

HV8001 Introduction to Environmental Humanities



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

e-mail : kiuwai.chu@ntu.edu.sg Office : HSS 03-15 Tel : (65) 6790 6710

Date and Time: Wednesday 2:30-5:30pm

Course tutors: Mr. Ng Khai Boon (khaiboan001@e.ntu.edu.sg) and Mr. Hugo Tam (wingyu001@e.ntu.edu.sg)

This course will be conducted entirely online. It consists of weekly pre-recorded lectures and occasional zoom meetings. 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:

- 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.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M, eds. *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities*. Routledge. 2016.
- Dryzek, John S, and Jonathan Pickering, *The Politics of Anthropocene*. U.K.: Oxford University Press. 2019.
- Garrard, Greg, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*. Oxford University Press. 2014.
- Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: the Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. 2008.
- Heise, Ursula K., Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the environmental humanities*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Morton, Timothy. *Being Ecological*. The MIT Press. 2019.
- . *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press. 2010.
- Oppermann, Serpil and Serenella Iovino, eds. *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*. Rowman and Littlefield Intl. 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.
- Online journal: *Environmental Humanities*
<https://read.dukeupress.edu/environmental-humanities>

Course Topic Summary

1. (12/8) Introduction: What is Environmental Humanities?

SECTION I. Eco-Storytelling

2. (19/8) Telling Stories of the Environment
3. (26/8) Ecocinema: Narrating ecology with images
4. (2/9) Climate Change, the Apocalypse and Beyond

SECTION II. Rethinking Nature and Culture

5. (9/9) Ecology without Nature? From Deep Ecology to Hyperobjects
6. (16/9) Elemental Studies: Earth, Air, Water, Fire
7. (23/9) Sustainability Beyond the West: Asian and Indigenous Traditions

(28/9 – 2/10) Recess Week

SECTION III. Environmental Justice: Human and Nonhuman Communities

8. (7/10) Women and the Environment: Ecofeminism and Gender Ecopolitics
9. (14/10) Slow Violence and Postcolonial Environmental Justice

10. (23/10) “The (In)Hospitable World” @ Asia Film Archive
-- Public Symposium

11. (28/10) The Nonhuman Turn I: Animals and Multispecies Coexistence
12. (4/11) The Nonhuman Turn II: Virus, Pandemics and Ecology
13. (11/11) Conclusion and Poster Presentations

Planned Weekly Schedule

Lecture (Date)	Topic -Topic of the week and notes of ideas for class discussion	Reference Reading (Subject to changes)
1 (12 Aug)	Introduction: What is Environmental Humanities?	Video clips: Animated shorts by Steve Cutts. 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 Slovic, Scott. “Savoring, Saving, and the Practice of Ecocritical responsibility”; “Going Away to Think”, in <i>Going Away to Think</i> . 2008.
SECTION I. ECO-STORYTELLING		
2 (19 Aug)	Telling Stories of the Environment 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.	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. DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. “Introduction”, <i>Allegories of the Anthropocene</i> . Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2019. Yuval Noah Harari, “Nationalism”, <i>21 Lessons for the 21st Century</i> . 2018: 115-126.
3 (26 Aug)	Ecocinema: Narrating Ecology with Images 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.	Film clips from <i>Seven Worlds, One Planet</i> (2019), <i>Still Life</i> (2006, Jia Zhangke); etc. Rust, Stephen, Salma Monani, Sean Cubitt, “Introduction” in <i>Ecocinema Theory and Practice</i> . New York and London: Routledge. 2013. 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 Environmental Governance. Taylor & Francis. 2017, pp.437-459.
4 (2 Sept)	Climate Change, the Apocalypse and Beyond	Film: <i>Snowpiercer</i> (2013), dir. Bong Joonho. Ghosh, Amitav. <i>The Great Derangement: Climate</i>

