

Course title (English): Climate Fiction: Literature in the Anthropocene

Course title (Hebrew): שינוי אקלים וספרות האנתרופוקן

Course number: 132.1.0304

Course slot (semester/s, weekday/s, hours): Yearly (Semester A+B), Mondays 16:00-18:00

Lecturer: Ruth Wenske

Lecturer's conference hour and contact details: Mondays 14:00-16:00 (by email appointment, noruthie@gmail.com)

Course description & objectives:

How do we conceive of climate change, when it is something that is too large to grasp, too vague to pin down, too futuristic to measure, and too frightening to accept? This course takes literature as a central venue for thinking about, and through, the environment and climate change, asking how fiction might help us imagine the unimaginable: a just and sustainable future. Building on the understanding that we now live in what is called the Anthropocene—the historical period in which human activity has become determinant to the planet's ecosystems and climate—the course looks at the way stories, both modern and indigenous, conceptualize the relationship between humans and the environment. We will read works from a range of genres—poetry, realism, science fiction, nonfiction and more—which thematize climate change in the context of the relationship between humans and nature. We will pay particular attention to non-Western narratives, as well as research from a range of scientific disciplines, which give us new ways of imagining the future in the Anthropocene. By considering the literary aspects of climate fiction, and the way knowledge is constructed through literature, we will develop skills for thinking and writing critically about both climate change and literature.

Course requirements:

Mandatory attendance (with up to three unexcused absences during the semester).

Participation and writing assignments on Moodle	20%
Midyear essay (3-5 pages)	20%
Quiz (to be announced in advance)	10%
Final paper (5-8 pages)	50%

Total 100%

* Every semester, there will be six writing assignments on Moodle. Some of them will be transcription notes, where you will have to bring three quotes from that week's text and explain your choice; other assignments will be more visual and creative. Three out of the six assignments are mandatory, and they are not graded. If you do all six assignments, the relative weight of the assignments goes up to 30% of your grade, so that the final paper will only account for 40% of your grade.

Topics & bibliography (subject to change)

Section One: Introduction

1. **1 January:** What is climate fiction?
Margaret Atwood, “Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet” (2009)
2. **8 January:** Amitav Ghosh, sections from *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) | **ASSIGNMENT** (three out of six each semester)
3. **15 January:** Sections from Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014)

Section One: From Romanticism to the 20th Century Climate Crisis

4. **22 January:** William Wordsworth, “The Prelude” + John Keats “Ode to a Nightingale”
Background reading: Greg Garrard, “Beginnings: Pollution,” introduction to *Ecocriticism* (2004)
ASSIGNMENT
5. **29 January:** Rachel Carson, chapters 1+2 from “*Silent Spring*” (1962)
6. **5 February:** St. J. Page Yako, “Pineapples” (1974), Craig Santos Perez, “Halloween in the Anthropocene” (2015), Isabella Borgeson, “Joint Typhoon Warning Center” (2020) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Section two: Ecocriticism today – theory and poetry

7. **12 February:** Anna Tsing, “The Art of Noticing,” from *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2012) +
8. **19 February:** Koleka Putuma, “Water” from *Collective Amnesia* (2017); Natalie Diaz, “The First Water Is the Body” from *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2021) | **ASSIGNMENT**
9. **26 February:** Rob Nixon, Introduction from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2013)
10. **4 March:** Gabeba Baderoon, “A Prospect of Beauty”; “The River Cities”; and “Promised Land” from *The History of Intimacy* (2021) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Semester conclusion: Visual representations of the climate crisis

11. **11 March:** Jason deCaires Taylor’s underwater sculptures
Nyani Quarmyne, “We Were Once Three Miles from the Sea” (visual archive), with Ian Baucom’s interpretation, “The View from the Shore” | **ASSIGNMENT**

15.4 Midyear essay due

Spring Semester

Section One: Prose fiction

1. **6 May:** Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (2013) or Efua Traoré, *Children of the Quicksand* (2021) | **ASSIGNMENT**
2. **13 May:** *Flight Behavior* or *Children of the Quicksand* (continued) (Yom Hazikaron – might be rescheduled)
3. **20 May:** short story from Bill McKibben (ed.) *I'm With the Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet* (2011) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Section two: Speculative fiction – cli-fi

4. **27 May:** Nick Wood, "Just Stories: The Role of Speculative Fiction in Challenging the Growing Climate Apartheid" (2022); excerpts from *In the Black Fantastic* (2023)
5. **3 June:** Noel Cheruto, "We Broke Nairobi" (2021) | **ASSIGNMENT**
6. **10 June:** Timothy Morton, sections from *Being Ecological* (2018)
With "Afrofuturism, Mysticism and Climate Justice" [photographs] and *Earth Sounds* [film still, 2021]; Wilfred Ukpong's visual meditations on the environmental crisis in the Niger Delta.

Section three: Audiovisual climate fiction

7. **17 June:** Wanuri Kahiu, *Pumzi* short film (2009) | **ASSIGNMENT**
8. **25 June:** Octavia Butler and Damien Duffy. *Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Adaptation* (2020)
9. **1 July:** *Lalela uLwandle*, by Empatheatre (2021) | **ASSIGNMENT**
With optional reading: Munyaradzi Felix Murove, "An African Commitment to Ecological Conservation: The Shona Concepts of *Ukama* and *Ubuntu*" (2004)

Section four: Concluding readings

10. **8 July:** Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* (2020), first chapters
11. **15 July:** Concluding class

22 July: **MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT** (choosing topic for your final paper)

Final paper due 31 August