

# EN9B5-30 World Literature in the Anthropocene

**22/23**

**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

EN9B5-30 World Literature in the Anthropocene

[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

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 1 of Q3PE English and Drama
  - Year 2 of Q3PE English and Drama

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of TGDA-L801 Postgraduate Taught Global Sustainable Development
- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts