

EN9B5-30 World Literature in the Anthropocene

20/21

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Nicholas Lawrence

Credit value

30

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

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[Module web page](#)

Module aims

To investigate the implications of the concept of the Anthropocene for literary-cultural studies on a world scale. Participants will read initially in the history of debates surrounding this term, denoting the advent of a geological era in which human action acquires decisive planetary force, as a way of revisiting conventional interpretive frameworks and categories, including questions of periodisation, comparative methodology and the 'worlding' of literary study. We will then take up a series of optics prompted by the Anthropocene and its counter-concepts (Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene) to further explore the challenges of reading ecological crisis and culture in an era when it is no longer feasible to disarticulate human from so-called natural history. Texts range from literary to field-specific criticism to theoretical, with an emphasis on the latter.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: World literature after the end of nature

Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene." *Nature* 519 (12 March 2015)
Jeremy Davies, from *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (University of California Press, 2016)
Ursula K. Heise, from *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford University Press, 2008)
Sharae Deckard, "Mapping the World-Ecology: Conjectures on World-Ecological Literature."
Review: *Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center* (2017)

Week 2: Contesting the Anthropocene

Jason W. Moore, "From Object to Oikeios: Environment-Making in the Capitalist World-Ecology" and "Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis." *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (Verso, 2015)
Daniel Hartley, "Against the Anthropocene." *Salvage* 1 (2015). <http://salvage.zone/in-print/against-the-anthropocene/>
Daniel Cunha, "The Anthropocene as Fetishism." *Mediations* 28.2 (Spring 2015)

Week 3: Energy Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (Verso, 2015) Imre Szeman, Jennifer Wenzel, and Patricia Yaeger, eds, from *Fueling Culture: 101 Words for Energy and Environment* (Fordham University Press, 2017) Tony Harrison, "V," *Selected Poems* (Penguin, 1984) David Thomas, "The Canary in the Coal Mine: Tony Harrison and the Poetics of Coal, Climate, and Capital," *Textual Practice* (2015) Week 4: Sixth extinction Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (Simon and Schuster, 2007) Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (Henry Holt, 2014) Eileen Crist, "Beyond the Climate Crisis: A Critique of Climate Change Discourse." *Telos* 4 (Winter 2007) Week 5: Borders, migrants, sacrifice zones Thomas Nail, from *Theory of the Border* (Oxford University Press, 2016) Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, trans. Lisa Dillman (*And Other Stories*, 2015) Alex Rivera, dir., *Sleep Dealer* (2007) Week 6: Resource wars Paulo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife* (Orbit, 2015) Emmi Itäranta, *Memory of Water* (HarperCollins, 2014) Donald Worster, "Water in the Age of Imperialism – and Beyond," *The World of Water*, Vol. III, ed. Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard (I.B. Tauris, 2006) Week 7: The forgotten space Allan Sekula and Noel Burch, "The Forgotten Space: Notes for a Film," *New Left Review* 69 (May-June 2011) Pablo Neruda, "Great Ocean," from *Canto General*, trans. Jack Schmitt (University of California Press, 1991) Elizabeth Deloughrey, "Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene," *Comparative Literature* 69.1 (2017) Week 8: Strange weather: media ecologies John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) Lisa Robertson, *The Weather* (New Star, 2000) Kenneth Goldsmith, "Spring," from *The Weather* (Make Now, 2005) Week 9: Digital clouds, immaterial labour, electronic waste Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Proletariat," "Vortex," "Mobile" and "Aftermath." *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (Pluto, 2015) Tung-Hui Hu, *A Prehistory of the Cloud* (MIT Press, 2015) Jack Linchuan Qui, Melissa Gregg and Kate Crawford, "Circuits of Labour: A Labor Theory of the iPhone Era," *TripleC: Communication, Capital & Critique* 12.2 (2014) Week 10: The poems of our climate change Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (University of Chicago Press, 2016) Naomi Klein, from *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Allen Lane, 2014) Ali Smith, *Autumn* (Hamish Hamilton, 2016) Ben

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Articulate an informed perspective on the concept of the Anthropocene in its ecological, political and literary-cultural aspects
- Refine a sense of the theoretical, methodological and interpretive stakes of reading world literature within the context of the Anthropocene.
- Develop a focused understanding of the literary challenges in responding to such topics as climate change, environmental despoliation, species extinction and media ecology.
- Adapt the theoretical debates surrounding the Anthropocene to further research in a variety of subfields.

Indicative reading list

- Angus, Ian. *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System*. New York: Monthly Review P, 2016.
- Armbruster, Karla, and Kathleen R. Wallace, eds. *Beyond Nature Writing: Exploring the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2001.
- Anderson, John G. T. *Deep Things Out of Darkness: A History of Natural History*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2012.
- Arnold, David and Ramachandra Guha, eds. *Nature, Culture and Imperialism*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1996.
- Buell, Frederick. *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Burkett, Paul. *Marx and Nature*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: CUP, 2011.
- Davies, Jeremy, *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (University of California Press, 2016)
- Davis, Mike. *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso, 2006.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick, *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (Pluto, 2015)
- . *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000.
- Goodbody, Axel and Kate Rigby, eds. *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2011.
- Heise, Ursula K., *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Hornborg, Alf, J. R. McNeil and Joan Martinez-Alier, eds. *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2007.
- Iovino, Serenella and Serpil Oppermann, eds. *Material Ecocriticism*. Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 2014.
- Klein, Naomi, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Allen Lane, 2014)
- Kolbert, Elizabeth, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (Henry Holt, 2014)
- Malm, Andreas, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*

(Verso, 2015)

Moore, Jason W., *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (Verso, 2015)

Moretti, Franco. "Conjectures on World Literature" [2000]. *Debating World Literature*. Ed. Christopher Prendergast. London: Verso, 2004.

Nail, Thomas, *Theory of the Border*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011.

Peters, John Durham. *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Sinha, Indra. *Animal's People*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007.

Szeman, Imre, Jennifer Wenzel, and Patricia Yaeger, eds, from *Fueling Culture: 101 Words for Energy and Environment*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2015.

Wark, Mackenzie. *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*. New York: Verso, 2015.

Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. London: Virgin, 2008.

Yaeger, Patricia et al. "Literature in the Ages of Wood, Tallow, Coal, Whale Oil, Gasoline, Atomic Power, and Other Energy Sources." *PMLA* 126.2 (2011):

Subject specific skills

To develop an informed perspective on the concept of the Anthropocene in its ecological, political and cultural aspects, and to adapt this perspective to further research in a variety of literary subfields.

Transferable skills

No transferable skills defined for this module.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (7%)
Private study	280 hours (93%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Reading & research

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
6,000 word essay	100%	

Feedback on assessment

Comments on written work; individual meetings during office hours and by appointment

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of TENA-Q3PD Postgraduate Taught Critical and Cultural Theory
- Year 1 of TENA-Q3PE Postgraduate Taught English and Drama

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TENS-Q2PE MA World Literature
- Year 1 of TENA-Q3PD Postgraduate Taught Critical and Cultural Theory
- Year 1 of TENA-Q3P1 Postgraduate Taught English Literature
- TENA-Q3PE Postgraduate Taught English and Drama
 - Year 1 of Q3PE English and Drama
 - Year 2 of Q3PE English and Drama

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts