

**Preliminary Syllabus
Fall 2015**

Course Title: Climate Trauma and the New Environmentalism
Course Location: HUM 2052
Professor: E. Ann Kaplan, Distinguished Professor, English and CAT
Office: HUM 2093
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1.00 to 2.00; Wed 12.00 to 1.00
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COURSE SUMMARY:

Against the background of the 2014 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the most sobering report yet issued by the scientific panel, this course examines the impact of realities of global warming on cultural discourses, individual and public consciousness, and media representations. Narratives of a destroyed planet, inhospitable to life in all forms, emerge at the intersection of scientific predictions about global warming (finally seeping into public media), and corporate businesses, determined to resist costly changes to their practices.

We will explore a new psychological condition, what I call “Pretraumatic Stress Disorder” (in contrast to the familiar Post-Traumatic Stress illness), and then study how this disorder is represented in a sub-set of the Science Fiction genre, the pretraumatic climate disaster film. Through close-readings of these texts, we will see how viewers become “virtual future humans,” as they identify with terrifying future selves they should hope to avoid. We will see whether such fantasies, rather than inoculating viewers from the catastrophe to come, instead function as a kind of wake-up-call, what I call “memory for the future.”

The course explores the masculinist and racialized aspects of the cli-fi genre, showing the cultural work the films perform. What are the implications of films rarely presenting climate catastrophe from the vantage point of women or minority peoples? Against the background of first-wave eco-criticism, we will explore new, second-wave environmental humanities texts, such as those by Timothy Morton, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rob Nixon, Ursula Heise, Bruno Latour. Cli-fi films include: *Soylent Green*, *The Happening*, *28 Days*, *Take Shelter*, *The Road*, *Blindness*, *Interstellar*, *Snowpiercer*. Documentaries include *Surviving Progress*, *Chasing Ice*, *Into Eternity*, *Manufactured Landscapes*, *Fukushima: Memories of a Lost Landscape or 311*, *Force of Nature*, and more. For contrast, in discussing gender in cli-fi narratives, we will look briefly at female sci-fi texts, such as those by Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler and Margaret Atwood. Students will develop their own research projects in Environmental Humanities as the course proceeds and according to their prior knowledge of this relatively new field.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop and apply advanced skills in textual analysis of both films and critical and theoretical readings.
- Understand the history and development of women's cinema as a local and global phenomenon with reference to its social, cultural, geopolitical and industrial contexts.
- Acquire and make effective use of the appropriate critical vocabulary and concepts of film and cultural analysis and theory in oral and written work.
- Demonstrate this knowledge and analytic skills in class discussion, individual presentations and a final seminar paper.

Course Prerequisite: Admission to the Ph.D program in the appropriate discipline or permission of instructor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required texts:. Available at the University Bookstore. (FF on the syllabus)

Course reader and films: All other readings for the course are available on Blackboard. All required films will be accessible for streaming via Blackboard and DVD copies are on reserve in Melville Library.

Presentation:

Each student will be responsible for presenting one of the assigned films and readings. Presentations should demonstrate both an analytic and pedagogical focus that establishes a critical and thematic framework for discussions. Students should avoid repeating a plot line or development of an argument, but rather offer a critical reading of texts with the aim of opening them up for collective commentary and analysis.

Discussion Posts: We will be using the Discussion Board section of Blackboard to post questions, comments and general orientation in a Forum set up for each weekly meeting and we invite you to get in the habit of sharing your own comments and questions there.

Final Paper: (15 pages) We encourage you to begin to think about potential topics for your final paper early in the semester. The structure and contents of the syllabus, with its dialogic structure, is intended to give you suggestions for pursuing a topic or theme in greater detail. Students will hand in a one page abstract and bibliography on Nov. 4 that I will return with comments and suggestions. I will also be available to talk with you about your topic and focus during office hours and urge you to consult with me before and after submission of your abstract. The last class will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of your final paper topics.

Attendance and Participation: As in all graduate seminars, we expect you to attend all classes and active participation is also expected.

