

Abrahams-Curiel Department of Foreign Literatures & Linguistics

Academic year 2025-26 (תשפ"ו)

Course title (English): Climate Fiction: Literature in the Anthropocene

Course title (Hebrew): שינוי אקלים וספרות האנתרופוקן

Course number: 132.1.0304

Course slot (semester/s, weekday/s, hours): Yearly (Semester A+B), Mondays 16:00-18:00

Lecturer: Ruth Wenske

Lecturer's conference hour and contact details: Mondays 12:00-14:00 (by email appointment, noruthie@gmail.com)

Course description & objectives:

How do we conceive of climate change, when it is something that is too large to grasp, too vague to pin down, too futuristic to measure, and too frightening to accept? This course takes contemporary (mostly 21st century) literature as a central venue for thinking about, and through, the environment and climate change, asking how fiction might help us imagine the unimaginable: a just and sustainable future. Building on the understanding that we now live in what is called the Anthropocene—the historical period in which human activity has become determinant to the planet's ecosystems and climate—the course looks at the way stories, both modern and indigenous, conceptualize the relationship between humans and the environment. We will read works from a range of genres—poetry, realism, science fiction, nonfiction and more—which thematize climate change in the context of the relationship between humans and nature. We will pay particular attention to non-Western narratives, as well as research from a range of scientific disciplines, which give us new ways of imagining the future in the Anthropocene. By considering the literary aspects of climate fiction, and the *way* knowledge is constructed through literature, we will develop skills for thinking and writing critically about both climate change and literature.

Course requirements:

Mandatory attendance (with up to two unexcused absences during the semester).

Participation and writing assignments on Moodle	20%
Midyear writing assignment (2-4 pages) or class presentation	20%
Quiz (to be announced in advance)	10%
Final paper: can be expanded from midyear assignment (4-6 pages)	50%

Total **100%**

* Every semester, there will be six writing assignments on Moodle. Some of them will be transcription notes, where you will have to bring three quotes from that week's text and explain your choice; other assignments will be more visual and creative. Four out of the six assignments are mandatory, and they are not graded.

Topics & bibliography (subject to change)

Fall Semester

Section One: Introduction

1. What is climate fiction?
Margaret Atwood, "Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet" (2009)
2. Amitav Ghosh, sections from *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) | **ASSIGNMENT** (four out of six each semester)
3. Sections from Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014)

Section One: Climate Crisis from the 20th Century to the 21st Century

4. Rachel Carson, chapters 1+2 from "*Silent Spring*" (1962)
+ St. J. Page Yako, "Pineapples" (1974), Craig Santos Perez, "Halloween in the Anthropocene, 2015" (2015), Isabella Borgeson, "Joint Typhoon Warning Center" (2020) | **ASSIGNMENT**
5. Lydia Lillet, "Zoogoing," from Bill McKibben (ed.) *I'm With the Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet* (2011)
6. First section of Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2016) +
Optional reading: Nurit Bird-David, "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology" | **ASSIGNMENT**
7. Tommy Orange, "New Jesus" (2022) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Section two: African Ecocriticism– theory, speculative fiction, and poetry

8. Cajetan Iheka, introduction to *African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics* (2022)
9. Dilman Dila, "The Leafy Man" (2013) | **ASSIGNMENT**
10. Edwin Okolo, "When the Levees Break" (2022)
11. T. L. Huchu, "Egoli" (2020) | **ASSIGNMENT**

Semester conclusion: Visual representations of the climate crisis

12. Jason deCaires Taylor's underwater sculptures (with article)
Nyani Quarmyne, "We Were Once Three Miles from the Sea" (visual archive) +
OPTIONAL READING: Ian Baucom's interpretation, "The View from the Shore" from *History 4° Celsius* | **ASSIGNMENT**

Spring Semester

Section One: Water

1. Section from Nick Wood, *Water Must Fall* (2020) | **ASSIGNMENT**
2. Nick Wood, "Just Stories: The Role of Speculative Fiction in Challenging the Growing Climate Apartheid" (2022)
3. Koleka Putuma, "Water" from *Collective Amnesia* (2017); Natalie Diaz, "The First Water Is the Body" from *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2021) | **ASSIGNMENT**
4. Empatheatre, *Lalela uLwandle* [Listen to the Sea] (2020) + "I Took my Ancestors to the United Nations," Mpume Mthombeni

Section two: Dystopic cli-fi

5. Rivers Solomon, *The Deep* | ASSIGNMENT
6. Rivers Solomon, *The Deep* (continued) + Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “Kinship in the abyss: submerging with *The Deep*.”
7. Kim Stanley Robinson, first chapters of *The Ministry for the Future* (2020) | ASSIGNMENT
8. Lavie Tidhar, “Smell of Orange Groves” (2011)

Section three: Audiovisual climate fiction

9. Wanuri Kahiu, *Pumzi* short film (2009) | ASSIGNMENT
10. Larisssa Sansour & Søren Lind, *In Vitro* (2019) | ASSIGNMENT
11. Octavia Butler and Damien Duffy. *Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Adaptation* (2020)
12. Concluding class: *My Octopus Teacher* (2020) | ASSIGNMENT

Final paper due 15 August