	<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><i>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>
SECTION II. RETHINKING NATURE AND CULTURE		
5 (9 Sept)	<p>Ecology without Nature? From Deep Ecology to Hyperobjects</p> <p>From deep ecology's development to Morton's hyperobjects and poststructuralist ecological thoughts, this session examines how contemporary scholars and critics constantly challenge and rethink the notion of nature.</p>	<p>Film clips: Zizek, Slavoj. "Ecology", in <i>Examined Life</i>.</p> <p>Naess, Arne. "Deep Ecology and Ecosophy", <i>Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism</i>. 1995.</p> <p>Morton, Timothy, <i>The Ecological Thought</i>. Chapter 1. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press. 2010.</p>
6 (16 Sept)	<p>Elemental Studies: Earth, Air, Water, Fire</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Film: <i>Anthropocene: The Human Epoch</i> (2018, dir Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal, Nicholas de Pencier)</p> <p>Selected excerpts from <i>Elemental Ecocriticism: Thinking with Earth, Air, Water, Fire</i>, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert, 2015.</p> <p>Starosielski, Nicole. "The Elements of Media Studies", <i>Media+Environment</i>, 1.1. 2019.</p> <p>Yuriko Furuhashi, "Of Dragons and Geoengineering: Rethinking Elemental Media", <i>Media+Environment</i> 1.1, 2019.</p>
7 (23 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>Film: <i>Whale Rider</i> (2002, Niki Caro)</p> <p>Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew. "Seeing Singapore with New Eyes", <i>Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene</i>. 2020.</p> <p>Adamson, Joni, "Cosmovisions: Environmental Justice, Transnational American Studies, and Indigenous Literature", in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism</i>. 2014.</p>

		Other chapters from <i>Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene</i> . 2020.
Recess Week – NO CLASS (28 Sept -2 Oct)		
SECTION III. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE; HUMAN AND NONHUMAN COMMUNITIES		
8 (7 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>Films: <i>Mother!</i> (2017, dir. Darren Aronofsky); <i>Under the Dome</i> (2015, Chai Jing).</p> <p>Harari, Yuval Noah. "Justice", <i>21 Lessons for the 21st Century</i>. 2018: 110</p> <p>Gaard, Greta. "Where is Feminism in the Environmental Humanities?" in <i>Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene</i>. Rowman and Littlefield Intl. 2016.</p> <p>Sze, Julie. "Gender and Environmental Justice", in <i>Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment</i>. Routledge: 2019.</p>
9 (14 Oct)	<p>Slow Violence and Postcolonial Environmental Justice</p> <p>This session explores the intersections between postcolonialism and environmental justice, and introduces concepts of slow violence, global inequality and environmentalism of the poor.</p>	<p>Film: <i>Avatar</i> (2009, James Cameron); <i>Plastic China</i> (2018, Wang Jiuliang)</p> <p>DeLoughrey, Elizabeth and George B Hanley, "Postcolonial Ecologies: Briding the Divide", <i>Key Readings in Ecocriticism</i>. Ed. by Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai et al. 2015.</p> <p>Nixon, Rob. "Introduction", <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i>. Massachusetts and London: Cambridge University Press. 2011</p>
10 (23 Oct, FRIDAY)	<p>Asia Film Archive Public Event: "The (In)Hospitable World" (Online Symposium and Film Screenings curated by Dr Chu)</p> <p>(The symposium will be available online after the event from Asian Film Archive's website/ Facebook page)</p>	<p>Baer, Nicholas. "Cinema and the Anthropocene: A Conversation with Jennifer Fay", <i>Film Quarterly</i>, Summer 2018, Volume 71, Number 4, 2018 https://filmquarterly.org/2018/06/08/cinema-and-the-anthropocene/</p> <p>Fay, Jennifer. "Introduction", <i>Inhospitable World</i>, 2018.</p> <p>Yee, Winnie L.M. "Why Asian ecocinema?", <i>Asian Cinema</i> No.30.2 Special Issue on Asian Ecocinema, 2009.</p>

11 (28 Oct)	<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>Film clips: <i>Okja</i> (2017, Bong Joon-ho); <i>Safari</i> (2016, Ulrich Seidl); <i>Chicken People</i> (2016, Nicole Lucas Haimes).</p> <p>Kirksey, Eben and Stefan Helmreich. "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography." <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> vol. 25, issue 4 (2010): 545-576.</p> <p>Haraway, Donna. "Chapter 2 Tentacle Thinking", in <i>Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene</i>. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2016.</p>
12 (4 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>Selected essays from <i>Critical Inquiry</i> / "Posts from the Pandemic", 2020 April onwards. https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/04/28/posts-from-the-pandemic/</p> <p>Selected excerpts from David Quammen, <i>Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic</i>, 2012.</p>
13 (11 Nov)	<p>Conclusion and Poster Presentations</p>	



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>