Evaluation Criteria:

Presentation:	30%
Participation:	20%
Final Paper:	50%

Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities>]

Academic Integrity Statement:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html

Critical Incident Management Statement:

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

MEETING SCHEDULE, TOPICS FOR EACH CLASS, AND ASSIGNMENTS:

August 27 **Introduction: The State of the Field:** Environmental Humanities (eco-criticism, eco-cinema, ecologies of the moving image, etc) and my approach. Concepts and categories for the course (see Kaplan Bibliography, BB)

Reading: Ursula Heise, "The Invention of Eco-Futures" (BB)

In-class Film: Jeff Orlowski's *Chasing Ice* (2013) or Roy and Crooks' *Surviving Progress*

September 3: **Background to course: The Science of Climate Change, Climate Deniers, History.**

Readings: IPCC Report (BB)
Kathryn Yusoff essay (BB)
McKibben Reader selections (RT)
Merchants of Doubt (selections) (film and book)
Ramachandra Guha, "Three Environmental Utopias," in *How Much Should A Person Consume?* (BB)
Dipesh Chakrabarty Lecture "The Anthropocene Project" (watch on line)
<http://www.artandeducation.net/videos/?currentYear=2014¤tMonth=10>

September 10: **Trauma and PreTrauma**

Film: *Take Shelter*

Readings: Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (RT);
Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (RT);
Swim, et al, "Psychology's Contributions to...Climate Change" (BB);
Susanne Moser, "Getting Real About It" (BB)

September 17 **Pretrauma scenarios of urban collapse (1)**

Films: *Soylent Green*; *Children of Men*

Readings: Nixon, *Slow Violence* (RT)
Latimer on *Children of Men* (BB)

Extra Reading Related to Sept 17 class:

Kaplan on *Children of Men* (BB)
Harvey, on Neoliberalism (BB)

September 24: **Catch-Up Week**

Students workshop together on presentations and get ahead with readings and film viewings. Reflect on what we've seen and read so far. Report back to Kaplan

Reading: Tom Cohen, *Telemorphosis* (BB: Selections)

October 1: **Pretrauma and Urban Collapse (2)**

Films: *Blindness*; *The Book of Eli* Post-urban collapse via Hollywood

Readings: Nixon (continued); Saramago, *Blindness* (novel)

October 8 **Virtual Future Humans (I): Future Selves in Fiction Film**

Film: *The Road*

Readings: Adam Brown and Team on PTSD and PreTrauma (BB);
Dorthe Berntsen/Rubin Research on Pretrauma in soldiers (BB)
Morton, *Hyperobjects* (selections)
Ortiz/Schwab: "Memory is Key"

Extra Reading: Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact." (BB)

October 15 **Virtual Future Humans II Getting Real: Documentaries**

Films: *Into Eternity*; *Manufactured Landscapes*

Readings: Orestes/Coway, *The Collapse of Civilization* (RT)(selections)
Xinmin Liu, "Ethical Dilemma in 'documenting' Manufactured Landscapes"

In China," *Forum for World Literature Studies*, 6.3 (Sept. 2014), 168ff

See also the "Introduction" to discussions, 426.

Gabriele Schwab, "Haunting From the Future: Psychic Life in the Wake of Nuclear Necropolitics" (BB)

Corrado Neri, "China Has a Natural Environment Too!...." (BB)

Extra Reading: LaCapra, "Traumatic Absence, Loss" (BB)

October 22: **Implications of Climate Change Reality for the Humanities**

Readings: Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History" (BB)

Tom Cohen, *Telemorphosis* (selections) (BB) (revisited)

N. Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," *Public Culture*, 26.2 (2014): 213-232.

"Hitchhiker's Guide to Eurocriticism," *PMLA* 121, #2, 503-516.

Bruno Latour on The Anthropocene, a UBC debate (watch on line before class)

<https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=bruno+latour+on+the+anthropocene+extinction&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001>

Preparing research paper topics: Short Abstract Due

October 29: **From "Nature" Debates to Leaving Earth**

Readings: Kate Soper, "Unnatural Times? The Social Imaginary and the Future of Nature" (*Sociological Review*, 2010) (BB)

Lawrence Buell, "Toxic Discourse," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Spring 1998) (BB)

Donna Haraway,

Bruno Latour, Gifford Lectures on "Once Out Of Nature" (watch online)

<https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=Bruno+Latour+Scotland+lectures&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-001>

Extra Reading: Susan Griffin "Woman and Nature" (BB)

Film: *Interstellar* (Christopher Nolan)

November 5 **Gender and Pretrauma imaginaries I**

a) *Snowpiercer*; *Interstellar* revisited

Readings: Kip Thorne, Science behind *Interstellar*; Scientist to Visit Class; Journal reviews of the film.

November 12 **Gender and Pretrauma Imaginaries II**

Alternative ways of being versus masculine melancholy

Readings: Ursula Le Guin, *The Word for World is Forest*

Susannah Radstone, excerpts from *The Sexual Politics of Time* (BB)

Atwood, "Dire Cartographies" (BB)

Kate Soper, "Feminism and Ecology" (BB)

Film: Volker Schlöndorff, *The Handmaid's Tale* (ref Atwood's novel)

November 19 Catch up Day plus Discussion re paper topics students working on

November 26 THANKSGIVING

December 3 **Student Paper Reports**