

# VN200-15 Trouble in the Water: Music and the Climate Crisis

26/27

**Department**

Warwick Venice Centre

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Chris Mapp

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study locations**

Warwick Venice Centre Primary

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

In an age of environmental challenges where culture often defines people as much as their politics, it has become incumbent on artists to create work inspired by or commenting on the state of the world. As the noise from our political leaders becomes lost in an endless news cycle, how do musicians, composers and songwriters disrupt traditional narratives with their own stories; stories reflecting their experiences of the world and their hopes for it? When that music is performed, how does the world which inspired it impact on the very nature of that performance space?

At the beginning of this module we will think through the work of artists, contemporary and historical, whose work connects with the themes of environment, the climate crisis and nature. Taking lessons, practices and techniques learned from these artists, the middle part of this module will be an artistic residency in Venice as a city inextricably linked to—and threatened by—its immediate and global climate challenges. Here, students will develop their own artistic outputs in response to a series of visits to key sites impacted by climate and environmental change as well as key performance spaces.

The module will culminate with a presentation/performance at Warwick Arts Centre of the works

created throughout the module curated by the students, critically reflecting on the process of creating music in dialogue with the world around us.

[Module web page](#)

## Module aims

Addressing complex problems such as the climate emergency as an individual can seem overwhelming. Thinking through the work of artists who are engaged with this subject can help to provide clarity and a way forward. Creating our own artistic responses which are connected to the environment in which they are made helps to bridge the gap between problem and solution. A focussed immersion in both artistic practice and place offers a unique opportunity to develop a practical approach to critical thinking through doing which can become a valuable method to examining other contemporary problems.

This interdisciplinary module with a focus on creative practice aims to provide this experience through your engagement with the creation of a new piece of music/song/sound art/installation. This will be informed by both the study of the work of artists engaged with the climate emergency and the location of Venice as a site which is directly and immediately responding to the consequences of our changing climate.

## 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.

### Part 1 - Warwick Main Campus

3 x 1 hour Lecture/Seminars in Warwick (Term 2) exploring key artists, concepts and themes relevant to the topics of music and environment. Examples include:

- Nature: Messian, Maja S.K. Ratkje, Labi Siffre, Dirty Projectors
- Climate Crisis: Amitav Ghosh, Naomi Klein, Massive Attack, Xiuhtezcatl, Gojira
- Technology and the world: Björk, data sonification, field recording and sampling
- Imagined worlds and performance spaces: Marion Brown, Jon Hassel

Students will need to also use this time to prepare/plan for work in Venice and prepare a short presentation on a chosen artist and how their work is engaged with the climate emergency (20% mark)

### Part 2 - Venice Artistic Residency (5 days during Easter break)

AM - 2 hour lecture/seminar/development session on developing artistic works

PM - Site visit and place-based activities to learn more about how Venice is responding to the climate emergency/collect field recordings

How does the world inspire music and impact on its performance? What is it like to make music in and of a place which is at risk? How does that sense of fragility impact on performances and presentation? What is the role of the performance space and context in music? Continuation of seminars and developing work plus presentations and visits to key venues and sites of significance, which may include: La Fenice Opera House, Fondazione Levi Music Library,

Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello, Giudecca and quieter canals for field recordings, Ca' Faletti (Mozart's House during his time in Venice), Santa Maria della Visitazione (where Vivaldi once gave music lessons), the Ecomuseum at the Lazzaretto Nuovo, Ocean Space, and more.

Part 3 – Performance/Presentation at Warwick Arts Centre

1 x rehearsal/preparation session (3 hrs)

1x Performance day (4 hrs, possibly more)

A student curated event featuring work created during the module. This could take the form of (but not limited to) songs, instrumental compositions, soundscapes, installations, improvisations, recorded music. Students will then submit a 1,500 word critical reflection on their engagement with the process and their artistic outcome(s).

