HV8001  Introduction to Environmental Humanities

Course coordinator: Asst Prof. Kiu-wai Chu (School of Humanities)
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Date and Time: Wednesday 2:30-5:30pm

Course tutors: Mr. Ng Khai Boon (khaibo001@e.ntu.edu.sg) and Mr. Hugo Tam (wingyu001@e.ntu.edu.sg)

This course will be conducted entirely online. You are encouraged to contact Dr. Chu and the course tutors 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.

Assessment

1. Online Eco-Blog (15%)
You will be building an online blog, and are encouraged to update regularly with short entries of your ecocritical thoughts and reflections relate to what will be covered in our classes.

2. Online Quiz 1 (15%)
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%)
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%)
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 (15%) and a video explanation (5%). In a group of 10 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 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. Due to the coronavirus situation, you are strongly encouraged to practice social distancing and consider doing your group projects via virtual modes.
❖ Please refer to the “Detailed Guidelines for Group Presentation” which will be distributed during the semester.
Reading and References

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:


Course Topic Summary

1. Introduction: What is Environmental Humanities?

SECTION I. Eco-Storytelling

2. Telling Stories of the Environment
3. Ecocinema: Narrating ecology with images
4. Climate Change, the Apocalypse and Beyond

SECTION II. Rethinking Nature and Culture

7. Sustainability Beyond the West: Asian and Indigenous Traditions
8. “The (In)Hospitable World” -- Asia Film Archive Online Symposium and Film Series

SECTION III. Environmental Justice: Human and Nonhuman Communities

9. Women and the Environment: Ecofeminism and Gender Ecopolitics
10. Slow Violence and Postcolonial Environmental Justice
11. The Nonhuman Turn I: Animals and Multispecies Coexistence
12. The Nonhuman Turn II: Virus, Pandemics and Ecology

13. Conclusion and Poster Presentations
Planned Weekly Schedule

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lecture (Date)</th>
<th>Topic - Topic of the week and notes of ideas for class discussion</th>
<th>Reference Reading (Subject to changes)</th>
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| 1 (12 Aug)     | **Introduction: What is Environmental Humanities?**          | Video clips: Animated shorts by Steve Cutts.  
https://read.dukeupress.edu/environmental-humanities/article/1/1/1/8085/Thinking-Through-the-Environment-Unsettling-the  
Slovic, Scott. “Savoring, Saving, and the Practice of Ecocritical responsibility”; “Going Away to Think”, in *Going Away to Think*. 2008. |

**SECTION I. ECO-STORYTELLING**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture (Date)</th>
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| 3 (26 Aug)     | **Ecocinema: Narrating Ecology with Images**                    | Film clips from *Seven Worlds, One Planet* (2019), *Still Life* (2006, Jia Zhangke); etc.  
<p>| 4 (2 Sept)     | <strong>Climate Change, the Apocalypse and</strong>                          | Film: <em>Snowpiercer</em> (2013), dir. Bong Joonho. |</p>
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<th>Date</th>
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Yuriko Furuhata, “Of Dragons and Geoengineering: Rethinking Elemental Media”, Media+Environment 1.1, 2019. | Over the past decade, elemental studies of media, culture and ecology become increasingly dominant. This session introduces the emerging “elemental analysis”, which also provides the thinking tools for this course’s group project. |
| 7 (23 Sept) | Sustainability Beyond the West: Indigenous and Asian Traditions | Film: Whale Rider (2002, Niki Caro)  
Adamson, Joni, “Cosmovisions: Environmental Justice, Transnational American Studies, and | 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 |
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<td>8-2 Oct</td>
<td>Recess Week – NO CLASS (28 Sept -2 Oct)</td>
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| October)   | (Online Symposium and Film Screenings curated by Dr Chu)                | Film Quarterly, Summer 2018, Volume 71, Number 4, 2018  
|            |                                                                        | Yee, Winnie L.M. “Why Asian ecocinema?”, Asian Cinema No.30.2 Special Issue on  |
|            |                                                                        | Gaard, Greta. “Where is Feminism in the Environmental Humanities?” in Environmental  |
|            |                                                                        | Sze, Julie. “Gender and Environmental Justice”, in Routledge Handbook of Gender  |
|            |                                                                        | DeLoughrey, Elizabeth and George B Hanley, “Postcolonial Ecologies: Briding the  |
|            |                                                                        | Divide”, Key Readings in Ecocriticism. Ed. by Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai et al. 2015.  |
|            |                                                                        | Massachussetts and London: Cambridge University Press. 2011                      |
| 11 (28 Oct) | **The Nonhuman Turn I: Animals and Multispecies Coexistence**  
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.  
| 12 (4 Nov) | **The Nonhuman Turn II: Virus, Pandemics and Ecology**  
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.  
Film clips: *Okja* (2017, Bong Joon-ho); *Safari* (2016, Ulrich Seidl); *Chicken People* (2016, Nicole Lucas Haimes).  
Selected essays from *Critical Inquiry i “Posts from the Pandemic”, 2020 April onwards.*  
| 13 (11 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://soh.ntu.edu.sg/Programmes/Undergraduate/current/Pages/Minor-in-Environmental-Humanities.aspx |