

LT302 Writing for the Anthropocene

Seminar Leader: Andreas Martin Widmann
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Course Times: Monday & Wednesday 2 - 3:30pm
Office Hours: Wednesday, after class, or by appointment

Course Description

This course examines literature by looking at connections between writing and ecology in the “Anthropocene” – a term advanced by the Dutch Nobel-Prize winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen. Throughout the semester, we will be investigating how literary texts can suggest new ways for thinking about nature, ecology and environmental issues, notably climate change and extinction. We trace the theoretical approach of “ecocriticism” through seminal works like Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* (1996) and Ursula Heise’s *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008). We will then consider the question of the role of literature in reflecting on the Anthropocene or human-made geological epoch, including the newly emerging literary genre of climate fiction (CliFi), and its furthering or incorporation of political criticism and activism. In the latter connection we address works like Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) or Edwards Abbey’s *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), T.C. Boyle’s *A Friend of the Earth* (2000) and Nell Zink’s *The Wallcreeper* (2014). The course will also pay special attention to the German environmental movement and its literary repercussions, e.g. in former Pankow-resident Christa Wolf’s Chernobyl-memoir *Accident. A Day’s News* (Störfall. Nachrichten eines Tages, 1987), or more recently, in the ecofeminism of Karen Duve’s *The Prepper Room* (Macht, 2016).

Requirements

Students are required to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and texts, as well as to take part in field-trips to places off-campus.

Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

The following texts must be purchased in paper form:

T.C. Boyle: *A Friend of the Earth*
Nell Zink: *The Wallcreeper*
A Course Reader

Some additional reading materials will be made available prior to classes dedicated to these texts and subjects. These texts should be printed for use in class. Please note that in seminars we will work with printed texts only. NO COMPUTERS, TABLETS OR PHONES should be used in class.

Please note that essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If an extension for an essay is agreed, the essay must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

All assignment must be completed in order to pass the course.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity (e.g. due to plagiarism) will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance

Please note that, in accordance with Bard attendance policy, attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester may significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

For regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence please consult the Student Handbook

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Syllabi for core and elective classes should note or refer to the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays:

Grade Breakdown

Participation: 35%

Midterm Essay (1500 words): 25%

Review of Literature (700 words): 15%

Final Essay (1500 words): 25%

Schedule

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change. You are responsible throughout the semester for knowing what you have to do for each class.

Week 1: Backgrounds

Monday, January 27	Introduction
Wednesday, January 29	Rachel Carson: <i>Silent Spring</i> (Excerpts) <i>Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction</i> Robert Kern: <i>Ecocriticism. What Is it Good For?</i>

Week 2: Poetics of the Anthropocene

Monday, February 3	Lawrence Buell: <i>The Environmental Imagination</i> (Excerpt) Amitav Ghosh: <i>The Great Derangement</i> (Excerpts)
Wednesday, February 5	Robert Hass: „State of the Planet” Richard Kerridge, “Ecocritical Approaches to literary Form and Genre”

Week 3: Ecology, Science and the Novel

Monday, February 10	Ian McEwan: <i>Solar</i> (Excerpts)
Wednesday, February 12	Amitav Ghosh: <i>The Hungry Tide</i> (Excerpts) Richard Powers: <i>The Overstory</i> (Excerpts)

Week 4: Petroculture

Monday, February 17	Stephanie Lemenager: <i>Living Oil. Petroleum Culture in the American Century</i> (Excerpts) Ben Okri: „What the Tapster Saw”
Wednesday, February 19	Tbc: Film screening <i>Sweet Crude</i>

Week 5: Fallout

Monday, February 24	Christa Wolf: <i>Accident. A Day's News</i> (Excerpts)
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Wednesday, February 26

Rob Nixon: *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Excerpts)

Ursula Heise: *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (Excerpts)

Week 6: Cli-Fi

Monday, March 2

T.C. Boyle: *A Friend of the Earth*

Goodbody/Johns-Putra: Introduction

Wednesday, March 4

Karen Duve: *The Prepper Room* (Excerpt)

Week 7: Imagining Extinction

Monday, March 9

Ursula Heise: *Imagining Extinction* (Excerpts)

Elizabeth Kolbert: *The Sixth Extinction* (Excerpts)

Wednesday, March 11

T.C. Boyle: *A Friend of the Earth*

W.S. Merwin: „For a Coming Extinction”

Thursday, March 23 Essay 1 due

Week 8: Environmental Activism and the Novel

Monday, March 16

Edward Abbey: *The Monkey-Wrench Gang* (Excerpts)

Wednesday, March 18

T.C. Boyle: *A Friend of the Earth*

Nell Zink: *The Wallcreeper*

Week 9: Environmentalist Non-Fiction

Monday, March 23

Rachel Carson: *Silent Spring* (Excerpts)

Edward Abbey: "A Field Guide to Monkey-Wrenching"

Wednesday, March 25

Gary Snyder: „Four Changes“

David Wallace Wells: *The Uninhabitable Earth* (Excerpts)

Week 10: Interspecies Relations and Coexistence

Montag, March 30

Nell Zink: *The Wallcreeper*

David Foster Wallace: "Consider the Lobster"

Wednesday, April 1

Donna Haraway: A Conversation

Thursday, April 2 Review of Literature due

Spring Break

Week 11: Urban Ecologies

Monday, April 13

No class

Wednesday, April 15

Jennifer Price: "13 Ways of Seeing Nature in Los Angeles"

Harryette Mullen: *Urban Tumbleweeds. Notes from a Tanka Diary* (Excerpts)

Woche 12: Resilience

Monday, April 20

Anna Tsing: The Mushroom at the End of the World (Excerpts)

Wednesday, April 22

Donna Haraway: Staying with the Trouble (Excerpts)

Week 13: Storytelling and Transformation

Monday, April 27

Helena Granström: "What Once Was"

Wednesday, April 29

Robert Macfarlane: Ness (Excerpt)

Week 14: The End of the End of the World

Monday, May 4

Anthropocene as Pop

Marvin Gaye: "Mercy, Mercy Me (The Ecology)"

Joni Mitchell: "Big Yellow Taxi"

Gänsehaut: "Karl, der Käfer"

John Grant: "Global Warming"

Grimes: *Miss Anthropocene*

Wednesday, May 6

Wrap-up

Completion Week

Thursday, May 14 Final Essay due

Fall 2019 classes start on Monday, January 27 and run until Friday, May 15 with spring break planned from Monday, April 6 to Monday, April 13. Completion week is from May 11 to May 15. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:
<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>