

Department of English & Writing Studies

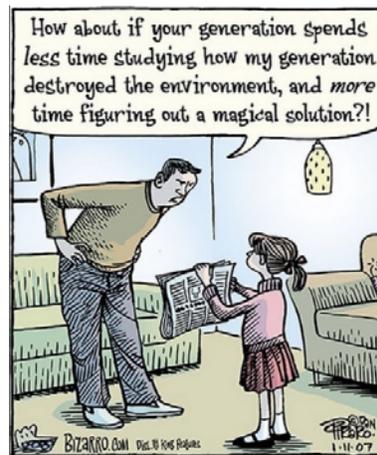
Arts for a Damaged Planet
English 2091G (001)
Winter 2023

Instructor: Professor Joshua Schuster
jschust@uwo.ca
UC 2422

Course Location: UC 3220

Course Day/Time: Wednesday 5:30-8:30 pm

Office hours: Wed 1:00-3:30, or by
appointment (online)



Course Description

Global heating, species depletion, non-renewable resource dependency, sustainable energies – solutions to these pressing issues will require not just advances in science, new economic policies, and political will. Resolving each of these also will require changes in vision, new stories, and new ways of imagining the present and the future. The arts help us to document and understand the damaged planet we live on, and contribute to transitioning to a future earth we aspire to see. This class introduces students to a wide range of arts for a damaged planet. We will study recent works of fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, film, and photography that helps to make legible our current planetary condition. This is also a kind of “maker class,” in that we will have short hands-on assignments, creative proposals, and experiential learning practices that involve ourselves in thinking and connecting to our environs in new ways. Our overall goal in this class is to use the arts to develop new ideas and tools to repair the damaged planet.

Objectives:

Successful students who complete the course will be able to:

- Define and apply key terms and concepts that connect the humanities to environmental issues and environmental issues to the humanities
- Understand how elements of form and content in art works provide the means to understand, interpret, and imagine our planetary condition
- Develop close reading skills by reading some key texts that address contemporary environmental art and non-fiction
- Develop creative skills based on interpretation and imagination in response to climate issues

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
Craig Santos Perez, *Habitat Threshold*
Harryette Mullen, *Urban Tumbleweed*
Simon Orpana, *Gasoline Dreams: Waking Up from Petroculture*
J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*

Note: All other texts, use the hyperlink on the syllabus or find the text in the OWL in the "Resources" tab

Methods of Evaluation

Class Participation	15%
Podcast	10%
Anthropocene Object	15%
Essay (1200 words)	20%
Final Exam	40%

Participation: Your participation is central to this class and is a key component of your growth as a student. Participation includes: being involved in class discussion, participating in group work, and putting real energy into all assignments and readings. **Read the texts before the day they are discussed.**

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and obviously counts for your grade in participation. It is imperative to arrive to each class on time.

Creative Project: Anthropocene object. Choose an object in the world that you think speaks to or reflects on the Anthropocene. Describe your object, perhaps interview it, or find some way to tell its story (like the plastic bag). Tell us why this object is representative of the Anthropocene. The format of this assignment can vary (written or multimedia permitted). Should be about 2-3 pages in length.

Podcast: You will be paired with another student to produce a 6-7 minute podcast (Zoom recording) discussing a poem from Harryette Mullen's *Urban Tumbleweed*. Be sure to ask some questions about the ecological form and ecological content of the poem you have chosen. Here are some models:

- 1) [On poet Julia Vinograd by your Prof](#)
- 2) [On Rae Armantrout's "Petard"](#)
- 3) [On Ted Joans's "The Truth"](#)

More examples can be found here: [Modpo Minute on YouTube](#)

Essay: a concluding essay on the course materials. Topics will be handed out in class.

Final exam: Some short essay and mid-length essay-type questions.

Academic Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Academic Offences

Plagiarism: Plagiarism constitutes an automatic failure of this course and goes on a student's permanent record of conduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

The following is a statement on plagiarism that has been mandated by the UWO Senate: "Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking."

MLA Documentation: Undergraduate research papers written in Arts and Humanities follow the formatting procedures outlined by the Modern Language Association. The complete guide to this format can be found in the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009). This guide can be found On Reserve in the D. B. Weldon Library, call no: LB2369.M57 2009. The Department of English also offers an overview of MLA documentation, at: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrad/guidelines.html>

Western University Land Acknowledgment: We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

Timetable

January 11 – Introduction – William Wordsworth, "[I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud](#)"; [Plastic Bag](#), dir. Rahmin Bahrani; Ailish Hopper "[Did It Ever Occur to You that Maybe You're Falling in Love?](#)"; June Jordan "[Calling on All Silent Minorities](#)"

January 18 – Rae Armantrout "[Threat Landscape](#)"; Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow"; David Wallace-Wells, "[The Uninhabitable Earth](#)"; David Suzuki "London in My Life"; Tom Cull, "[Resilience](#)"; Anti Creep Climate Initiative, "[Against the Ecofascist Creep](#)"; Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction"

January 25 – Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* (1-273)

February 1 – Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* (273-end)

February 8 – adrienne maree brown "[Meditation Time Travel to 2050](#)"; *Ecotopian Lexicon*, excerpts, Kim Stanley Robinson, "Foreword," Melody Jue, "*~*"; Luther Standing Bear "[Nature](#)"; Robin Wall Kimmerer, "[Speaking of Nature](#)"; Kyle Powys Whyte "[Climate Change: An Unprecedentedly Old Catastrophe](#)"; Joy Harjo "[Perhaps the World Ends Here](#)"; Joy Harjo "[For Calling the Spirit Back from Wandering the Earth in Its Human Feet](#)"

February 15 – William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

March 1 – [17 Principles of Environmental Justice](#); Craig Santos Perez, *Habitat Threshold*
due: Anthropocene object

March 8 – Simon Orpana, *Gasoline Dreams: Waking Up from Petroculture*

March 15 – no class – **due: podcast assignment**

March 22 – bell hooks "[Touching the Earth](#)"; Evelyn C. White, "[Black Women and the Wilderness](#)"; Harryette Mullen, *Urban Tumbleweed*

March 29 – J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*

April 5 – no class

Due: essay – April 10