, this is the girl
before puberty, before she becomes
capable of having children. When she
shifts into that part of her life she is
no longer the maiden, she becomes the
matron. Matron means a woman capable of
having children. And a woman will shift

to a third part of life in this view
which is traditionally called the crone,
which is sort of postmenopausal. These
three are seen as intimately connected,
and why not because it really isn't
talking about three different women, or
three different like kind of women,
all women are this, all women go through
these three phases of life, and that's
was what was shown in these little stone
sculptures. So the question is, why
were people making these? Well the answer
is that these were deities because
you know the process of giving life, or
bringing life about, was just so
important to early people that they
deified it, they saw this as
amazing. And if you think about it, if all
the world is created, and all the world is
brought into being and all, what kind of
god would do that? Well men can't bring things
in, can't create life, but females can.
So the original deities, in this view,
were female, and these little stone

sculptures suggest that that was in fact the case. This is before Gilgamesh's time. And you know, from a feminist perspective, an eco-feminist perspective especially, you know what we have here is a shift from matriarchal deities to patriarchal ones. So recall that originally the Cedar Forest is the forest it belongs to, not Humbama he's this sort of you know demigod, but a larger god, a goddess, which is Ishtar, and she is a female god. But Gilgamesh now has a male God championing him, which is Shamash, the sun god. And it's because of that, and now you have two gods coming into conflict, but really two religious systems coming into conflict, right? One, this sort of presumably older matriarchal one, protecting the forest with this earth based religion. And this new metaphysical kind of god, Shamash, which is Gilgamesh's champion. So how is Gilgamesh able to do what he does, which is

essentially sacrilege? Well he has to first shift to a new kind of religion. In the argument that I'm unfolding here, this happens to be a shift not only from earth-based religions to more metaphysical ones, because remember Shamash is up in the sky, he's not part of earth, he's the sun god, but also we're seeing a transition from a patriarchal to- a matriarchal of a patriarchal system. And you know in early religions, especially in this part of the world, that female deities are expressly given the ability to create life. So it is Aruru who actually fashions Enkidu, and presumably all the human beings, out of clay. So this is an early version of the creation myth that we'll see, pretty much exactly the same. And now that's surprising because they're coming from the same part of the world what we call the Middle East today, but this would appear in the story of Genesis with Adam. Adam is fashioned out of clay by a deity,

same thing happens here, but it's Enkidu.
But the big difference is, and by
the time we get to the Hebrew Bible
we're definitely going to be in a
patriarchal religious world, there's no
vestige of a matriarchal one, so a male
god has to take over doing this. But here,
where we still have this older religion
in place, arguably it almost has to be a
female because who else can have that
power of reproduction, of creating life.
That's what we have here. But even
without this eco-feminist perspective
you know, we have this other thing
happened here, when you know one religion
is being defeated by another. A religion
that was principally based on earth gods,
and those earth gods and their you know
their helpers, the demigods and all, are
defeat it by a person Gilgamesh is
inaugurating a new religion. He is
championed by a new god, a god that's not
connected to the earth, that is not an
earth deity. We're gonna see the argument

made, we're gonna see it very soon, not in this lecture, but that that happened throughout human history because of the god that's inaugurated in the Hebrew Testament. So we'll see that in a minute, but for here, just know that it's not only a move you know arguably from matriarchal to patriarchal, but also from earth-based deities to a new kind of deity, which is being you know which is championing Gilgamesh. Yeah. So it's interesting, but you know we can talk about religion here, but if you stand back and think of this in surely practical terms. When human ambition becomes great enough, and human perceived need becomes great enough you know, and Gilgamesh says this in abundance, that's the way he's described, you know Earth's deities, earth prohibitions, have to get cast aside, in their place will come new gods. So in other words, if people want to take natural resources, even if there is a religious prohibition against it, they

will find a way. Even if it means, which
what we see- what we see here happening,
if an entire religion has to get cast
aside because it functions in a way that
protected the environment from you know
human beings doing whatever they want,
well so be it, then the religion has to
go so that people can
do what they want. This sense, I would
argue that the Epic of Gilgamesh truly
is an environmental epic because it
reveals you know, at a decisive moment in
human history, where human needs to- human
desire to use natural resources overcame
a religion. And arguably you know why
this transformation happened, or move
from one kind of religion to another, and
this happened all over the planet and
again we're gonna see this, was because
this older religion was a real pain in
the neck for people who wanted to
indiscriminately exploit the natural
environment, who wanted to do whatever
they wanted, to dig up you know minerals

and things, mines, and take forests, and do whatever they wanted. That to a certain kind of ambitious person, which Gilgamesh is portrayed as, that's a stumbling block that has to get taken over. I mean if you're Gilgamesh, you want to do whatever you want, whenever you want.

Well granted you're not going to do it to people anymore in the form of being a rapist, but he's still going to do it to the world around him, starting with the Cedar Forest. It's an important moment in history because this is really human beings proclaiming that they were stronger than the environment- than the environment. In other words, instead of cowering to gods like a you know a river god you know next to where you lived, and saying oh I'll just take care- I'll just be really careful and I won't bother the river god and hopefully he won't get mad at me and all, it's Gilgamesh saying I am stronger than that god. Yes

that god may have put a demigod there, I am stronger, I'm gonna go kill that god, I am going to do what I want. In practical terms, this is when human beings began to feel, in the west especially, that they were stronger than the environment, that they were not little beings cowering and hoping that their storms weren't gonna come and hurt them, they were people saying we are stronger than all that, we can do what we want.

That's a decisive moment in human history. So a little bit of an epilogue to the Epic of Gilgamesh. Deforestation followed Western civilization out of Mesopotamia and swept through Europe, then North America, South America, and everywhere now. The other texts that we read alongside of Gilgamesh, *A Forest's Journey* by John Perlin, who's in fact an instructor at UCSB. If you're really interested in this, he lays out a nice history of how this happened through the

West, we just read about Gilgamesh's era.
But it is a feature of Western civilization, you could even argue that the history of Western civilization is a history of deforestation, that where people went, forests went away. And there was no reason for them not to. You know when we got to North America, for example, there were people there already, and they had acted very respectfully to their forests. And we're gonna get to this complicated situation, but by in large I think that's right. But we got there, and by the way I mean you know the West, and we just deforested the continent. And you know that then swept, and in fact right now we're at a moment where it's happening in South America of course with the great- you know rainforest, Brazilian rainforest, and it's happening in other places like Indonesia and all, it's happening everywhere now. It's an unusual way to think about the history of the West,

history of human western occupation of places, but it is a history of deforestation as well.

The problem is mass deforestation contributes to global warming. Global warming is the older term of course for climate change, and the newest one is the climate crisis. But it is a fact that our planet is warming, and we're going to see just how much in future lectures. But in part and that's because you know those forests, let's talk about the Cedar Forest, massive trees, you know forests millions and millions of pounds of trees, half of the weight of a tree is carbon. And when burned that carbon mixes with oxygen in the air; "C" carbon, "O" oxygen, to become CO₂, and that's an issue, and they had- forests are wonderful at sequestering CO₂. We're doing something far worse in burning the fossil fuels, which are fossilized plant material like wood, which is again releasing a lot of carbon into the atmosphere. But this is

why forests are often called the lungs of our planet because they have you know absorbed the CO₂. So you can tell right away, that if we're talking about the history of the people, a history of the West, and being seen as a history of deforestation, this is environmentally a problem. Environmentally a problem for other reasons, but specifically in terms of climate change, it's a problem because these trees are no longer sequestering CO₂, carbon. The good news is that there is reforestation happening across the planet in parts of, for example, New England there are more trees now than there were you know a hundred years ago. It's not nearly enough, and we need to do a lot more reforestation. That, by the way just as an aside, is not going to be sufficient, you'll have people say well we can solve the climate crisis by just planting lots of forests. First, yes, let's plants lots of forests and make

sure that they actually grow, let's just not put trees in and say they're gonna grow, because that's happening now too. But even if we successfully you know brought back old-growth forests, well first it's gonna take hundreds of years to get forests to the you know stage of their life that Gilgamesh's Cedar Forest was, but it's still not nearly enough to sequester all the carbon that we're releasing because of fossilized fuels.

Yeah. And by the way this began in the Renaissance, and we're gonna see that and kind of a spoiler where environmental thinking begins to emerge in the Renaissance, and it wasn't just sort of hypotheticals, which we're gonna see too, but in practical terms people were coming up with policies. Like in France, for example, that every time you cut down a tree in a forest, you would have to plant two more. That's- that's a good policy, but yeah. So here's the question, the final question.

This lecture is curling to an end.

Is you know- does reading something
“greenly” make sense to you? And the
question is, let me get out of here in case
I’m in the way, do you buy the argument
that I just made? This you know- it’s not
just is it environmentally epic, which I asked
about before. But you know hopefully
you’re gonna say yes, definitely, or a
little that the idea that you know we
could read things “greenly.” In fact, lemme
pop back on screen here. It makes
sense because you know that’s the- what
we’ll be doing throughout the course. So
maybe I’ll kind of bookend the way I
started that saying. Well if you didn’t
like the literature, if you didn’t like
reading the Epic of Gilgamesh, then
maybe this is gonna be a tough term for
you because you’re gonna be reading a
lot of literature that frankly isn’t
as good. But beyond that, if you
didn’t buy the argument today here,
because I think it’s a pretty
straight forward one with the Epic of

Gilgamesh, if you didn't buy that, then this is gonna be a long-term too because you're gonna be hearing a lot more arguments of the sort. We're gonna be leaving Gilgamesh now, and then we're gonna jump ahead almost a couple thousand years into next lecture. But um- but hopefully hopefully you're of the mind that this is both an interesting thing to read, worthwhile to read. Now that doesn't mean you have to buy into western exceptionalism and saying well this is you know great, the West is a wonderful thing. In fact, we're getting to see that this is a mixed tradition that we've inherited, that it certainly has had its share of problems that continue on in the world today. And you can see why, going back to where we started with this lecture, just seeing the world as this binary, which we need a natural and unnatural, and that's kind of a problem, right? I mean, wouldn't it be better if you could see everything as kind of

natural and act accordingly. What I mean by that is, well when you build a city why not make it as natural as possible, why not try to incorporate the natural world into it. When you- you know you live in a house, why not try to make that house as natural as possible, the place that you live in as natural as possible, why do they have to be in opposition? But anyhow, kind of jumping ahead with that.

So hopefully you enjoyed the Epic of Gilgamesh. Hopefully you're of the mind that this project that we've embarked upon, which is reading literature from an environmental perspective and in turn interpreting culture (whether it's you know philosophy, religion, or whatever from an environmental perspective), hopefully you've bought the argument that this makes sense because we're going to be doing quite a bit of it from here on out. So, that's it for today and I'll see you at the next lecture.