

HV5001 Introduction to Environmental Humanities



Course coordinator: Asst Prof. Kiu-wai CHU (School of Humanities)

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Lecture Date and Time: Wednesdays 2:30-5:30pm

Venue: LT28

Course tutor: tbc

This course consists of 13 weekly physical lectures. Students are expected to attend all classes in person. For any question and enquiries, you are encouraged to contact Prof. Chu and the course tutor via e-mail.

Course Description

This course brings together approaches that characterize Environmental Humanities as an academic field since the 21st century, and draws examples from literature and films to explore specific regional and cross-regional environmental issues and phenomena. The course centers on three aspects: how textual and visual storytelling play a role in facilitating our understanding of ecology and the environment in contemporary world; the rethinking of what nature and culture means in an age of environmental challenges; and the changing relationships between human beings and the more-than-human-world (that includes animals, plants, nonliving beings and the environment).

The course covers major topics such as new theoretical concepts of nature and the environment; social and environmental justice; climate change and environmental degradations; pollutions and toxicity in everyday life; the Anthropocene debates; critical studies of human and animal relationships; as well as

the relationship between environmental humanities and our daily lives as concerned, thoughtful citizens.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you would be able to:

1. identify and explain history, vocabulary, central theoretical concepts and major debates in Environmental Humanities through class discussion and assignments.
2. examine a range of literary, film, art and cultural texts, in order to acquire general knowledge and develop critical perspectives towards global environmental issues past and present;
3. identify and explain the distinct positions held by the various critical theories, or schools of thought, and their socio-political or cultural contexts;
4. develop a plan of actions that can demonstrate one's ability to put environmental awareness, sensitivity and core values towards animals, the environment, nature and society into daily life situations and practices, thus leading to more eco-friendly ways of thinking and living.

Assessments

1. Continuous Short Assignments (15%)

You will be asked to submit a number of short assignments (of about 500-800 words each) throughout the semester, to reflect your ecocritical and creative thoughts and reflections relate to what will be covered in our classes.

2. Online Quiz 1 (15%)

In Week 6, you will be asked to take an online quiz in which the content will focus on topics covered in Week 1 to Week 5. The quiz will consist of multiple choice questions.

3. Online Quiz 2 (15%)

In Week 11, you will be asked to take an online quiz in which the content will focus on topics covered in Week 6 to Week 10. The quiz will consist of multiple choice questions.

4. Final Essay (35%) DL: 17 Nov

There will be a 1200-word essay at the end of the course. The essay requires you to demonstrate your comprehensive and critical understanding of knowledge you have obtained from the course.

5. Group Project: Poster Presentation and Video Explanation (20%)

This consists of two components, a poster for presentation (10%) and a video explanation (10%). In a group of 6 to 7 students (subject to class size), you will be asked to prepare for an A2-sized visual poster that focuses on a selected environmental issue covered in class. All posters will be displayed on an online platform in week 13. Each group will be required to produce a 5-minute video explanation that supplements the poster presentation. In the video, your group should explain the rationale of the poster design, and include a short description on each group member's contribution. Both the posters and videos will be posted for other groups' viewing and reviewing.

- ❖ Due to the cross-disciplinary nature of the subject, you are encouraged to form your own groups with students from other disciplines.

- ❖ You will each be asked to fill out a peer review form upon submission of your project.
- ❖ Please refer to the “Detailed Guidelines for Group Presentation” which will be distributed during the semester.

Reading and References

Content and Texts subject to changes.

This course draws its reading material from a range of books and readings in Environmental Humanities, literary and film studies, Cultural studies, sociology and other humanities and social science writing that stress on ecological and environmental issues. There will also be a range of films, short videos and images used to illustrate conceptual ideas that are introduced in class. Both the readings and visual texts will help to enhance and broaden your knowledge in the recent development and debates in Environmental Humanities.