## **Learning outcomes**

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

- Apply critical thinking skills and use them to produce impactful, artistic work
- Create interdisciplinary research through musical and artistic analysis and issues of climate crisis and environmental contexts.
- Investigate and evaluate diverse creative methodologies within music practice
- Analyse the most significant problems of climate crisis, along with contemporary and historical artistic responses to it

## **Indicative reading list**

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

## **Research element**

Students will be expected to provide and analyse their own examples of artists, historical or contemporary, whose work comments on, is linked to, or is inspired by the climate crisis, nature or the environment in which they live and work. They will discuss how these examples have inspired their own artistic outputs through a critical reflection which forms part of the assessment and must include a research bibliography.

## **Interdisciplinary**

This module explicitly links the disciplines of music practice to contemporary issues of climate science, the interdisciplinary field of sustainability, and the social impacts of climate change in the Anthropocene. Links will also be made to Literature and Politics through the issues raised and the examples drawn upon throughout, and students will be welcome to bring in their own disciplinary framings.

## **International**

The module features an international residency at the Warwick Venice Centre, which will prompt students to think about the climate crisis from the local to the global stage. Students' time in Venice will be crucial to thinking about global intersections of the climate crisis, and students will be encouraged to bring in their own international experiences to classroom discussions, along with global artists and multilingual compositions from across the international spectrum.

## Subject specific skills

- Critically analyse work from artists who are engaged with the narratives of climate change and the environment.
- Learn and select from these techniques to apply them to their own work
- Create a musical intervention that addresses issues of the climate crisis
- Interact and discuss with students from other disciplinary programmes

## Transferable skills

- Plan and deliver a sustained project culminating in a performance/presentation
  - Examine connections between artistic practice and public impact and apply this to their own work
  - Improve confidence in communicating their own ideas
  - Critical analysis of place-based intersections between environment and creative arts
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## Study

### Teaching split

| Provider                         | Weighting |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Warwick Venice Centre            | 90%       |
| School for Cross-faculty Studies | 10%       |

### Study time

| Type              | Required                   |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Lectures          | 8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)  |
| Seminars          | 5 sessions of 1 hour (3%)  |
| Practical classes | 2 sessions of 3 hours (4%) |
| Fieldwork         | 2 sessions of 3 hours (4%) |
| External visits   | 3 sessions of 3 hours (6%) |
| Private study     | 16 hours (11%)             |
| Assessment        | 100 hours (67%)            |
| Total             | 150 hours                  |

## Private study description

Independent reading, reflection, and preparation for lectures and seminars.

Above breakdown:

Part 1 (Term 2 - two weeks apart):

3x Lectures (Coventry - Warwick Arts Centre)

Part 2 - 5-day Residency at Warwick Venice Centre in Easter Break

5 x Lectures in Part 2 (Warwick Venice Centre AM)

5 x Seminar in Part 2 (Warwick Venice Centre AM)

2 x 3-hour fieldwork sessions (Venice PM)

3 x 3-hour external visits (Venice PM)

Part 3 - Preparation and Final Performance (Warwick Arts Centre) - Early Term 3

2 x 3-hour Practical Class (one preparation and rehearsal, and one performance day)

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Weighting | Study time | Eligible for self-certification |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Assessment component                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |           |            |                                 |
| Critical and Reflective Essay                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 80%       | 80 hours   | Yes (extension)                 |
| At the end of the module students are expected to present a song, piece of music, or sound based artwork (this can be pre-recorded). This is accompanied by an essay reflecting on engagement with the artistic process and the research behind their creative output, totalling 2,500 words. |           |            |                                 |

Reassessment component is the same

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Weighting | Study time | Eligible for self-certification |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Assessment component</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |           |            |                                 |
| Pre-Venice presentation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 20%       | 20 hours   | Yes (extension)                 |
| Prior to departing for Venice, students will give a short presentation (format to be discussed in advance) about an artist(s) whose work is engaged with the climate emergency. This can be an artist discussed in the lectures or chosen by the student. Students may present a pre-recorded presentation if they prefer. It is expected that an element of the artist's work will inform the student's plan for their work in Venice. |           |            |                                 |
| Reassessment component is the same                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |           |            |                                 |

## Feedback on assessment

Written feedback will be provided on Tabula.

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## Availability

There is currently no information about the courses for which this module is core or optional.