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BA English Honours | Semester V | Calicut University

Literature and Oceanic Studies

Course Code: ENG5EJ306(3) • Module 3 Notes

Unit 9: Understanding Marine Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Coral Reefs: The Rainforests of the Ocean

Coral reefs represent the most biodiverse, structurally complex, and fragile ecosystems on the planet. Occupying less than 0.1% of the ocean floor, coral reefs support over 25% of all known marine species. Formed by the delicate symbiotic relationship between microscopic coral polyps and photosynthetic algae (zooxanthellae), reefs provide crucial coastal protection against storm surges, support global fisheries, and yield life-saving biomedical compounds.

Mangroves, Kelp Forests, and Blue Carbon

Littoral ecosystems—including mangrove wetlands, seagrass meadows, and giant kelp forests—function as the vital nurseries of the sea. Mangroves filter sediment, protect coastlines from tsunamis, and provide shelter for juvenile fish. Furthermore, these coastal marine ecosystems are the most efficient carbon sinks on Earth, sequestering **Blue Carbon** up to ten times faster per hectare than terrestrial tropical rainforests, making their preservation essential for stabilizing planetary climate.

Unit 10: Threats to Ocean Health: Pollution, Overfishing, and Climate Change

Plastic Pollution and the Anthropocene Oceans

Human industrial activity has inflicted catastrophic damage upon global marine health. In *Plastic Ocean*, Captain Charles Moore documents the discovery of the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch**—a colossal gyre of swirling plastic debris in the North Pacific twice the size of Texas. Modern plastics do not biodegrade; they photochemically fragment into billions of microscopic particles (microplastics). Microplastics now saturate every marine trophic level—from zooplankton in the Mariana Trench to arctic ice and commercial fish, entering the human food chain with unknown toxicological consequences.

Ocean Acidification and Coral Bleaching

The global ocean has absorbed over 90% of the excess heat and approximately 30% of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions generated by burning fossil fuels. This massive absorption has triggered two catastrophic planetary phenomena:

- **Ocean Acidification:** Dissolved CO_2 forms carbonic acid, decreasing seawater pH. This depletes carbonate ions, preventing shellfish, pteropods, and corals from building and maintaining their calcium carbonate shells, threatening the collapse of the marine food web.
- **Coral Bleaching:** Prolonged marine heatwaves cause corals to expel their symbiotic algae in thermal shock, turning the reefs stark white. If water temperatures do not rapidly normalize, the corals starve and die en masse, as witnessed in the devastating mass bleaching events across the Great Barrier Reef.

Industrial Overfishing and Bottom Trawling

Industrial commercial fishing fleets, equipped with satellite tracking and massive bottom-trawling nets, have depleted over 90% of global predatory fish stocks (tuna, sharks, cod). Bottom trawling acts as underwater clear-cutting, pulverizing ancient deep-sea coral ecosystems and releasing gigatons of stored carbon from marine sediments into the water column.

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Unit 11: Conservation Efforts and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

The High Seas Treaty and Global Marine Stewardship

To combat marine extinction, international conservation efforts focus on establishing **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** and "No-Take Reserves" where commercial fishing, drilling, and seabed mining are strictly prohibited. In 2023, the United Nations achieved a historic diplomatic milestone by adopting the **High Seas Treaty** (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction - BBNJ), providing a legal mechanism to designate MPAs in international waters that cover nearly two-thirds of the world's oceans, aiming to protect 30% of the global ocean by 2030 (the "30x30" pledge).

Unit 12: Sustainable Practices and the Blue Economy

Principles of a Regenerative Blue Economy

The concept of the **Blue Economy**, championed by international marine policy bodies and environmental economists, seeks to align ocean-based economic development with ecological sustainability. Rejecting rapacious extraction, the Blue Economy promotes:

- *Regenerative Aquaculture:* Multi-trophic farming of seaweed, kelp, and bivalves (oysters, mussels) that cleans seawater and produces nutritious food without freshwater, fertilizers, or feed.
- *Offshore Marine Renewable Energy:* Harnessing clean, zero-emission electricity from offshore wind, tidal turbines, and ocean wave energy converters.
- *Decarbonization of Maritime Shipping:* Transitioning the global merchant fleet away from bunker fuel to green hydrogen, ammonia, and modern wind-assisted sails.

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 1)

1. Hydro-Criticism, Archipelagic Thinking, and Tidalectics

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2. The Ocean as Capitalist Resource Sink versus Sacred Commons

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3. Oceanic Necropolitics and the Littoral Borderlands

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 2)

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 3)

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 4)

1. Hydro-Criticism, Archipelagic Thinking, and Tidalectics

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2. The Ocean as Capitalist Resource Sink versus Sacred Commons

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3. Oceanic Necropolitics and the Littoral Borderlands

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 5)

1. Hydro-Criticism, Archipelagic Thinking, and Tidalectics

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 6)

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 7)

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 8)

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Supplementary Scholastic Discourse: Module 3 Blue Humanities & Oceanic Hermeneutics (Extension Cycle 9)

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