Reference Reading:

- Adamson, Joni and Michael Davis, eds. *Humanities for the Environment: Integrating Knowledge, Forging New Constellations of Practice*. London: Routledge. 2016.
- Adamson, Joni, William A. Gleason, and David N. Pellow, eds. *Keywords for Environmental Studies*. New York and London: New York University Press. 2016.
- Chang, Chia-ju, ed. *Chinese Environmental Humanities: Practices of Environing at the Margins*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge University Press. 2011.
- Garrard, Greg, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*. Oxford University Press. 2014.
- Heise, Ursula K., Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the environmental humanities*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Hourdequin, Marion. *Environmental Ethics: From Theory To Practice*. Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Morton, Timothy. *Being Ecological*. The MIT Press. 2019.
- . *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press. 2010.
- Rust, Stephen, Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt, eds. *Ecomedia: Key Issues*. Routledge, 2016.
- Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew and Brent Ryan Bellamy. *An Ecotopia Lexicon*. Minneapolis, London: Minnesota University Press. 2019.
- Slovic, Scott. *Going Away to Think: Engagement, Retreatment, and Ecocritical Responsibility*. Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press. 2008.

Course Topic Summary

1. (16/8) Introduction: What is Environmental Humanities?

SECTION I. Eco-Storytelling

2. (23/8) Ecocriticism: Telling Stories of the Environment
3. (30/8) Ecocinema: Narrating ecology with moving images
4. (6/9) Ecomedia: Game, Apps, Music and More

SECTION II. Rethinking Nature and Culture

5. (13/9) Climate Change, Global Warming, the Apocalypse and Beyond
6. (20/9)-Blue Humanities: Water, Ocean, and the Hydrological Turn
7. (27/9) Sustainability Beyond the West: Asian and Indigenous Traditions

~~ Recess Week (2/10 – 6/10) ~~

8. (11/10) Slowing Down: Slow Food, Slow Media, Slow Life, and Sustainability

SECTION III. Environmental Justice: Human and Nonhuman Communities

9. (18/10) Women and the Environment: Ecofeminism and Gender Ecopolitics
10. (25/10) Slow Violence, Solastalgia and Postcolonial Environmental Justice
11. (1/11) The Nonhuman Turn I: Animals and Multispecies Coexistence
12. (8/11) The Nonhuman Turn II: Virus, Pandemics and Ecology
13. (15/11) Conclusion and Poster Presentations

Planned Weekly Schedule

Lecture (Date)	Topic <i>-Topic of the week and notes of ideas for class discussion</i>	Reference Reading (Subject to changes)
1 (16 Aug)	Introduction: What is Environmental Humanities?	<p>Video clips: Animated shorts by Steve Cutts.</p> <p>Rose, van Dooren, Chrulew, Cooke, Kearnes and O’Gorman. “Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities”, <i>Environmental Humanities</i> Vol.1.1 2012,p.1-5. https://read.dukeupress.edu/environmental-humanities/article/1/1/1/8085/Thinking-Through-the-Environment-Unsettling-the</p> <p>Slovic, Scott. “Savoring, Saving, and the Practice of Ecocritical responsibility”; “Going Away to Think”, in <i>Going Away to Think</i>. 2008.</p>
SECTION I. ECO-STORYTELLING		
2 (23 Aug)	<p>Ecocriticism: Telling Stories of the Environment</p> <p>This week we focus on the importance of “stories” in promoting environmental awareness. The session aims to examine the need to cultivate ecocritical thinking and writing in multiple scales and perspectives.</p>	<p>Slovic, Scott, “Ecocriticism: storytelling, communication, contact”, <i>Going Away to Think</i>.</p> <p>Yuval Noah Harari, “Nationalism”, <i>21 Lessons for the 21st Century</i>. 2018: 115-126.</p> <p>Further readings: Heise, Ursula K. “Planet, species, justice—and the stories we tell about them”, <i>The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities</i>. London: Routledge, 2017.</p>
3 (30 Aug)	<p>Ecocinema: Narrating Ecology with Moving Images</p> <p>Are visual images an effective media form in delivering environmental messages? Do meanings and impacts of movies and photos tend to get lost in cultural translations? This session focuses on recent discussion in ecocinema studies, and examines the various genres of films and their effectiveness in promoting environmental messages.</p>	<p>Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula. “Shifting Paradigms: from Environmentalist Films to Ecocinema”, in <i>Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film</i>. 2010, 43-61.</p> <p>Chu, Kiu-wai, “Screening Environmental Challenges in China: Three Modes of Ecocinema”, <i>Journal of Chinese Governance</i>. Vol.2 No.4. Special Issue in <i>Environmental Governance</i>. Taylor & Francis. 2017, pp.437-459.</p> <p>Chu, Kiu-wai, interview in <i>SinDie</i>, “Chu Kiu-wai: There are always signs of hope for building towards a more sustainable and hospitable world” 2020.</p>

		https://www.sindie.sg/2020/10/chu-kiu-wai-there-are-always-signs-of.html
4 (6 Sept)	<p>Ecomedia: Game, Apps, Music and More</p> <p>Departing from literature and films, this week we will assess a broader range of media forms that are rarely viewed from environmental perspectives, such as video games, digital apps, music, the internet and more. We particularly wish to highlight how interactive uses of media could reshape our relationships with the environment and nonhuman species.</p>	<p>Lopez, Antonio. "Ecomedia: The metaphor that makes a difference", <i>Journal of Sustainability Education</i>, Vol. 23, April 2020 Ecomedia Literacy http://www.susted.com/wordpress/content/ecomedia-the-metaphor-that-makes-a-difference_2020_05/</p> <p>Watson, Kay, "Playing Nature: Alenda Y. Chang on Gaming's Role in the Climate Crisis" https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/art-and-ideas/playing-nature-alenda-chang/</p> <p>Chang, Alenda, "Introduction: Edge Effects", <i>Playing Nature: Ecology in Video Games</i></p>
SECTION II. RETHINKING NATURE AND CULTURE		
5 (13 Sept)	<p>Climate Change, Global Warming? The Apocalypse and Beyond</p> <p>This week we will focus on speculative films and writings that address the issues in climate change and the apocalypse. We will explore the significance of speculative and imaginative narratives in environmental humanities.</p>	<p>Film: <i>Snowpiercer</i> (2013), dir. Bong Joonho.</p> <p>Ghosh, Amitav. <i>The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable</i>. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press. 2016. (Extracts)</p> <p>Goodbody, Axel and Adeline Johns-Putra, "Introduction", <i>Cli-fi: A Companion</i>. 2018</p> <p>Chu, Kiu-wai. "Snowpiercer", <i>Cli-fi: A Companion</i>. Eds. by Axel Goodbody and Adeline Johns-Putra. 2018.</p>
6 (20 Sept)	<p>Blue Humanities: Water, Ocean, and the Hydrological Turn</p> <p>This session focuses on what can be said as a "hydrological turn" in humanities studies, or Blue Humanities as a sub-topic of environmental humanities, which examines the entanglements among humans with marine lives, the ocean, and anything related to water. This session also introduces the emerging "elemental analysis", which provides the thinking tools for this course's group project.</p>	<p>Alaimo, Stacy, "Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism, and New Materialism at Sea", in <i>Exposed: Environmental Politics & Pleasures in Posthuman Times</i>. 2017.</p> <p>Cecilia Chen, Janin LacLeod and Astrid Neimanis, "Introduction: Toward a Hydrological Turn", <i>Thinking with Water</i> (2013)</p> <p>Further readings:</p> <p>Starosielski, Nicole, "Beyond Fluidity: A Cultural History of Cinema Under Water", <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i>. 2013.</p> <p>Selected excerpts from <i>Elemental Ecocriticism: Thinking with Earth, Air, Water, Fire</i>, edited by</p>

		Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert, 2015.
7 (27 Sept)	<p>Sustainability Beyond the West: Indigenous and Asian Traditions</p> <p>This session goes beyond western traditions and examine how classical Asian philosophical thoughts and world indigenous beliefs and practices continue to play a role in contemporary society, in shaping the ecological thoughts and practices in everyday life.</p>	<p>Agyeman, Julian, "Sustainability", <i>Keywords for Environmental Studies</i>, ed. J Adamson et al. 2016, p.186-189.</p> <p>Arnel Murga, "Why Indigenous folklore can save animals' lives", <i>BBC Future Planet</i>. 2020. https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200728-the-mythical-creatures-that-protect-the-philippines</p> <p>Yuriko Furuhashi, "Of Dragons and Geoengineering: Rethinking Elemental Media", <i>Media+Environment</i> 1.1, 2019.</p>
Recess Week – NO CLASS (2 -6 Oct)		
8 (11 Oct)	<p>Slowing Down: Slow Food, Slow Media, Slow Life, and Sustainability</p> <p>Focusing on a re-adjustment to temporality of life in the present world, this session highlights the importance of slowing down and degrowth that is reflected in various aspects of our daily life, ranging from food and media consumptions, to new cultural trends in different parts of the world.</p>	<p>Rauch, Jennifer. <i>Slow Media: Why 'Slow' is Satisfying, Sustainable, and Smart</i>. 2018. p.1-32.</p> <p>Further reading: Carruth, Allison, "Slow Food, low tech: environmental narratives of agribusiness and its alternatives", <i>The Routledge Companion to Environmental Humanities</i>. 2017.</p>
SECTION III. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE; HUMAND AND NONHUMAN COMMUNITIES		
9 (18 Oct)	<p>Women and Nature: Ecofeminism and Gender Ecopolitics</p> <p>This session introduces the feminist concepts in environmental humanities. It assesses the intersections between gender and environmental injustice, and recent global movements related to that.</p>	<p>Marion Hourdequin, "The social dimensions of environmental problems" <i>Environmental Ethics: From Theory to Practice</i>. 2015.</p> <p>Greta Gaard, "New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism", <i>Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment</i>. 17.4, 2010.</p>
10 (25 Oct)	<p>Slow Violence, Solastalgia and Postcolonial Environmental Justice (with guest lecturer Ms Kee Ming Feng)</p> <p>This session explores the intersections between postcolonialism and environmental justice, and introduces concepts of slow violence, solastalgia, global inequality and environmentalism</p>	<p>Timothy Clark, "Post-colonial ecojustice", <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment</i></p> <p>Yuval Noah Harari, "Justice" <i>21 Lessons for the 21st Century</i>, 2018.</p> <p>Rob Nixon, "Slow Violence" <i>The Chronicle Review</i>, June 26, 2011</p>

	of the poor.	
11 (1 Nov)	<p>The Nonhuman Turn I: Animals and Multispecies Coexistence</p> <p>What role do animals play in human society, and in daily practices since ancient time? From animal rights to multispecies studies, this session introduces recent discussions in the relationships between humans and animals, and the often blurred boundaries between them.</p>	<p>John Berger, "Why Look at Animals (1977)", <i>About Looking</i>.</p> <p>Luis Vivanco, "Penguins are good to think with: wildlife films, the imaginary shaping of nature, and environmental politics", <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i>. Eds. by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, Sean Cubitt. 2013.</p> <p>Thom Van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, Usula Muenster, "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness", <i>Environmental Humanities</i> 8:1. May 2016.</p>
12 (8 Nov)	<p>The Nonhuman Turn II: Virus, Pandemics and Ecology</p> <p>This session examines recent scholars' discussion of nonhuman forces in the context of virus and the pandemic, and explores how the nonhuman turn in humanities enables us to understand the COVID-19 new normalcy we are currently experiencing.</p>	<p>Film clips: <i>Contagion</i> (2010); documentary footages on pandemic and coronavirus.</p> <p>Quammen, David, "Chapter 1 Pale Horse" <i>Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic</i></p> <p>Frederic Keck, "Postscript: Epidemic Villains and the Ecologies of Nuisance", <i>Framing Animals as Epidemic Villains</i>. 2019.</p>
13 (15 Nov)	Conclusion and Poster Presentations	



The course is a compulsory, introductory module for the new Minor in Environmental Humanities. For enquiries or further details of the minor programme, please contact Dr. Chu, or visit: <https://www.ntu.edu.sg/soh/admissions/undergraduate/minor-second-major/minor-in-environmental-humanities>