

EN3N4-15 Climate Imaginaries

26/27

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Graeme Macdonald

Credit value

15

Module duration

9 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

What responses do literary and cultural texts afford in the age of intensifying climate impacts? What role, responsibilities and effective powers—might the Arts in general offer in the grand endeavour to mitigate the crisis and enact the kinds of transition that mitigation requires: in culture, but also in politics, economics, infrastructure, habitat? As students will discover, the range and volume of cultural registrations of climate breakdown are considerable and diverse. The module will provide a curated selection oriented around the ‘climate imaginary’—realist, speculative, creative and performative envisioning of climate-affected presents and futures in different spaces and times. Such imaginaries offer the means for a generative response to readers, audiences and publics charged with understanding and acting on climate issues. The module will cover a variety of themes and concerns, from extractivism to conservation; from scenarios of catastrophic weather, resource depletion and radically transformed habitats to dystopian worlds of geoengineering and utopian forms of community such as solarpunk and post-oil lifeworlds.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

The module will integrate a basic climate literacy at the outset, covering some climate science, climate theory and early historical examples of climate fiction. The initial section of the module will

locate a variety of concerns around the climate crisis and the ways in which cultural forms (principally fiction, but also film, art, contemporary media and performance) imagine, represent and mediate it. Students will be encouraged to discover their own climate imaginaries—texts and artefacts—as the module progresses. The module will also aim for students to consider how such imaginaries can be put into practice, either as a form of intellectual and political response to climate action or issues around the crisis and/or through realising a creative mode of response. The module will also consider how cultural forms of climate activism are presented through music, performance, subvertising and cinema, and introduce students to basic practices of imagineering and futuring, such as urban design and the speculative museum.

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 One: Introduction to Climate Change: Conditions, Causes and Effects; Cultural Theory on Climate; The role of “Imaginaries”

Week Two: Social Transformations—Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower* (1993)/ Yōko Tawada, *Scattered All Over the Earth* (2018)

Week Three: Learning the World—Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behaviour* (2012)

Week Four: Denial and its Consequences—Adam McKay (dir.), *Don't Look Up* (2021)

Week Five: Climate Dystopia—Collapse (1)—John Lanchester, *The Wall* (2019)

Week Seven: Futuring—The Museum of Carbon Ruins (2018-)

Week Eight: Collapse/Recovery (2)—War, Peace, Repair — Omar Al-Akkad, *American War* (2018)

Week Nine: Resistance—Activism in Song, Art, Performance

Week Ten: Renewability/Solarfutures—Ganzeer, *The Solar Grid* (1) *The Wretched of the Earth*; Cixin Liu, *The Wandering Earth* (2000); Wanuri Kahui, *Pumzi* (2009); After Oil Collective, *Solarities* Selection from Jenny Fagan, *The Sunlight Pilgrims* (2016); Selected Solarpunk short tales.

Learning outcomes

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

- Demonstrate in broad outline a grasp of the nature, scale, causes and effects of climate change.
- Develop some understanding of recent cultural theory connected with climate change.
- Develop a critical approach to climate imaginaries that enables the construction of an argument, in both oral and written formats, through commentary on relevant (primary) cultural texts and artefacts.
- Demonstrate critical reading skills and an ability to develop a question about relevant literary and cultural texts that brings some theoretical (philosophical, anthropological, aesthetic, political, environmental, ethical, or scientific) context to bear on the analysis of one or more of these texts, making some appropriate use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.
- Demonstrate ability to present creative responses and approaches (written, visual, material) to the question of the imaginary and in particular show some grasp of the critical and creative methods and theories of ‘futuring’ as a form of climate action.

- Demonstrate ability to organize research on set module materials, showing appreciation for complexity and capacity to examine the premises of an argument.

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

Subject specific skills

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of climate change as a cultural phenomenon
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of arts and theory based methods and techniques oriented towards climate action/futures

Transferable skills

Demonstrate developed oral and written communication skills focused on complex theoretical material.

Demonstrate critical thinking and an ability to analyze literary and cultural texts to uncover theoretical (philosophical, anthropological, aesthetic, ethical, scientific) contexts, and to synthesize ideas across a range of media and disciplines.

Demonstrate independent research skills and ability to curate issue relevant module materials.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour 30 minutes (9%)
Other activity	3 hours (2%)
Private study	93 hours 30 minutes (62%)
Assessment	40 hours (27%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Reading and Research

Other activity description

Film Screening and Discussion

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Assessed Essay	70%	30 hours	Yes (extension)

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Video/Reflective/Curative	30%	10 hours	Yes (extension)
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A 1000 word reflective piece OR 5 minute creative video essay of 5 mins. These can be chosen from: a) make the case for a chosen piece for submission into the Museum of Carbon Ruins b) a video reflection essay on a specific climate imaginary c) make the case for a climate song/artwork/performance piece as a climate imaginary.

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Tabula and Face to Face

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 3 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 4 of UENA-QP37 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UENA-Q301 Undergraduate English Literature with Intercalated Year

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 3 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 4 of UENA-QP37 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UENA-Q301 Undergraduate English Literature with Intercalated Year
- Year 3 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 4 of UENA-VQ33 Undergraduate English and History (with Intercalated year)
- Year 3 of UENA-VQ34 Undergraduate English and History (with a term in Venice)
- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature